

19th Century European Art History

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*Short Histories of Major Art Movements and Select
Artists from ART 305*

MEGAN BYLSMA



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Introduction

What happens when a class shares their collective knowledge about their subject, rather than hiding it away and stuffing it down in individual memory?

A textbook that is formed by the meeting of the minds!

As part of the ART 305 19th Century European Art History move to online during the pandemic, a collective project was born: creating a digital open-education resource, free to any who choose to access it, and a way for the individuals in class to be part of a greater community in an online learning environment.

With some chapters authored by the instructor of the class and others created by the students as a result of their term's research, this text is a growing document that will encompass past, present, and future learners as their collective body of knowledge grows.

Within the parameters of 19th Century European Art History this text begins with the influence and beginnings of change during the Rococo era in France and progresses through time until the beginning of the 20th century. Each chapter and chapter sections marks a specific era or a specific artist and chapter sections are individually authored.

Welcome to ART 305! The 19th century awaits!

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support and expertise of many.

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Sona Macnaughton, our information and digital literacy and open educational resources librarian at Red Deer Polytechnic, was an invaluable resource and liaison. Her willingness to expertly track down OER resources is what led us to partner with the University of Alberta Library's [Open Education Alberta](#) project to platform and create this book. I asked Sona a myriad of complicated and difficult to answer questions during the making of this project and even when it required her to contact individuals in other institutions she was always able to find an answer for me. She also fielded questions (so many questions) about intellectual property, copyright, and creative commons licensing in the OER world. She also sourced institutional policy that made it clear how students could share their work in this text while maintaining their right to their intellectual property. She made this project easy and I am so appreciative of her time and effort! Thank you so much Sona!

Caitlin Ratcliffe was a copyright life line! A subject librarian at Red Deer Polytechnic, she and Sona answered so many questions about copyright and intellectual property that I'm sure they were very over this project by the end of it. Caitlin was indispensable at helping me support my students so they could fully understand their rights as intellectual property creators and gave us so much

information on what the different kinds of copyright and creative commons options there were for authors and content creators in a project like this. Thank you Caitlin for the resources you have shared and the many questions you have answered!

Finally, true appreciation needs to be extended to the University of Alberta Library and their [Open Education Alberta](#) project. This allowed us to create this Open Education Resource, gave us access to their expertise and support, and ultimately made a very daunting task as smooth as possible. Thank you for your collaboration in making this project possible.

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I. Chapter I - Rococo through Neo-Classicism

France

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By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- define the terms ‘Rococo’, ‘Enlightenment’, and ‘Classicism.’
- describe the Rococo style and its purpose.
- identify the philosophies of the Enlightenment.
- explain the historical basis of Neo-Classicism.
- describe the identifying characteristics of Neo-Classicism.

Chapter opening in audio:



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The Rococo

It is easy to look at the Rococo era as nothing more than silly, insipid rich people celebrating their wealth in the most opulent ways. Which, in some part, it really was. However, there was also more going on with the Rococo than just “Wheee! We’re rich! And *lascivious!*” But not by much.

It is difficult to really understand the reality of the Rococo Era by just looking at pictures of its art. The Rococo was a full sensory experience, from how the fabric you were wearing felt and the sound it made when it moved, to the food you ate, the company you kept, the topics you talked about, the people you flirted with, the music that was played (either by you or someone else) and the way the rooms were decorated while you talked and played. This was an expensive, time consuming, experiential aesthetic lifestyle. And it was a lifestyle and aesthetic for the rich. (As most aesthetic-based lifestyles are.)

The Rococo (also spelled ‘Roccoco’) period could not have come about were it not for the earlier years of the 1700s. The absolute power of the King of France had kept the aristocracy trapped at the Palace of Versailles, under his watchful eye, and away from their city homes in Paris. After his death, the aristocracy flooded back to Paris. Happy to be free of the palace, feeling resentful for the amount of control exercised over their lives, and moving back into apartments in serious need of a decorating update due to their long absence. With all the money and time they could desire at their disposal, they indulged in creating the most comfortable, exciting, and luscious surroundings possible.



Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV*, oil on canvas, 1701 (The J. Paul Getty Museum) – Rumour has it that his guy only took a bath twice in his life. YUP. YOUR READ THAT RIGHT.

“In the early years of the 1700s, at the end of the reign of Louis XIV (who died in 1715), there was a shift away from the classicism and “Grand Manner” (based on the art of Nicolas Poussin) that had governed the art of the preceding 50 years in France, toward a new style that came to be known as 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 characterized the art of this period.

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. This disparity in wealth fuelled growing national discontent.”

Excerpted from an Essay by Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris, “A beginner’s guide to Rococo art,” in *Smarthistory*, January 7, 2016, <https://smarthistory.org/a-beginners-guide-to-rococo-art/>.

All Smarthistory content is available for free at

www.smarthistory.org

Fragonard's *The Swing* and Sexual Mores



Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing*, oil on canvas, 1767 (Wallace Collection, London)

Rococo paintings do not often have deep meaning or high moral reasoning. In Fragonard's *The Swing* the scene is focused on a young woman in a beautiful dress floating through the air on a swing being pulled by her elderly husband in the darker right hand

corner. In the lower left hand corner a young man is partially concealed in the bushes, catching a peek under the woman's skirts as she flies over his head. In Rococo images narrative was often embedded through the use of settings, props, and attention to where the people portrayed were focused; Rococo relied on some of the same theatrical elements that the earlier Baroque art had also used. In *The Swing* there are two small cupids leaning on snail next to the elderly husband in the background. They can be seen to be a representation of the slow, unexciting commitment of a sedate marriage between the young woman and the older man. This along with the dog that barks a warning from below, can be seen as a reminder of fidelity and loyalty. The woman is looking at the young man in the bushes below her, indicating that she is aware of his presence and is spreading her legs to afford him a better view. Following the sweeping diagonal of her dress and foot a shoe can be seen flying off. Compositionally, this leads the painting viewer's eye to the solitary cupid in the upper left hand corner who is whispering a 'shh' to the young man and woman. The solitary and secret keeping cupid can be seen to represent the secret love and infidelity of the woman and the young man.

The story in Fragonard's *The Swing* is one of flirtation, concupiscence, and infidelity; but in this painting there is no judgement or call to resistance. Martial infidelity was a common, cultural occurrence among French nobility at this time. As early as the 1500s the king of France had a mistress as part of his court. The title given to the woman in this position was *maîtresse-en-titre* and this semi-official position came with power and apartments at the palace (whereas a *petite maîtresse* was an unacknowledged, completely unofficial mistress to the king). Therefore it is not strange that by the 1700s it was expected that every married man of means would keep at least one mistress. The keeping of mistresses was merely part of the way of life for the upper classes in France at this time – all the wealthy men had them and all the women knew about them. Paintings, like *The Swing*, that celebrated, normalized,

and made light of the moral decadence of the ruling classes added fuel to the fire of the Enlightenment. Those that called for social and moral reforms used examples of art like this to call society to a searching for their moral fiber and to value heroism and duty over self-indulgence and avarice.

La salon de la Princesse and Madame de Pompadour sections in audio:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=5#audio-5-2>

Boffrand's *Le salon de la Princesse* and Seeds of Dissent



Germain Boffrand, Le salon de la Princesse, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris, 1735–40

Rococo architecture and interior design were as indulgent and over the top as the paintings of the time. This salon was created for a new, young, wife in a city mansion located at 60 rue des Francs-Bourgeois, in Paris. The gilded and highly decorated interior highlighted here was not an unusual feature for Rococo interiors. Integrated wall paintings like those in the spaces between the window arches near the ceiling, were popular – as were silk wall coverings punctuated with easel paintings.

This integrated painting is a series of paintings in the alcoves in this room that relate the story of Eros and Psyche. Now remember that these paintings would be seen in either daylight, or more often, as this was a room for entertaining guests, by candlelight. Seen in microscopic singular detail, as is often the case with digital viewing in the 21st century, these paintings seem odd and over the top. But in situ, in the ambience of candlelight reflecting off of glass, mirrors

and gold, it would have seemed quite in keeping with the tastes of the day. The selection of this story of Psyche on the alcoves is interesting because it is the love story of the human Psyche and the god Eros. In this story, Psyche is a beautiful human who, after a series of misadventures, is the object of the god Eros' affections. Eros had been given the task of destroying Psyche, but instead he had fallen in love with her and knew that to keep their love a secret from Aphrodite, Psyche must never see his face. However, she eventually sneaks a peek during the night and Eros immediately leaves her. After much sad seeking of her love, Psyche asks Aphrodite for help and is given dangerous tasks to complete. In the end, she is rescued by Eros, who asks Zeus to allow Psyche into the pantheon of gods and demi-gods so that their love is no longer forbidden and to appease the anger of Aphrodite. When Psyche is elevated to Mount Olympus, she and Eros live happily ever after. This story is considered to be one of the first and few fairytale like stories from Greek myth, but it has an interesting moral that can be argued from the story. As Petra ten-Doesschate Chu explains in her book *Nineteenth-century European Art*, to use the story of Psyche and Eros seems like a lovely love story in keeping with the flirtatious expectations of the Rococo. Yet, this particular love story may have also been seen as a story about questioning authority and rebelling against the absolute rule (as the nobles had just been released from Versailles by the death of King Louis the XIV) and bending the will of the ruler to that of the ruled. Just as the moral of the story of Psyche and Eros is deeply hidden and really only a small factor in the overall message of the story so the questioning of authority was only a glimmer of a growing idea in the minds of the French people at this time.

Even the smallest of glimmering flames can be fanned into a raging fire, though. Fed up with the self-indulgent and self-congratulating celebration of the bourgeoisie, the seeds of the Enlightenment were planted.

The Enlightenment

The fact that one section ended and another began in this resource would make it seem like the Rococo era ended and was succeeded dramatically by the Age of Reason, but in reality the Rococo and the Enlightenment sort of melded one into the other. In the fancy, rich interiors of Rococo extravagance there were dinner parties with witty, rich, and intelligent people having conversations and questioning authority. As these conversations grew more strident and the thoughts become more clearly formed people like the philosophers of the eighteenth century – Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert – came to believe that reason, logic, and duty were the only things that would save humanity from its own decadence.

Madame de Pompadour



Maurice Quentin de La Tour, *Madame de Pompadour*, pastel, 1755 (Louvre)

This portrait of Madame de Pompadour – the king’s leading mistress – shows her with books, papers, and music – a nod to her intelligence, ‘good taste’ and patronly generosity. Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Marquise of Pompadour – aka Madame de Pompadour – used her position in the royal court to shrewdly wield her influence for the arts and other intellectual endeavours. Maurice Quentin de La Tour’s portrait of Madame de Pompadour surrounded by

books, including a copy of *Encyclopédie*, was an acknowledgement of her role in the intellectual undertaking of the first ‘Encyclopédie’, or what we now refer to, in English, as an Encyclopedia. It was to be a compendium of illustrated knowledge that encompassed everything known to the intellectuals at the time – from horse tack to liturgical seasons. Madame de Pompadour became its protector as rival intellectuals from the French Academy and high ranking members of the Catholic Church, including Archbishop of Paris Christophe de Beaumont and Pope Clement XIII, were quite against the undertaking as some of the articles in it were quite provoking.¹

1. Évelyne Lever, *Madame de Pompadour: A Life*, translated by Catherine Temerson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 176.

Due to Madame de Pompadour's diplomatic interventions the *Encyclopédie* was completed and published (although it was placed on the list of banned books by Pope Clement).

Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Marquise of Pompadour is an excellent example of the dual existence of Rococo excess and Enlightenment intellect. Madame de Pompadour was the official mistress to the king – a role she received by calculated and direct flirtation with him. She attended salons where food, talk, music, and wit flowed. She hosted grand parties and redecorated her many dwellings frequently and opulently. She held even greater power in the king's court once she received the



Love at Peace in the Reign of Justice; engraved print by Madame de Pompadour of a drawing by Boucher, after an engraved gemstone by Guay c. 1755

title of lady-in-waiting to the Queen of France. She lavished money and favours on those she deemed worthy; she removed those that disappointed her from their positions. Her influence was felt especially in the arts and other realms of intellectual pursuit. She was an also an artist after a fashion, although some debate whether her work was really her own, or a collaboration with the artists she championed.² She learned how to engrave gemstones from the king's own engraver, Jacques Guay and learned printmaking from François Boucher, a member of the French Royal Academy of

2. Melissa Hyde, "The "Makeup" of the Marquise: Boucher's Portrait of Pompadour at Her Toilette," *The Art Bulletin*, 82 no. 3 (2000): 453–475. doi:10.2307/3051397.

Painting and Sculpture.³ Boucher created a series of drawings of pieces by Guay that Madame de Pompadour engraved and printed.

The Academy, the Salon, and the Critic in audio:



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The Academy, the Salon, & the Critic



Gabriel-Jacques de Saint-Aubin, *Vue du Salon de 1765*, 1765, watercolour, pen and black and grey ink, graphite pencil on paper, (Louvre)

3. Fletcher William Younger, *Bookbinding in England and France*, (Moscow: Рипол Классик, 1897), 70.; Jean Adhemar, *Graphic Art of the 18th Century*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 43, 106, 108, 113.

This is an artist's rendering of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture's Salon of 1765 – exhibitions like this were extremely important to the art world. The public came in crowds to see the new art and artists' careers were dependent on being accepted into the Salon shows. However, this also had a stifling effect on creativity as the Salon juries and the Academy controlled what kind of art and subject were accepted. If a style or subject was not popular with the Academy it would either be denied entry to the Salon, or it would be hung in a place where it would be easily overlooked. The term 'Salon hang' comes from the way art was arranged at these shows; because the shows were popular, art was hung side-by-side and next to each other, nearly floor to ceiling. The spaces not taken up by paintings of all sizes were filled with sculptures, and by contemporary standards the final product was a very cluttered and overwhelming display space where things could be easily missed by a viewer enveloped in a crowd.

The Academy controlled what art was accepted and where art pieces were hung – if the artist was a watercolour artist (watercolour was considered inferior and not good enough for finished works of art or was left to hobbyists and female artists) who managed to get into the Salon with a smaller sized piece of work, the work was likely to be 'skied' or hung up at the top where the huge historical genre paintings were hung – so no one saw it anyway. Ironically, much of the documentation of the Academy Salons was in the form of watercolour works, like this piece by Gabriel-Jacques de Saint-Aubin.

Eventually, the Academy Salon shows gave rise to the creation of the art critic. Completely accepted as a form of journalism, art critique was common in the journals, pamphlets, and newspapers from the mid-18th-century on. Almost immediately, art critics began to lament the state of art being created (some things never do change). These critics condemned the decadence and sensual self-indulgence that was evident in the artwork. Of course, the artists hated the critics for daring to critique their work. Artists at that point were not used to be criticized because until the emergence

of the art critic the fact that their art had been chosen to be showcased in an Academy exhibition proved that their art was part of unquestionable and unchallenged strata of creative work. To question the value, message, or technique of the art in the Academy exhibition was like critiquing the Academy! The Academy was formed by the king and run by aristocratic members of society, therefore questioning the art they approved was like questioning the king himself (in the minds of those who managed the Academy and its artists). Artists who had had the fortune of being sheltered within the Academy shows had only had to deal with critique and dramatic snobbery from within the cultural structure of the Academy itself. The outside judgement of the critic-in-the-press was an unwelcome source of insubordinate antagonism. Thus began a long and complicated relationship between the established, main stream controller of art (the Academy), the artist, and the critic.

One particularly hated critic was Étienne La Font de Saint-Yenne. He was aghast at the level of decay and self-appreciation in the fine art and wrote works that called artists to abandon the frivolous, erotic themes of the Rococo art market and pursue themes of nobility and calm grandeur. He challenged artists to put away their sensuous colours, self-congratulating virtuoso brush work, and arousing asymmetrical compositions, and to find inspiration in Classical Greek and Roman art. La Font de Saint-Yenne felt that it was the right and duty of all intellectuals to challenge decadence when they saw it and he was not popular with the artists that he wrote about. Because the relationship between art critic and artist was very new at this time, many artists felt that a writer had no right to critique or judge visual arts in anyway. Judging the artist that had been accepted into an Academy Salon was akin to criticizing the Royal Academy – one of the king’s appointed power-brokers of cultural influence – and the French art world found the change to be a difficult adjustment.

Values of the Enlightenment



Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Ffilial Piety (The Paralytic)*, 1763, oil on canvas, (The Hermitage, St. Petersburg)

Denis Diderot, a philosopher and one of the editors of the *Encyclopédie*, took up the cry for artists to embrace noble, edifying, and intellectual sentiment based themes as well. Diderot admired works like Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Ffilial Piety*, for its reality and honour and sense of duty. Diderot praised Greuze's work for showing non-upper class

people living real, flawed lives with a noble sense of endurance. In this piece, the patriarch of the family commands attention and reverence from all, including the family pet, even from his sick bed and all members of the family respect and care for him. This is an image that is neither dramatic, nor sensual. It showcases and celebrates the calm dignity and noble service of respectful and dutiful family.

Which isn't to say that Greuze didn't have his own collection of nearly pornographic Rococo paintings and portraits, but by this time his work was frequently championing the same things that Diderot's writing valued – virtuous examples and genuine sentiment mixed into contemporary realities.

The philosophers of the Enlightenment devised a social antidote to the ills of the Rococo. They felt moral reform and a return to the what they perceived were the values of the ancient Greeks and Romans were the only hope. The main values of the Enlightenment can be generalized as follows:

- nobility (noble action and attitude, not noble birth)
- calm grandeur

- edification (the instruction or improvement of a person morally or intellectually)
- virtuous character
- genuine sentiment
- intellectual development
- reality
- honour
- duty

However, the aristocracy, who so liked their naughty pictures were also buying these noble paintings and supporting this change in the arts. It is clear that Rococo sensibilities weren't killed off suddenly as Enlightened ideals took over. Instead, the fashions simply co-existed with one another until one became more popular and sparked an initiative for drastic change.

And so the Enlightenment gradually came to be.

The Classical Paradigm in audio:



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The Classical Paradigm

The art that is often seen as the epitome of the philosophies of the Enlightenment actually owes just as much to the ideas of the Classical Paradigm.

Art in the mid-1700s, as seen in the Rococo style, was suffering from a case of death-by-excess, or decadence. It was fluffy and

frilly and self-serving and some people felt that it was showing how society at the time was the same. The Enlightenment called for noble, edifying art that could repair the moral fabric of the nation. But this also meant looking for new role-models in art aesthetics. Looking to Baroque and Rococo artists for a guide would only lead to more cotton candy lack-of-substance, looking to Michelangelo or the Renaissance artists would not lead to purity of intention or virtuousness since they also came from a flawed time and the great artists of the Renaissance received their inspiration from the Greeks. Scholars began to argue that the pinnacle of western society was age of the Greeks and thus the art of the 1700s should look to Homer, Plato and the Greek artists for pure and culturally untainted inspiration.

The literary work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann – *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, 1756 – called to imitate what was thought as a nobler, healthier and more fulfilling time. Winckelmann was one of the leading scholars at the time arguing this was the right way to look at reviving morality in culture.

This new kind of Classicism (Neo-Classicism) was more than just looking back to Grecian ideals. It was about finding ideals, purified of every imperfection – which while the Greeks also looked for what they called the ‘ideal’, was a different kind of ideal. When ancient the ancient Greeks looked to create an ideal form they were were looking to return to the ideal generic thing that was created at the beginning of the world; understanding that the first tree, animals, and humans created were the perfect and ideal specimen of each thing as considered ideal for their role by the gods. Therefore, if an ancient Greek artist found they had re-created perfection they



Copy of Polykleitos' *Doryphoros* (Spear Bearer), marble, original made 120-50 BCE

could simply keep copying that as a form because there would never be a better version. In Grecian times, Polykleitos' *Spear Bearer*, was considered perfectly ideal or ‘canon,’ and was therefore a rule of form that all others should follow. However, an artist couldn't just create a single perfect figure and use it in all situations. Each ideal was home to its own ideals and narrative. For example, Polykleitos' figure would have been a perfect athlete, a perfect young male (but not youth), and a perfect warrior, but the figure could never have been used to relay ideas of wisdom, age, or femininity. For those ideals a different ideal form was required. To the French in the 1700s the idea of ‘ideal’ didn't have the same connotations of being related to the divine original copy of creation. It was more closely related to

our contemporary understanding of ideal – something that is perfect, and un-improvable. However, the French scholars did feel that a Greek ideal would be closest to a cultural ideal of intelligence, strong character, and civic duty.

Pompeii and Herculaneum were re-discovered around 1599, while the first archaeological excavations began in 1764. Winckelmann was one of the scholars heavily influenced by this discovery, and he, as most other scholars, was sorely disappointed when he realized that the murals they found at Pompeii and Herculaneum did not live up to the preconceived ideas of what Greco-Roman art must have been. At Pompeii and Herculaneum the art varied from technically perfect to crudely rendered with subject matter that ran from the benign to the scandalous. Much of what was found there did not reflect a society that was perfect, healthy, and untainted by the vagaries of moral decay. In reaction to this discovery, Winckelmann hypothesized a developmental model for societies that has been applied to Greek and Roman art and culture ever since. His theory was that art in Greece and Rome must have had a life-cycle like that of a living creature; a birth, flourishing, prime, decay, and death arch. He explained, based on this theory, that the Classical Greek period was the high point. It had a primitive kind of learning period at the start of its life that flourished and grew into a high middle point that eventually decayed and grew stagnant and self-indulgent with the Roman period that built on the weakened ruins of the previous society.



This model continues to be the ‘canon’ of art history as it continues to be taught into the 21st century. Written in 1764, *The History of Ancient Art* put forward that idea and it has stuck to this day. It is challenging, though not impossible, to find any scholarly theories of the evolution of Greek and Roman art and culture that is not based on the model of a rudimentary beginning, perfected middle and over-indulgent end. However, this is an area that may require intense scrutiny as contemporary scholars have realized that how the art of the Greeks and Romans were viewed in the 1700s is not a representation of how the Greeks and Romans viewed their own cultural output.



Polychrome recreation the goddess Athena from the west pediment of the temple of Athena Aphaia in Aegina. Original created approx. 490 BC



Original sculpture of Athena as found with the polychrome weathered away

When Winckelmann and his associates saw the marbles of the ancient Greeks and Romans, they saw them in their weathered and unpreserved states; weathered down to their raw marble foundations. The scholars of the 1700s accepted these sculptures as pieces that would have been presented in their raw white form because they were familiar with sculptures from the Renaissance, which were revered for their pristine white marble surfaces.

The sculptors of the Renaissance had also been influenced by the white Greek and Roman sculptures they had seen. The reality was that a white marble sculpture was simply a myth told by the harsh realities of time. Originally, ancient Greek sculptures were painted in bright colours and presented with an aesthetic that would have made the Neo-Classicalists (and continues to make some present day people) quite uncomfortable.

This makes it clear that the foundations of Neo-Classicism were built on misinformed judgments regarding ancient cultures. However, the philosophers and scholars of 1700 France felt that change was needed in their society and so they looked back to a culture they believed to be better than their own. This combination of looking back to the ‘ideal’ era to find the ‘ideal’ way of communicating more edifying ideals and noble character gave birth to what we know as Neo-Classicism. However, the most famous works of art of the New Classical Era or Neo-Classical are also shown as examples of the Enlightenment because they really were doing double duty. Yet, this doesn’t mean that every painting of the Enlightenment was a Neo-Classicist work. Neo-Classical works were only ones that showed Greco-Roman themes and stories as a way of relaying a narrative of Enlightenment values, while Enlightenment works showed the values of the Enlightenment through a many narrative and aesthetic means.

Neo-Classicism in audio:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=5#audio-5-5>

Neo-Classicism

Jacques-Louis David was one of the first, and now most famous, artists to combine the classical ideal of Neo-Classicism with the high ideals of the Enlightenment. Works like *Oath of the Horatii* show duty being chosen over emotion and nobility of character triumphing over self-fulfillment.



Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii*, oil on canvas, 1784-85 (Louvre)

This painting showcases the moment when the sons of the Horatii family pledge honour and allegiance before engaging in a bloody battle. In the story of the Horatii of Rome versus the Curaitii of Alba there are much more dramatic and exciting moments than is shown here, but David chose to depict this moment of calm logic and sense of civic duty triumphing over emotion and self-preservation. The short version of story goes like this:

It is a story set in early Roman history. There is a border dispute between Alba and Rome. Rather than having a war with great cost to both sides, this dispute was solved by a duel between three men from Alba and three men from Rome – the finest swordsmen of each city-state. The three brothers from the Roman Horatii family were selected to fight the three brothers from the Alban Curiatii family. However, Sabina (the woman in blue and gold in the painting) – a Curiatii sister – was married to one of the Horatii brothers, while Camilla (the woman in white) – a Horatii sister – was engaged to one of the Curiatii boys. Either way this story was never going to have a happy ending for the women. In David's painting the men with their strong silhouetting against the darkness of the background, their straight lines, and flexed muscles show the strength of resolve and the calm grandeur of noble sacrifice. However, the women, depicted in curving shapes, crumpled in grief, and trying to shield the children from the reality of death are shown as the character foil of the weakness of emotion, self-service, and inability to sacrifice

for the reality of the circumstances.

(To finish the story: The Romans won the duel but only one Horatii brother came back. Camilla cursed her brother for the death of her fiancé and he flew into a rage and killed her. The end.)



Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates*, oil on canvas, 1787
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Jacques-Louis David's *The Death of Socrates* is often talked about as a prophesy of the coming French Revolution. One where Socrates is dying for an ideal of society that was perceived of as a threat by those in authority and this image is an allegory of those sacrifices coming in just 2

years. However, that isn't how it would have been seen at the time and David could never have predicted where his country would have gone over the course of the decade. Here Socrates, calmly the embodiment of the eternal soul, is reminding his followers of the immortality of the soul while his followers embody the physical side of death with their fear. David chose to recreate this scene by departing from the historical record of this event and creating a scene that fit his ideals more closely. Despite that, this piece, along with the *Oath of the Horatii*, is considered part of the quintessential Neo-Classical genre.

Self-Reflection Questions

Consider the following questions:

- Do you think the contemporary world that we live in now is experiencing something like France during the Rococo/Enlightenment transition?
- Or do you feel there is no correlation between the societal attitudes in the 1700s in France and the societal attitudes of today?
- Do you think that the proliferation of 'First World Problem Memes' and 'Back In The Day' stories is a sign of a kind of rebellion against a Rococo-esque self indulgence in our society?
- Or do you find that the society we live in is not relatable to the ideas of the 1700s?
- No matter which opinion you have, how would you debate your position with someone who disagreed?



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2. Chapter 2 - French Revolution through to the End of Napoleon

France

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By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Identify art of the French Revolution by Jacques Louis David and Pierre Paul Prud'hon
- Recognize Prud'hon's and David's Napoleon era work and compare it to their Enlightenment era and Revolution era pieces
- List the main chronological events that took place to cause the Revolution and the important developments during the Revolution
- Recount basic high fashion changes in French court fashion from the Rococo through to the Revolution
- Explain the events that allowed Napoleon to take over the Empire
- Identify Directoire Style and Napoleon's Empire Style

Opening of chapter in audio:



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What is it that Chip says at the end of Disney’s animated *Beauty and the Beast*?

“Are they gonna live happily ever after, Momma?”

And we have to ask, do they?

We have to ask, because the traditional story of *Beauty and the Beast* is usually set somewhere in the mid to late 1700s, in Rococo France. Which, as a side note, means that Belle’s iconic, deeply shoulder-less, canary yellow ball gown in the animated feature just might be a bit anachronistic considering how fashionable wide side cage panniers on skirts were and how impossible it was to create such bright and clear yellow fabric in that era. Side panniers were cages worn under the clothing and attached to the body of the woman on a belt at the waist and were used to create a wider-than-she-is-flat



François-Hubert Drouais, Portrait of Princess Louise Marie of France, oil on canvas, 1737-1787 (Palace of Versailles, France)

silhouette. Bright, clear colour only became possible with the invention of synthetic fabric dyes later in the 1800 and even 1900s. This painting of Princess Louise Marie by François-Hubert Drouais may be a closer approximation of what Belle's dress would have looked like, complete with side panniers. The setting of Princess Louise Marie's portrait is fitting of Belle though – it's a library. Belle's animated dress departs from fashion norms of its time in many ways, but one of the most startling, beyond the bell-shaped silhouette more fitting of styles to come one hundred years later in Victorian England, is the neckline. Plunging necklines, like the one on Princess Louise Marie's dress, were very common, but combining a low front with a very off the shoulder neckline and a barely there slip of sleeve would have been bordering on unacceptably scandalous in Rococo France. While the lowest of fronts was only for the most adventurous dresser, and a smidge of shoulder showing was quite flirtatious, to show the full shoulder and arm would have been beyond acceptable standards for even the most rule-flouting of women. Even though Rococo fashion was adaptable to an individual's personal tastes in many ways, the majority of dresses had a just-past-the-elbow sleeve and the upper arm was rarely bared. While Belle wears long gloves in the animated feature to counteract the amount of skin shown by her bare shoulders and arms, gloves were not common (although they did make an occasional appearance) in Rococo France and wouldn't have distracted from her alarmingly unclothed appearance. With this in mind, if you're wondering, after looking at Princess Louise Marie's dress, how a woman's, ahem, *chest* stayed in her clothing when the bodice was cut so low and was only bordered by lace, well the answer is that it usually didn't. French fashion of the period was greatly varied, but extremely low-cut bodices were frequent and the *accidental* (but inevitable) wardrobe malfunction was often simply part of the price of high fashion and was not considered as utterly reputation ruining as a fully bare arm and shoulder.

But returning to Chip's question regarding Belle's future happiness; approximately five to twenty years after the close of

the movie, some things in France begin to change. Changes began to creep in, even in a provincial town that used to be “a quiet village, every day, like the one before.”¹ While Belle’s ideologies and values align fairly well with the beliefs of the philosopher’s of the Enlightenment and she would have definitely supported them, she had the misfortune of marrying into the aristocracy. In the events that followed that last happy closing scene of *Beauty and the Beast*, being part of the aristocracy was bad for ones health. Perhaps even worse? Chip himself would have grown up and either have been called up or joined voluntarily to fight as a soldier or he would have been exiled back to England, as he and his mother were obviously British.

What is the event that would have so disrupted the lives of Belle and her prince?

The French Revolution

The French Revolution is a complicated series of events and it can be easy to become bogged down in the details of what happened first and then what happened next while not forgetting what came in the between time. For art history the French Revolution is a dramatic and devastating series of events. Essentially, it ran from 1789 to 1795 although some say it went right up to 1815, while others say it went to 1799. The date range of the Revolution depends on where you decide the Revolution ends, as everyone agrees on the date that it started. Some sources will say it ended with Napoleon’s first exile, for others it ended with the rise of the Bourbon Monarchy, others posit it ended with the final exile of Napoleon

1. Howard Ashman, *Belle* (Los Angeles: Walt Disney Studios, 1991).

and the final democracy. Art history tends to label the end of the Revolution with the rise of Napoleon as he ushered in his own changes to the art and culture of France. This isn't to say that French politics were completely stabilized by the rise of an emperor, but rather that the revolutionary aspect of the period gave way to a new approach and the art and material culture of the time reflects that.

The French Revolution irrevocably changed the face of French culture. As an agent of cultural change, the Revolution tends to often be talked about in bright and celebratory terms. However, to uncritically celebrate the French Revolution means to ignore the incredible violence and loss of life the Revolution brought to France.

In some ways the French Revolution brought about some good things. Slavery, long abolished in main-land France, was, in 1794, declared illegal in the French colonies.² In 1791 the new radical government opened the Salon to all artists, including women, regardless of political affiliation.³ The Revolution also gave birth to the public art museum, in 1793, when revolutionary forces sought to democratize access to art and the cultural power it holds by removing the monarchy from the Louvre and opening the government's art holdings to the public.⁴

Regardless of the good changes wrought by the French Revolution and the good intentions of the revolutionaries in the early days of the upheavals, things very quickly turned into brutal violence, deaths, and fighting between factions in the revolutionary forces.

2. Dr. Susan Waller, "Marie-Guillemine Benoist, Portrait of Madeleine," *Smarthistory*, September 26, 2018
<https://smarthistory.org/benoist-portrait/>.
3. Waller, "Marie-Guillemine Benoist."
4. Dr. Elizabeth Rodini, "2. Museums and politics: the Louvre, Paris," *Smarthistory*, June 1, 2019,
<https://smarthistory.org/museums-politic-louvre/>.



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Unrest in France was long growing, but things were brought to a point by the end of the American Revolution. The French had watched the American Revolution with interest, wondering if it was possible for the ideas of the Enlightenment to create the spark necessary to dislodge the weight of a ruling power. When the colonists defeated their British rulers, the French found encouragement that perhaps they too could shrug off the weight of their rulers, at least in part. What began as bureaucratic changes related to budgetary concerns earlier in 1789, then became full on rebellion against the monarchy when the Estates General (an assembly representing all three levels of society – the First Estate representing the clergy, the Second Estate representing the nobility, and the Third Estate representing the common class), led by the Third Estate, due to their large size, declared themselves a

National Assembly. Later in the same month, the National Assembly wrote the first of many constitutions that created a new government with the monarchy as a figurehead, instead of an absolute ruler.



Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Tennis Court, preparatory drawing on paper, 1791*

Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Tennis Court* represents the moment, on June 20, 1789 that the National Assembly found themselves locked out of the chambers they had been using, and they subsequently gathered at a nearby tennis court fearing that they would be attacked by the king's

troops. Once gathered, they collectively swore to not leave the place until they had established a constitution. David's drawing shows all three Estates – the clergy, the nobility, and the common class – agreeing together in the middle of this image. Within the same year the abolition of feudalism and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen would be written. The oath of the tennis court was an important moment as it was the first time the French people had significantly stood in opposition of the king.

However, as the monarchy resisted change the king ordered the military to move into the city of Paris. The king wanted the military close in the event that there was a political uprising (more than what had already happened in the previous month) but the city of Paris was in the middle of food shortages due to an agricultural



Jean-Pierre Houël, *The Storming of the Bastille, watercolour, 1789*

crisis gripping the nation. As soldiers and Parisians began to aggravate each other unrest grew until July 14, 1789. On that day the

people of Paris stormed the Bastille – the medieval fortress that housed political prisoners and an arsenal for the military. While the Bastille was not an important or much used prison, it was seen as a symbol of the absolute authority of the monarchy and the wasteful spending habits of the government. The storming of the Bastille is usually seen as the moment that the violence of the Revolution began.



Not surprisingly the king refused to ratify the constitution that removed him from authority and in the same month an angry mob descended on the palace and imprisoned the Royal Family. By February of the next year the Catholic Church was told to remove all of its personnel from French soil and forfeit their land and assets in France to the new revolutionary government or risk the death of their clergy. Later the revolutionary government passed their first constitution, but it was a hotly debated topic and over the course of the winter relations sour between the factions in the revolutionary groups and the Revolutionary Wars begin in the Spring of 1792. The three major factions of the revolutionary forces by this time were the Jacobins, the Montagnards (or the Mountain), and the Girondins. Of the three sects, the Girondins were the most moderate and the Montagnards the most radical. In a general sense, the Montagnards agreed more often with the Jacobins – who were also quite radical, and least often with the the Girondins – who were considered moderate (for revolutionaries). However, not all Jacobins agreed

with the Mountain's approach to things and not all Jacobins were Montagnards (although many Montagnards had at one point politically identified as Jacobins). While this may sound like a Dr. Seuss riddle from our nightmares, understanding the surface of this political landscape is necessary to be able to read the art that comes from this time period, especially the pieces created by a Jacobin-Montagnard artist we've touched on before – Jacques-Louis David.



As the year 1792 turned into 1793, the Girondins began to lose their footing in the revolutionary government and were outvoted in the matter of what to do with the royal family. The Montagnard call for the execution of the king came to pass at the beginning of 1793 and by the summer of that year Maximilien Robespierre, now a firm leader of the Montagnards, took control of what was essentially the functioning government of France by this point – the Committee of Public Safety. By Fall of 1793 Robespierre and government started to resort to terror, harsh sentences, and frequent executions to squelch any dissent. Death was the sentence for anyone of a different opinion to the Committee of Public Safety, anyone of suspiciously aristocratic birth, or for failing to lead a military win in a battle those not on the front thought should have been winnable. The Reign of Terror would swallow up 17,000 souls on the guillotine, including that of the former Queen of France, Marie Antoinette.



With the people sick of the bloodshed and tired of living in fear of a new and violent tyrant, Robespierre was arrested and convicted, and executed on the guillotine he had sentenced so many to die on. In the aftermath of the Reign of Terror a new constitution is adopted and a new governing body, called the Directory, was established. After years of little stability and an abundance of weak governing, the Directory in turn, was dissolved (because it was unable to do its job due to petty arguments, in-fighting, and disagreements within its own ranks). Seeing the weakness of the Directory as an opportunity, Napoleon returned from military campaigns in Egypt and rose to power. With the rise of Napoleon, France entered a new era no less tumultuous and interesting – the era of France as an Empire.

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Jacques-Louis David –

Revolutionary Artist

Jacques-Louis David was a well established artist in France by the beginning of the Revolution. He was a popular and respected Neo-Classical and his art was felt to show the important aspects of the Enlightenment. In his personal life David was a highly politically active figure and his values aligned with those who called for the absolute destruction of the nobility, the monarchy, and the king. He was part of the council that had direct vote over what happened to the king and his family, including the decision to behead the king. He was a member of the Committee for Public Instruction (Propaganda) and eventually became head of the Interrogation Division. Interrogation (a term used loosely to describe interviewing people while sometimes subjecting them to pain) was used for those who either had information or were thought to have information and had been brought up on charges against the government. A Jacobin and Montagnard, Jacques-Louis David had friends in high places and influence far beyond the reaches of the art world.



Jacques-Louis David, *Death of Marat*, oil on canvas, 1793

Jean-Paul Marat was a personal friend of David and a rabid writer for the Montagnards. Before the Revolution Marat was a theorist, philosopher, and scientist but once the Revolution took hold of France he became more active as a politician and journalist. However, by the time the Reign of Terror began Marat had begun to be less active in the government due, in part, to his skin condition and also in part due to the fact that his

vehement support of the Montagnards was not as necessary to their political aspirations after the removal of the Girondins from the government. Working from home in a medicinal bath for his worsening skin, Marat's lessening influence in the government did not lessen his writing volume.

Jacques-Louis David, while rising in the new government, maintained his friendship with Marat; in fact, he had visited Marat the day before Marat's death. In the painting, *Death of Marat*, David created a tribute to his friend that doubled as an artistic propaganda piece for the Montagnards. Marat is depicted in a pose familiar to the Roman Catholic-raised French and the meaning of that pose would not have been lost on French viewers. The scene? The Pietà. A uniquely Catholic scene, it showed the twisted and peaceful body of the crucified Christ as depicted after being removed from the cross; whose peaceful face, shows that Christ had accepted death as a necessary element for the salvation of others and therefore did not fight or resist that death. David had also place Marat in a deep contemplative space surrounded only by the darkness of the space and bathed in the warm light of noble sacrifice. The writing on Marat's box-desk at the bottom of the painting means 'To Marat - David' and with this tribute to the Montagnard's death David elevated Marat to the position of a secular martyr for the revolutionary cause.

Charlotte Corday was a Girondin whose family blamed Marat for the September Massacre. She convinced Marat to meet with her with the letter depicted in Marat's hand, that said according to David (roughly) "I am unhappy and therefore have a right to your help." She claimed to have information regarding a conspiracy and was offering that information to Marat along with the names of important Girondins. However, her true motive was she had planned to kill him. Eager to hear her information, Marat invited her into his room where he was soaking. After some conversation, Corday stabbed Marat once in the chest with a knife she had hidden in her dress. Once she had done what she had come to do, she did not flee the scene of the murder, but waited to be arrested. Within four days

she was tried and executed. Corday had murdered Marat in hope of weakening the Montagnards and bringing an end to the Reign of Terror but the death of Marat became a pivotal propaganda and rallying point for the group as they gained momentum.

However, times change and when the threat of terror and death is no longer there people's opinions sway. Someone considered a champion and non-religious martyr for a cause after a time can be seen as a beast and problem-causer. Consider this painting of the same event by Paul-Jacques-Aimé Baudry. Painted in the mid-1800s, by this time Marat was seen as a blood-thirsty monster whose writing incited violence. Titled *Charlotte Corday*, it



Paul-Jacques-Aimé Baudry, Charlotte Corday, oil on canvas, 1860

focuses on Corday, and reduces Marat to a monstrous figure who, in the end, fell short of the stoic ideals of the Enlightenment. In Beaudry's painting Marat's figure is twisted, not into a peaceful Pietà scene reminiscent of sculptures of the death of Christ, like David's piece, but instead twisted as one who fought death and resisted it. He did not peacefully and nobly accept his fate and calling, but tried to get away, knocking his writing table into his bath and the chair over in his futile attempt. In Baudry's painting the knife remains in Marat's chest as evidence of his violent death. In David's it has slipped quietly to the floor, more an artifact of a great man's passing than an implement of death. Here Marat's face has formed a mask of fear and pain; in David's it is quiet and glows with divine light. In David's painting, Marat's apartment has been transformed into a dark and contemplative space but Baudry depicts Marat's apartment

much like it probably would have been – a lived in space with the accoutrements of a life lived within its walls.

In David's painting the role of Charlotte Corday has been completely ignored. Her existence has been erased except for the consequences of her actions. The subject of David's story is Marat and the cause both he and David had fought so hard for. In Baudry's painting the focus and hero is Corday herself. Here it is the killer, not the killed, that exhibits the calm and noble sense of spirit. Her face relays resolve as she waits to be arrested, while her hands twist in turmoil over the violence of her act and the judgement she knows will come. She is a representation of duty; she is one who has done what they knew had to be done and who is willing to deal with the consequences of those actions. In the course of just over sixty-five years the story of Marat had shifted to being the story of Corday, a hero of her cause.

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Traditionally, art history texts don't mention Baudry's painting or Charlotte Corday, instead they spend the time heroizing Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Paul Marat, and the French Revolution as a whole. Jacques-Louis David was a gifted artist and his ability to take a scene and elevate it to quietly sublime propaganda is not to be undermined. However, does the beautiful and skilful production of objects alleviate a historical figure from their role in violence and harm? As an artist, David is unparalleled during his time. As a human-being, David may leave a lot to be desired. David's reputation as a skilled artist has largely overshadowed his involvement in the

more bloody parts of the French Revolution and history has been remarkably kind to David's memory and his artistic endeavours before, during, and after the Revolution. However, not everyone has the privilege of having their shortcomings forgotten in the light of their accomplishments...

Marie Antoinette

If you are asked to think about Marie Antoinette, what would come to mind?

A sexy Marie Antoinette Halloween costume? Images of cake? Scandalous liaisons, infidelity, and lavish parties? Powdered wigs and French debt? A bored and spoiled princess out of touch with life beyond her palace walls?

In the 2004 film *Mean Girls* the titular girls of the movie have a book in which they write down rumours and facts about the people they dislike. They call it the "Burn Book" and it contains all the socially questionable decisions, snipe, and gossip of an entire microcosm as seen through the eyes of North Shore High School's most powerful queen bees. It could be hoped that the concept of writing down inflammatory things and creating reputations for people that simply were not true or were just one representation of a single event is something that only shows up in the fiction-based entertainment of the early 2000s, but that would be wishful thinking.

For most of us, Marie Antoinette lives in our popular collective understanding as caricature of grotesque and taboo traits, rather than as a human being that existed in the same world in which we live. Much of what we popularly believe we know is based on rumours that were never true but were perpetuated by a 1700s version of a burn book – actual books and cheap sensationalized newspapers (what we would call tabloids today). Marie Antoinette,

like Jacques-Louis David, was a multi-dimensional and complicated human being. Her story is one that has been told and retold, but much of what is told about her is a repeating of her flaws (unlike the kindness history has shown David's flaws) and the retelling of the lies that were spread during her life. Her life was the result of a cataclysmic combination of bigotry, rules of tradition, narrow-mindedness, and spiteful back biting.

At 12 years old, Marie Antoinette was a princess in the court of the Austrian royal family. She had been born and raised in Austria and as she entered adulthood she was the only female left in her family eligible to be married to the French male monarch. Her sisters had either been handicapped by smallpox or had died from it in their childhoods. However, there was a problem with her that the French could not ignore.

Her teeth were not nice enough according to French court customs. This could be fixed, the French said, if her family was willing to have her undergo oral surgery. The Austrian royal family consented and young Marie (then named Maria Antonia) had her mouth changed to fit French aesthetic customs over the course of three months without anaesthetic or antibiotics. When she was considered to have a nice enough mouth, she was betrothed to her second cousin, a person she had never met – the teen-aged Louis Auguste future king of France who had been trained since birth to never trust an Austrian.



Joseph Ducreux, Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria, the later Queen Marie Antoinette of France, pastel on parchment, 1769

When she was thirteen or fourteen this portrait was made of her, to be sent to Louis Auguste so he would know what his future bride looked like. At fifteen she was married-by-proxy to the future king of France. Marriage-by-proxy means that the ceremony was performed without the groom present except by a proxy who could legally give the prince's consent to the marriage. She travelled to France, where she was relieved of all her belongings, her name was changed from Maria Antonia to Marie Antoinette, and she

entered a royal court that was far more formal than her own and deeply suspicious of anyone from Austria.

Over the course of the next four years, Marie Antoinette's life was much different than she had experienced in Austria. She had been raised quite simply (for a monarch's child) in Austria. Austrian royal children were encouraged to play with commoners and were not forced to live by the strict rules and rites that the French monarchy had instituted as a tradition for its own children. Now in France and grappling with the rules and traditions of the French court, her new life was plagued with problems ranging from political issues (with intense scrutiny from her French peers if she involved herself in political life while also receiving disparaging letters from her mother for not being influential enough in political things), to her husband's lack of interest in her as a wife, as well as interpersonal clashes with people such as her father-in-law's mistress.

At age nineteen, Marie Antoinette's father-in-law, King Louis XV of France died. Louis Auguste was crowned king and became King Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette was made the queen of France. With the king's approval Marie Antoinette began to make changes to court life. The queen of France had responsibilities in the court and these frequently revolved around fashion and court rituals. Inspired by her own simpler upbringing, as queen she began to strip away away some of the more antiquated court rules & to tone down the



Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Archduchess Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, oil on canvas, 1778-79

excessiveness of court fashion. It was part of her job as queen to spend lots of money on her looks (she was expected to always look better than the rest of court, even while the court emulated her in every way) and to host lavish and expensive parties. Her unhappiness coupled with the king's indecisiveness regarding the handling the nation's finances, made it easy to spend money in her role as queen. Marie Antoinette's spending habits would later be used against her.

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Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, *Marie Antoinette in a Muslin Dress*, oil on canvas, 1783

As she continued to make changes in the French court fashions she eventually added 'mother' to her job title. With that change she made it clear she also meant to raise her own children. This was scandalous as child rearing was not an appropriate activity for French queens. However, the birth of her first child also created more issues in her life as she was already suffering from an undiagnosed malady of the uterus (possibly cancer or some other disease) and the childbirth

nearly killed her. During her convalescence, her hair fell out and her hairdresser was forced to cut her hair and make wigs until it grew back. When it grew back it came in sparsely and was no longer suitable for court hair fashion but this gave her the chance to also tone down another facet of the court. She, by necessity, moved from the large 'pouf' hairstyle seen in Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's portrait of 1778-79 – a style that could add up to three feet to the stature of the wearer and could weight in the range of 20lbs depending on how much wire caging and jewelled elements were added – to the *coiffure à l'enfant* (literally 'baby hairstyle') seen in Vigée-Lebrun's portrait of her from 1783.

Also, notice the dress in the 1783 painting. The huge shift in fashion depicted in this painting made this a big controversy picture in its day. Viewers petitioned for it to be removed from the Salon show it was in and considered it a completely inappropriate representation of a queen. Marie Antoinette had slowly gotten rid of the big panniers and whale-bone trussing for dresses and had implemented a smooth, simple design. Part of this was possible because of the Rococo fascination with shepherdesses and simple

purity and this was partly her Austrian upbringing coming out (not that Austrian royalty had simple fashion as a commoner might view but, it was much simpler than the French customs). So a straw hat, low hair and a 'simple' dress made of cotton were scandalous in an era when everything but nothing was scandalous.

This dress and Marie Antoinette's massive influence changed French fashion forever, but she may have inadvertently changed the entire world with this dress. Some believe that this dress, made of cotton, catapulted the cotton industry into the stratosphere, and through a butterfly effect impacted the entrenchment of slavery in the very recently revolutionized United States of America. For more reading regarding the impact of Marie Antoinette's cotton dress see Carol London's 2018 article at Racked.com: <https://www.racked.com/2018/1/10/16854076/marie-antoinette-dress-slave-trade-chemise-a-la-reine>

Before we move completely away from French fashion to discuss the reverberations of the French Revolution in the life of Marie Antoinette, there is a pressing question that must be answered.

What colour was Marie Antoinette's hair?

Each image of Marie Antoinette in this section gives a different answer. In the 21st century, in an age with photo filters and faded historical photographs, it is easy to dismiss the changes in hair colour and unconsciously



After Jean-Baptiste André Gautier-Dagoty, Portrait of Marie Antoinette, oil, circa 1775

assign her hair a colour. Brown or grey would be the logical choice.

But at fourteen years old, would Marie Antoinette naturally have

such white hair?

Seems unlikely.

In the 1700s, hair was fashionably style with a combination of hair product (a kind of waxy pomade) and powder. The powder stuck to the hair product and these worked double duty – on one front it kept the hair style in place and on the other it allowed for the hair to be coloured if the powder had been mixed with pigment. It was not uncommon in the French court of this time for women to sport pink, purple, grey, or brown hair due to the colour of their hair powder. Marie Antoinette has portraits of her with each of those colours. Obviously, white or grey was the easiest hair colour as that was the colour an untinted powder would produce. However, Marie Antoinette favoured purple throughout her wardrobe and purple hair also graced her ensembles from time to time.

But what was her natural hair colour?

Unfortunately, it was a strawberry blonde. Each hair colour had a purpose in the world of French fashion, except for one.

Red hair.

Historically red hair was the colour of hair for actresses and prostitutes. For a French queen to have red-toned hair? Scandalous! On days that Marie Antoinette was feeling particularly rebellious, she would leave her hair *unpowdered* and in its natural colour simply to scandalize the court. As time progressed it became apparent that no matter what she did, it would always be a source of consternation and offence to her French peers.

Eventually, as the revolution began to heat up, Marie Antoinette was the target of many other scandals. In the daily tabloids she was accused of treason, lesbianism, incest, orgies, funnelling money to Austria, plotting, and many other crimes and misconducts. When the royal treasury went bankrupt due to mismanagement and indecision by the king (and no cutting of expenditures in the palace) she was called ‘Madame Deficit’, as if the queen herself had bankrupt the entire nation.

Soon she realized that there was nothing she could do about her reputation – if she had a baby it was because she had an affair (in

fact, the paternity of all her children was questioned at one time or another) – if she got a visit from family in Austria it was because she was stealing money – if she took part in politics she was running the country – if she didn't take part in politics she wasn't doing her duty. When she bought a property to leave to her children who wouldn't inherit the throne (her younger children) she scandalized the nation – queen's didn't own things, *kings* owned things. So then she tried to re-brand herself as a good mother. This went against her too though, as in France queens did *not* raise their children – it was considered bad taste and the custom was that the state raised royal children. The campaign to show people she was a good mother was suddenly dropped when she went into mourning at the sudden death of her youngest daughter. Around the time of the Oath of the Tennis Court, her oldest son died of tuberculosis. She was devastated and in mourning while the daily tabloids ran rumours that Marie Antoinette was wishing to bathe in the blood of the people. It was clear no one cared that the crowned prince of France had died and later she would be accused of having raped her son to hurry his death.

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Jacques-Louis David, *Widow Capet on the Way to the Guillotine*, ink on paper, 1793

In this pen and ink sketch, Marie Antoinette is depicted by Jacques-Louis David as a hag. During the events of the first few years of the French Revolution she had aged considerably. Separated from her two remaining children, she was accused of many things with the one charge she found most offensive being the charge that she had engaged in incestuous relationships with her oldest, now dead, son in an effort to kill him in his weakened state of advanced tuberculosis. At her trial, she was accused by her youngest

son (who had been removed from her care and placed in the charge of a cobbler for a ‘untainted’ and retraining upbringing as a commoner and had been coached in his story by the Committees of Investigation and Safety led by David and Robespierre) of incest.

Before her trial she suffered many things. She was stripped of her name (again) and was renamed the Widow Capet. Her husband was executed. Her best friend was raped, humiliated, decapitated, quartered and her body parts paraded in the streets. Her hair turned white nearly overnight and had then fallen out (again). Her husband’s sister, and closest family member, was also imprisoned awaiting execution. She suffered from terrible stomach cramps (due to that un-diagnosed illness) that progressively got worse during her imprisonment. Her daughter was sent to Austria as a prisoner. And finally, the former queen of France was trundled around the city on display in an open cart like a prize veal and then executed via the guillotine. After her death, her son was put in prison and left there to die.

Her last recorded words were to her executioner, “I beg your pardon, sir. I didn’t mean to.”

While climbing the stairs in the purple shoes that had carried her from the palace at the beginning of the Revolution to the executioner’s square at the end of her life she had accidentally stepped on his foot.

Even in her last words, Marie Antoinette’s character was questioned. Had she apologized because she truly was a genteel woman who naturally apologized when she tread on someone’s foot or had she meant to manipulate the executioner into ensuring that the guillotine was successful on its first pass, thus saving her from a long and painful death?

Pierre-Paul Prud'hon and Other Post-Revolutionary Developments

Despite the fame of Jacques-Louis David, there *were* other artists in France at the time. Younger than David but just as gifted at creating art of the Revolution was an artist named Pierre-Paul Prud'hon. Prud'hon had been trained outside of Paris. He was an amazing portraitist and this skill stood him in good stead as portraits were always in demand and were a good source of income during a time when there were few patrons for more expensive types of art. Art sales of all kinds had declined as the



Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, Portrait of Constance Mayer, chalk on paper, circa 1804

Revolution raged on as poverty grew, but portraits were a cheaper form of art and were popular as family mementos. Prud'hon's work was largely overlooked for a time as a strong ability to master chiaroscuro was undervalued until the rise of Romanticism in the 1800s. The Neo-Classical tradition of the late 1700s valued strong contour lines but Prud'hon's art focused on rendering the shifting values of light and dark across the figure. However, he was still a sought after artist in his time.



Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, Female Nude, chalk on paper, 1800

In Prud'hon's chalk and charcoal drawing of a female nude it is clear to see how he blends the rules of Neo-Classicism with his own approach to rendering soft values. The contour lines of the elbows, knees, and nose are strong against the background while the soft tonal shifts of the abdomen lend a three-dimensional rendering to this image. By deepening the dark values of the thigh and lower leg of his model he allowed the lighter areas of the piece to emerge more strongly, giving a real suggestion of light, shadow, and reflected light. Neo-

Classicism tended towards a flatter style that utilized contour line more strongly, but in this piece it is clear that Prud'hon, trained in the Neo-Classical style, had intentions to take it beyond its boundaries.

Robespierre came to power in 1793 and for eleven months terror reigned down in Paris. 17,000 people were executed, including the King and Queen. Eventually Robespierre's cruel reign came to an end and he and his supporters were removed from power, with Robespierre being arrested, tried, and executed.

Alexandre de Beauharnais – the first husband of a woman named Josephine – was tried and executed five days before Robespierre's execution. de Beauharnais was arrested for being suspiciously aristocratic and not leading the troops to victory during a battle. (Yes, actually. Those not involved in the battle felt if he had really wanted to, he could have managed to win. But because he didn't win, that was seen as evidence that he was a traitor.) His wife,

Josephine, usually called Rose, was also arrested but was eventually released. This Josephine would later become the wife of a 26 year old Napoleon Bonaparte – an political figure and officer at that time.

The Directory was established in 1795. It was a body of five Directors who were executives of the French government. The governing bodies of France were somewhat democratic during the Directory, but failed within four years due to civic discontent, lack of co-operation between political parties, extended wars-for-gain, and financial ruin. The Directory had promised to uphold the Constitution III but the Constitution hadn't been written with money and corrupt officials in mind. The impact on the arts of this short period was the creation of Directoire Style. Directoire Style was neoclassical fashion and interior design and its development was mostly limited to just those two areas. The other Fine Arts largely maintained their Neo-classical-all-the-time aesthetic.

Jacques-Louis David had been thrown in prison following the arrest of Robespierre and had managed to be released without being executed after a few years. But the France he was released into was not the France of the Revolution he had left. No longer on the wealthier side of the Revolution he painted *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, a painting he had started planning out while in prison, and he charged admission for people to see it. This was a scandalously undemocratic handling of art and there was much talk about paying to see art – art was for the people. However, this piece wasn't created for a patron as most pieces were and David needed money, so he devised the plan to charge admission to recoup his costs. At this point in time the Academy had been defunct for years so their rules regarding free-admission and democratic access to art no longer applied. The painting also brought David to the attention of Napoleon.

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The battle depicted is a battle between the Romans (right) and the Sabines (left). The woman in the middle with arms outspread is Hersilia. She was the daughter of the Sabine Tattius (left) but she was also the wife of the Roman Romulus (right). She is depicted begging for peace – she had been kidnapped from Sabine three years earlier by the Romans who needed women. Eventually the Sabines had come to avenge their women's kidnappings, but at this point revenge would only hurt the innocents who were related to both – the children.



Jacques-Louis David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, oil on canvas, 1799

At this point in the Revolution in France the political parties were so at war with each other this painting was seen as a cry for a peace worth fighting for.

**Let's talk about Napoleon!
Was he a tall man?**

Napoleon had been an officer and lieutenant in the Army but returned to France to stage a coup when he heard how the

Directory was behaving and saw their weakness as a political opportunity. Napoleon is often described as incredibly short. In fact, there are theoretical complexes and stereotypes that are named after Napoleon that revolve around people who are short and the psychological impact that may have on them (these theories are

largely debated and disputed. Much like Napoleon's actual height.) Often, Napoleon is listed as being 5'2". However, those were probably French measurements which were slightly larger than British measurements. When his French height and history was translated into English and into British measurement, the British kind of just left them untranslated and then ran a lot of cartoon propaganda that advertised him as rather short.

Napoleon hated being depicted as short, which gave British cartoonists a very easy joke to make.⁵ In the time of unrest between the French and British after 1803, Napoleon was frequently featured in satirical cartoons as being a short and angry man, and in the two hundred years that have



James Gillray, *Evacuation of Malta*, etching, 1803

followed that 'joke' has been repeated as fact.⁶ In reality, it is likely that he was actually around 5'6" or 5'7", which would have been slightly above average height for men of the time. In some French paintings he may have appeared short because he was often depicted with an elite squad of soldiers who were all known for being extremely tall for their day. The French and the British have a long history of fighting between themselves and it looks like that while Napoleon and the French may have tried their best to route

5. Tristan Hopper, "Greatest Cartooning Coup of All Time: The Brit Who Convinced Everyone Napoleon was Short," *National Post* (Toronto, Canada) Apr 28, 2016, <https://nationalpost.com/news/world/greatest-cartooning-coup-of-all-time-the-brit-who-convinced-everyone-napoleon-was-short>
6. Hopper.

the British, historically the Brits got the last laugh on Napoleon (albeit in a bit of a petty victory)!

After Napoleon's successful coup of the Directory, he took control of France in 1799. When the Empire was proclaimed in 1804, Jacques-Louis David was given the official role of court painter. In the process of painting the scene of the crowning of the Emperor Napoleon and Josephine, David was even visited by the Pope! (Which is interesting for a revolutionary who was part of the group who demanded the secularization of a nation.)



Jacques-Louis David, Coronation of Emperor Napoleon I and Coronation of the Empress Josephine in Notre-Dame de Paris, December 2, 1804, oil on canvas, 1805-07.

Napoleon became Emperor in 1804 – crowning himself and then crowning Josephine. The Pope was present for this proceeding and had originally been the one who was to crown Napoleon (before Napoleon took the crown and crowned himself instead) which is also very interesting considering how anti-religion the Revolution had tried to be. Napoleon, who was eager to not be from a line of monarchy used emblems from monarchy tombs that linked him to the reign of Charlemagne, the favourite king of the papacy and the

Merovingians, the earliest rulers of the geographical area known as France (then Gaul). To understand just how politically crafty this maneuver was let's talk about the French history of bees.

The Merovingians were considered the first kings of France and ruled from around 400 C.E. Three hundred of these gold and garnet bees depicted on the right had been found during the mid 1600s in the tomb of Childeric I along with other artifacts. (Most of which was stolen in the 1830s



Bees, gold and garnet, Tomb of Childeric I, circa 430CE

and only these two bees here and few other pieces were ever found – at the bottom of the river in the 1800s.) To the Merovingians the bee was sacred and divine and a symbol of their power.

Interestingly, there was an argument that the symbol of the Merovingian Bee evolved into the *fleur de lys*. This theory was disputed and discredited by historians in the 1800s after Napoleon's reign because this argument would have given credence to the Bourbon Monarchy's claim of a Merovingian blood-line right to the throne. Also, the *fleur de lys*, as its name suggests, was popularly believed to represent a lily or more precisely an iris. Alternatively, the *fleur de lys* could also have come from the shape of the 'sting' of the early Frank dynasty (aka Merovingian). A sting was a kind of spear. Some argue that Napoleon didn't claim the bee as his personal symbol because of the Merovingian Dynasty but because he refused to spend the money to redecorate the palace. He couldn't leave the *fleur de lys* covered curtains intact as the *fleur de lys* was the symbol of the previous monarchy, so he had the curtains re-hung upside down and said the symbol of overthrown royalty was now a bee and his symbol. While this argument may have merit it seems logical that Napoleon's adoption of the bee was to claim the first kings of the realm's symbol of authority and to connect himself with

that tradition of rule. In many images of Napoleon his bee symbol appears, and he had bees stitched onto his coronation robes.

Napoleon's claimed connection to the ancient rulers of France went deeper than simply taking some bees as a brand; he forged a connection between his rule and power of the Vatican. The Merovingian rulers were staunchly Roman Catholic and Napoleon knew he needed the support of the Catholic church if his reign over France was to have any kind of power. However, the last Merovingian king was deposed by Pope Zachary in the mid-700s and replaced by Pepin the Short. Pepin was the father of Charles I, who was later known as Charles the Great, Carolus Magnus, and Charlemagne. The list of names Charlemagne was known by didn't stop there. His titles also included: King of the Franks, protector of the Papacy, ruler of western Europe, and the Father of Europe. The sceptre Napoleon received at his coronation was after the order of Charlemagne and the crown – which wasn't the same crown used by the Regime Monarchy – was made to look medieval and called the Crown of Charlemagne (it was not the actual crown of Charlemagne).

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By choosing to connect his power with the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties, Napoleon had successfully managed to link himself with French national history and the Catholic church. The first kings of France were historically powerful but the fact that that dynasty had been dethroned by the Pope created a complication with the present-day relationship Napoleon would have with the

Vatican. By laying claim to the line that the Papacy had set up in place of the Merovingians Napoleon was also using the good will that was still felt by Rome for Charlemagne. Charlemagne was loved, even in the 1700s, by the Catholic church for his protectorship and the Merovingian Dynasty laid claim to the universally loved ideal of 'firsts'. Napoleon was using his knowledge of his nation's history to manage some very crafty politics – even though it was harking back to a history that was almost a thousand years old.

Yet even though he so craftily wove a narrative that combined natural-born power and religious power and made a point of inviting the Pope to France to officiate his coronation, Napoleon also acted in a way that really offended the Roman Catholic Church. At the coronation ceremony Napoleon seemed to lose patience waiting for the Pope to give him the crown and throne and simply took the crown and placed it on his own head, crowning himself Emperor of France. Some say that Napoleon was making an Enlightenment-esque statement to the Papacy by crowning himself. Others just say he was impatient and self-important. While this may have been a childish fit of impatience on the part of Napoleon, it seems like someone who so patiently created such a strong narrative regarding who he wanted to emulate as a ruler might have been up to something much more calculated. Understanding the France that he was about to take rule of and knowing his peers' dedication to the Revolution, his disrespect of the Pope and disregard for the Catholic church's authority may have been a strategic move to gain the trust and respect of the post-Revolution French people. This is only speculation, however, as there are some things that Napoleon never explained.

As Napoleon began his reign, he ushered in a new aesthetic in the arts called Empire Style. Empire Style took all the elements of Neo-Classical design and added Egyptian aesthetics. While the Fine Arts didn't feel the impact of Empire Style too directly, architecture and interior design saw more additions of Egyptian motifs being combined with ancient Roman imagery. Empire Style is considered to be a late phase of Neo-Classicism.



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Napoleon on his Imperial Throne*, oil on canvas, 1806.

As France shifted into a new phase of existence under Napoleon, the Fine Arts saw a shift as its young students sought new themes and inspirations. No longer roused by the ideals of ancient Rome and influenced by Napoleon's shifted gaze to the history of France, young artists began to look to medieval period for material to use in their imagery. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres was a gifted student of Jacques-Louis David and during his time as a student Ingres painted *Napoleon on his Imperial Throne*. The painting was not considered a smash hit at the time as the paint

rendering seemed very flat (to us it just looks like an overexposed photograph, but to the eyes of the 1800s it looked flat and washed out) and the imagery all referred back to the Middle Ages, which seemed like an odd choice in a Neo-Classically saturated art world.

“In Ingres painting, Napoleon sits on an imposing, round-backed and gilded throne, one that is similar to those that God sits upon in Jan van Eyck’s Flemish masterwork, the Ghent Altarpiece, 1430–32. It is worth noting that, as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, the central panels of the Ghent Altarpiece that include the image of God upon a throne, were in the Musée Napoléon (now the Louvre) when Ingres painted this portrait.



Jan van Eyck, Center Panel, Christ Enthroned (detail), Ghent Altarpiece (open), oil on wood, 1430–32

The armrests in Ingres’s portrait are made from pilasters that are topped with carved imperial eagles and highly polished ivory spheres. A

similarly spread-winged imperial eagle appears on the rug in the foreground. Two cartouches can be seen on the left-hand side of the rug. The uppermost is the scales of justice (some have interpreted this as a symbol for the zodiac sign for Libra), and the second is a representation of Raphael’s *Madonna della Seggiola* from 1513–14, an artist and painting Ingres particularly admired. One final ancillary element should be mentioned. On the back wall over Napoleon’s left shoulder is a partially visible heraldic shield. The iconography for this crest, however, is not that of France, but is instead Italy and the Papal States. This visually ties the Emperor of the French to his position—since 1805—as the King of Italy.

It is not only the throne that speaks to rulership. He unblinkingly faces the viewer. In addition, Napoleon is bedazzled in attire and accoutrements of his authority. He wears a gilded laurel wreath on his head, a sign of rule (and more broadly, victory) since classical

times. In his left hand Napoleon supports a rod topped with the hand of justice, while with his right hand he grasps the sceptre of Charlemagne. An extravagant medal from the *Légion d'honneur* hangs from the Emperor's shoulders by an intricate gold and jewel-encrusted chain. Although not immediately visible, a jewel-encrusted coronation sword hangs from his left hip. The reason why the sword—one of the most recognizable symbols of rulership—can hardly be seen is because of the extravagant nature of Napoleon's coronation robes. An immense ermine collar is under Napoleon's *Légion d'honneur* medal. Ermine—a kind of short-tailed weasel—have been used for ceremonial attire for centuries and are notable for their white winter coats that are accented with a black tip on their tail. Thus, each black tip on Napoleon's garments represents a separate animal. Clearly, then, Napoleon's ermine collar—and the ermine lining under his gold-embroidered velvet robes—has been made with dozens of pelts, a certain sign of opulence. All these elements—throne, sceptres, sword, wreath, ermine, embroidered bees, and velvet—speak to Napoleon's position as Emperor.

But it is not only what Napoleon wears. It is also how the emperor sits. In painting this portrait, Ingres borrowed from other well-known images of powerful male figures. This 'type' showed Zeus seated, frontal, and with one arm raised while the other was more at rest. The low eye level—about that of Napoleon's knees—also indicates that the viewer is looking up at the seated ruler, as if kneeling before him. The sum total of this painting is not just the coronation of Napoleon, but almost his divine apotheosis. Ingres shows him not just as a ruler, but as omnipotent immortal. Thus, Ingres is working in yet another rich visual tradition, and in doing so, seems to remove Napoleon Bonaparte from the ranks of the mortals of the earth and transforms him into a Greek or Roman god of Mt. Olympus. Never once accused of modesty, there is no doubt that Napoleon approved of such a comparison."

Excerpted from an Essay by Dr. Bryan Zygmunt, "Ingres, Napoleon on His Imperial Throne," in Khan Academy,

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/romanticism/romanticism-in-france/a/ingres-napoleon-on-his-imperial-throne>

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Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, Portrait of Empress Joséphine, oil on canvas, 1805-1809

While students like Ingres began introducing new and non-revolution-related ways to deal with subject matter, artists like Jacques-Louis David worked as a court painter as the First Painter or Official Painter for the Emperor and he began to fade from the political (but not art) scene. Another artist of the Revolution who had never involved himself in politics too openly, Pierre-Paul Prud'hon also found work as a painter for the new ruler of France. One of his commissions was to paint a large portrait of the Empress

Josephine of France. It took him four years to paint it. In fact, it took so long that Prud'hon's wife accused him of being in love with the Empress and ended up flying into such a jealous rage that she was

institutionalized. Prud'hon eventually separated from his wife before her death, and had one of his students, fellow artist Constance Mayer (portrait by Prud'hon above) raise his children. Sadness and tragedy seemed to follow Prud'hon as Mayer, who had been a close friend and had raised his children, realized after the death of his wife that he would not marry her and so violently died by suicide. Unfortunately, the Empress Josephine's marriage to Napoleon was also unlucky. By the time her portrait by Prud'hon was completed Josephine had been divorced by Napoleon for not being able to produce him an heir. Because of this public repudiation, this painting wasn't shown at the Salon of 1810 because that would have just been awkward. Because she isn't portrayed as a great and mighty Empress but rather a beautiful, calm woman, some critics agree with Prud'hon's wife and feel that Prud'hon may have been in love with Rose (as she preferred to be called). Josephine was always held in high regard by Napoleon, except for when he first found out she was prone to having affairs (French life hadn't really changed all that much apparently), and just before their coronation they nearly dissolved their marriage. Josephine found Napoleon in bed with another woman, a woman Josephine knew, a woman supposed to be a friend to Josephine, and Napoleon flew into a rage at her rage and counter-threatened to divorce her for being infertile. They smoothed things over for a while. However, by 1809, he realized he needed a baby boy and told her that they were getting divorced. Apparently, *that* was not a pretty dinner conversation as they were both rather loud when angry. A few months later they were divorced. Josephine, as promised by Napoleon, kept her title as Empress of France, but her marriage to Napoleon was over. After the marriage was official ended, Napoleon married Marie-Louise of the Austrian royal family. Napoleon is said to have said that he married a womb, not a wife, when he married his Austrian princess. (He may have never said this, but it makes for a very good story.) The fact that he chose an Austrian princess for his new wife shows that for all its violent revolutionary ways, the culture of France may not have changed all that much at all indeed. Another anecdote of

his relationship with Josephine that may or may not be true is that Napoleon died with Josephine's name on his lips.

In 1811, Prud'hon was commissioned to paint the Emperor's heir – the child born to him from Marie-Louise. Napoleon nick-named his son The King of Rome and Prud'hon's painting was full of allegorical references to this young royal's heritage.



Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, *Portrait of the King of Rome*, oil on canvas, 1811

Self-Reflection Questions

Consider the following questions:

- Do you think the moral & the 'put the people first' goals of the Revolution were successful considering the moral & political corruption evident in post-Revolution France?
- If those goals were not met, do you think that it was maybe because they were not the true motivations for the uprising?
- If they weren't the true motives, what do you think might have been the 'real' reasons behind the violence?
- What cautionary tales do you think we, in the 21st century, can take from the climate, actions, and consequences of the French Revolution when we look at our own times and attitudes?



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3. Chapter 3 - French Romanticism and the Academy

France

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Reconstruct a basic timeline that spans the French Revolution, the Napoleonic eras, the Restoration, and the emergence of Romanticism
- Explain French Romanticism's driving philosophies
- List the key French Romantic artists and identify and decipher their artwork
- List the hierarchy of painting genres according to the French Academy
- Describe the power of the Academy system over the art world

Opening section in audio:



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At the beginning of the movie *The Godfather*, Michael Corleone (played by Al Pacino) wants nothing to do with his family's involvement in organized crime. When telling a family story to his girlfriend, he concludes, "That's my family, Kay, That's not me." As the film progresses, however, Michael's father and older brother are the focus of violent attacks and Michael becomes more active in the family business until—at the end of the film (SPOILER ALERT)—he has assumed the leadership of the Corleone crime syndicate by killing all of his enemies. Fictional characters—both in film and in novels—have arcs. They change through time. The same is true of real characters from history. They often have a rise, but just as often there is a precipitous fall. Napoleon Bonaparte is but one example.



*Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres,
Napoleon on his Imperial
Throne, oil on canvas, 1806.*

A visual starting point could be Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's 1806 painting, *Napoleon on His Imperial Throne*. In this work, Ingres painted Napoleon as if he were an omnipotent ruler—rather than a mere mortal. But six years later, Jacques-Louis David (Ingres's former teacher), painted *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study in the Tuileries* (1812). These two portraits—painted just six years apart—show a significant arc in the life and career of Napoleon.



Jacques-Louis David, *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries*, oil on canvas, 1812.

In David's portrait, Napoleon's uniform is completed with white knee breeches and stockings, and black shoes with gold buckles. Although he wears a military uniform, this is hardly a military portrait. He has discarded his officer's sword—it rests on the chair on the right side of the painting—and Napoleon is shown doing the administrative work of a civic leader. He stands between the high-backed red velvet chair on the right and in front of the Empire-styled desk behind him. A gilded regal lion serves as the visible leg of the desk, and an ink-stained quill, candle-lit lamp, and various papers can be seen atop his writing table. David has

signed and dated the portrait on a rolled up map to the side of the table, a leather-bound volume of Plutarch (in French: Plutarque) is beside it. Plutarch was an ancient Roman biographer and historian, most famous in the nineteenth century as the author of *The Parallel Lives*, a text that explores the virtues and vices of Greek and Roman rulers, men such as Alexander the Great, Themistocles, Julius Caesar, and Cicero. The inclusion of this book was a way to visually tie Napoleon to the great rulers of the classical past who he so admired. And yet, not everything is perfect within this space.

Although Napoleon stands and looks out towards the viewer, he looks more dishevelled than not. His hair—complete with the grey typical of a man in his fifties—appears unkempt and tousled. In addition, his uniform would hardly pass muster. A cuff button has been undone, and his silken stockings and trousers appear wrinkled from being worn for an exceptionally long working day. This fact is alluded to by two time-bearing details. The grandfather clock displays the time as 4:12. And the candles of his desk lamp—one nearly burned to its completing, another recently extinguished, several others seemingly expired—make it clear that it is not the late afternoon, but rather the very early morning. Clearly, time was running short. This portrait seems to suggest that Napoleon was working too late and too hard at the time it was commissioned, and indeed, Napoleon's time as a world ruler was coming to a climactic finale. The year the painting was completed—1812—was a particularly calamitous one for Napoleon, as he was in the middle of the disastrous

invasion of Russia. Less than two years later, on 4 April 1814, Napoleon abdicated his throne and was exiled to the island of Elba. David skilfully and subtly depicts Napoleon's transition from omnipotent ruler to fallible commander.

Excepted and adapted from: Dr. Bryan Zygmunt, "David, *The Emperor Napoleon in his Study at the Tuileries*" in *Khan Academy*, accessed September 14, 2020, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/renaissance-reformation/rococo-neoclassicism/neo-classicism/a/david-the-emperor-napoleon-in-his-study-at-the-tuileries>

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Antoine-Jean Gros section in audio:



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Antoine-Jean Gros



François Gérard, *Portrait of Antoine-Jean Gros at Age Twenty*, oil on canvas, c. 1791.

Antoine-Jean Gros was born in Paris to a portrait painter. Before the Revolution, he trained under Jacques-Louis David but had to flee France for a safer environment during the Revolution. He move to Genoa, Italy in the 1790s and there met Marie Josèphe Rose Tascher de La Pagerie, who would become known as Joséphine Bonaparte.

Joséphine appreciated Gros' work and introduced the young painter to her new husband, Napoleon. She also commissioned a painting of her husband by Gros which was completed in 1796. The painting *Napoleon Bonaparte at the pont d'Arcole* impressed Napoleon and eventually led to Gros' instalment as an official painter for the Emperor Napoleon following the troops and painting their endeavours. Usually considered a Romantic artist due to the emotive nature of his paintings and their brushier execution, Gros never embraced the ideology of the Romantics and largely devoted himself to presenting military events in a positive or grander light

than they actually occurred (which is why Napoleon placed him in the position).



Antoine-Jean Gros, *Bonaparte Visiting the Pest House in Jaffa*, oil on canvas, 1804.

Gros' most well known painting is *Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Pest House in Jaffa*, from 1804. In this proto-Romantic painting, that points to the later style of Gericault and Delacroix, Gros depicted a legendary episode from Napoleon's campaigns in Egypt (1798-1801). On March 21, 1799, in a make-shift hospital in Jaffa, Napoleon visited his troops who were stricken with the Bubonic Plague. Gros depicted Napoleon attempting to calm the growing panic about contagion by fearlessly touching the sores of one of the plague victims. (At this time it was believed that the plague was spread by touch, so this gesture would have made Napoleon look

fearless and like a conqueror in the face of death – unlike his subordinate soldiers who recoil from the pestilence and smell.) Like earlier neoclassical paintings such as David’s *Death of Marat*, Gros combined Christian iconography, in this case Christ healing the sick, with a contemporary subject. He also drew on the art of classical antiquity, by depicting Napoleon in the same position as the ancient Greek sculpture, the *Apollo Belvedere*. In this way, he imbued Napoleon with divine qualities while simultaneously showing him as a military hero. But in contrast to David, Gros used warm, sensual colours and focuses on the dead and dying who occupy the foreground of the painting. We’ll see the same approach later in Delacroix’s painting of *Liberty Leading the People* (1830).

Napoleon was a master at using art to manipulate his public image and used this painting to counteract the travelling news of what had actually happened at Jaffa. In reality, he had ordered the death of the prisoners whom he could not afford to house or feed, and poisoned his troops who were dying from the plague as he retreated from the area.

Excepted and adapted from: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Pest House in Jaffa,” in *Smarthistory*, November 23, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/baron-antoine-jean-gros-napoleon-bonaparte-visiting-the-pest-house-in-jaffa/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org

Gros' painting of Napoleon at Jaffa was a wild success at the Paris Salon because it was a brand new genre of painting. It was like a history painting, but it showed a contemporary event. This gave birth to a new and enormously popular genre of painting – the contemporary history painting. This new subject matter combined with the sensationally dramatic scene in the painting guaranteed it was well received by the public, which worked well for Napoleon. But the viewers at the Salon weren't just responding to the propagandistic subject matter and the drama of the event, they were being sucked into a story that they couldn't easily refuse and the composition makes sure of that. The triangular composition of the painting, a composition built out of the swaths of light that sweep through the painting, moves the viewers eye from each strategic point in the painting. The sick are in the dimly lit bottom, but arranged in a sweeping curve meant to draw your eye across the more well-lit ill soldiers to Napoleon and from Napoleon to the flag of France, which was a reminder of the 'good cause' the soldiers were fighting for in that foreign field. This reference to the 'good cause', plus Napoleon's Christ-like pose, gives a subtle suggestion that these plague victims aren't just dying of disease or being abandoned by their leader, these plague victims are martyrs for the cause of France (just like Marat in David's painting from the Revolution). It was this kind of dramatic painting style with its embedded subtle messages that entrenched Gros as Napoleon's premier public relations painter – although he was obviously not called that. He was just a painting that documented the troops.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres section in audio:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=48#audio-48-3>

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres was an artist of immense importance during the first half of the nineteenth century. His father, Jean-Marie-Joseph Ingres was a decorative artist of only minor influence who instructed his young son in the basics of drawing by allowing him to copy the family's extensive print

collection that included reproductions from artists such as Boucher, Correggio, Raphael, and Rubens. In 1791, at just 11 years of age, Ingres the Younger began his formal artistic education at the Académie Royale de Peinture,



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, Self Portrait at Age Twenty-Three, oil on canvas, 1804.

Sculpture et Architecture in Toulouse, just 35 miles from his hometown of Montauban.

Ingres was a quick study. In 1797—at the tender age of 16 years—he won the Académie’s first prize in drawing. Clearly destined for great things, Ingres packed his trunks less than six months later and moved to Paris to begin his instruction in the studio of Jacques-Louis David, the most strident representative of the Neoclassical style. David stressed to those he instructed the importance of drawing and studying from the nude model. In the years that followed, Ingres not only benefitted from David’s instruction—and the prestige and caché that such an honor bestowed—but also learned from many of David’s past students who frequented their former teacher’s studio. These artists comprise a “who’s who” of late-eighteenth-century French neoclassical art and include painters such as Jean-Germain Droais, Anne-Louis Girodet, and Antoine Jean-Gros.



Due to the financial woes of the French government in the first years of the nineteenth century, Ingres's Prix de Rome—which he won in 1801—was delayed until 1806. Two years later, Ingres sent to the École

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres,
The Valpinçon Bather, oil on
canvas, 1808

three compositions—intended to demonstrate his artistic growth while studying at the French Academy in Rome. Interestingly, all three of these works—*The Valpinçon Bather*, the so-called *Sleeper of Naples*, and *Oedipus and the Sphinx*—depict elements of the female nude (to be fair, however, the sphinx is not human). The first two, however, do not depict a story from the classical past. Instead, nearly the entire focus of each composition is on the female form. While Ingres has retained the formal elements that were so much a part of his neoclassical training—extreme linearity and a cool, “licked” surface” (where brushwork is nearly invisible)—he had begun to reject neoclassical subject matter and the idea that art should be morally instructive. Indeed, by 1808, Ingres was beginning to walk on both sides of the neoclassical/romantic

divide. In few works is a Neoclassical style fused with a romantic subject matter more clearly than in Ingres's 1814 painting *La Grande Odalisque*.

Ingres completed his time at the French Academy in Rome in 1810. Rather than immediately return to Paris however, he remained in the Eternal City and completed several large-scale history paintings. In 1814 he travelled to Naples and was employed by Caroline Murat, the Queen of Naples (who also happened to be Napoleon Bonaparte's sister). She commissioned *La Grande Odalisque*, a composition that was intended to be a pendant to his earlier composition, *Sleeper of Naples*. At first glance, Ingres's subject matter is of the most traditional sort. Certainly, the reclining female nude had been a common subject matter for centuries. Ingres was working within a visual tradition that included artists such as Giorgione (*Sleeping Venus*, 1510), Titian (*Venus of Urbino*, 1538) and Velazquez (*Rokeby Venus*, 1647-51). But the titles for all three of those paintings have one word in common: Venus. Indeed, it was common to cloak paintings of the female nude in the disguise of classical mythology.



Jean
Auguste
Dominique
Ingres,
*La Grande
Odalisque*,
oil on
canvas,
1814.

Ingres refused to disguise who and what his female figure was. She was not the Roman goddess of love and beauty. Instead, she was an odalisque, a concubine who lived in a harem and existed for the sexual pleasure of the sultan. In his painting *La Grande Odalisque* Ingres transports the viewer to the Orient, a far-away land for a Parisian audience in the second decade of the nineteenth century (in this context, “Orient” means Near East more so than the Far East). The woman—who wears nothing other than jewellery and a turban—lies on a divan, her back to the viewer. She seemingly peeks over her shoulder, as if to look at someone who has just entered her room, a space that is luxuriously appointed with fine damask and satin fabrics. She wears what appears to be a ruby and pearl encrusted brooch in her hair and a gold bracelet on her right wrist. In her right hand she holds a peacock fan, another symbol of affluence, and another piece of metalwork—a face-down bejewelled mirror, perhaps?—can be seen along the lower left edge of the painting.

Along the right side of the composition we see a

hookah, a kind of pipe that was used for smoking tobacco, hashish and opium. All of these Oriental elements—fabric, turban, fan, hookah—did the same thing for Ingres’s odalisque as Titian’s Venetian courtesan being labelled “Venus”—that is, it provided a distance that allowed the (male) viewer to safely gaze at the female nude who primarily existed for his enjoyment.

And what a nude it is. When glancing at the painting, one can immediately see the linearity that was so important to David in particular, and the French neoclassical style more broadly. But when looking at the odalisque’s body, the same viewer can also immediately notice how far Ingres has strayed from David’s particular style of rendering the human form—look for instance at her elongated back and right arm. David was largely interested in idealizing the human body, rendering it not as it existed, but as he wished it did, in an anatomically perfect state. David’s commitment to the idealizing the human form can clearly be seen in his preparatory drawings for his never completed *Oath of the Tennis Court*. There can be no doubt that this is how David taught Ingres to render the body.

Students often stray from their teacher’s instruction, however. In *La Grande Odalisque*, Ingres rendered the female body in an exaggerated, almost unbelievable way. Much like the Mannerists centuries earlier—Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Long Neck* (c. 1535) immediately comes to mind—Ingres distorted the female form in order to make her body more sinuous and elegant. Her back seems to have two or three more

vertebrae than are necessary, and it is anatomically unlikely that her lower left leg could meet with the knee in the middle of the painting, or that her left thigh attached to this knee could reach her hip. Clearly, this is not the female body as it really exists. It is the female body, perhaps, as Ingres wished it to be, at least for the composition of this painting. And in this regard, David and his student Ingres have attempted to achieve the same end—idealization of the human form—though each strove to do so in markedly different ways.

Excerpted from: Dr. Bryan Zygmunt, “Between Neoclassicism and Romanticism: Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*,” in *Smarthistory*, November 12, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/between-neoclassicism-and-romanticism-ingres-la-grande-odalisque-2/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org

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An aside about a compositional and theoretical device called

The Male Gaze

The theory of The Male Gaze is a second wave feminist theory and it began as a way to examine and explain the way women were filmed in twentieth century films. Often, women were framed compositionally so that it appeared as if the eye of the camera was the eye of a male co-actor watching the woman



Marilyn Monroe in a Film Still from Niagara (1953) – directed by Henry Hathaway

from an angle slightly above (because stereotypically speaking most men were taller than most women). This filmed-with-a-downward-angle aesthetic was also slightly filtered for the best aesthetic view, and always in a way or at an angle or in a lighting that made the viewer feel like they had some kind of power over the woman being filmed. This was the theory, or part of it anyway, and the theorist who first proposed it, Laura Mulvey, called it the Male Gaze. (Interestingly, this downward angle aesthetic can now be seen most frequently in the 21st century in selfies, but this is likely more an aesthetic choice, rather than a comment on the power dynamic between the viewer and the viewed.) Obviously, there are now many ways to film all kinds of people, but art historians took a look at Mulvey's ideas and realized that historically women haven't been exactly in control of their image in the same way men have been in art the art that portrays them.

Basically, the Male Gaze is a gendered way of saying a gaze that consumes and/or objectifies and is meant to do so. This isn't a case of someone looking at a candid snapshot of someone and the viewer finding them attractive and thinking "Yowza!" That's a different kind of gaze and is the product of the person doing to the looking, rather than an agreement between the viewer and a purposefully constructed image created with the purpose of being

sexually available and attractive specifically to viewers who find female bodies sexually appealing. Ingres' *La Grande Odalisque* was painted by a man for men and the subject in the painting knows it full well – she looks back at the viewer but with eyes glazed by some kind of exotic opiate. She is aware and her body is displayed by the artist for your consumption and objectification but due to her intoxication she is in no real position to protest, making her all the more consumable. But Ingres went one step further – instead of making the viewer mentally objectify the subject for better consumption, he literally changed the human body to make it easier on the eyes and more appealing than any reality.

Question: Can you easily objectify and consume the image of those you feel are your equals or that you find important to you?



Jacques-Louis David, *Portrait of Madame Récamier*, oil on canvas, 1800.

In answer to this question, the majority of people find that they can't very easily consume the images of people they feel they know well, are important to them, or are their equals. Often consumption of an image requires an anonymity or, in the very least, a power structure (real or imagined) that places the consumed in a more powerless position than the one doing the consuming. In the early 1800s it wasn't much different. The objectification of French women, especially known individuals of the time,

was not often indulged in. Take Jacques-Louis David's *Portrait of Madame Récamier*, whose painting was an influence on the pose of Ingres' *La Grande Odalisque*, for example. In David's painting, Juliette Récamier appears clothed, somewhat in possession of her own image (based on her levelled look towards the painting's viewer) and she was a well known figure on the social scene in early 1800s Parisian society. In David's painting, the subject of the image may be

idealized but she is not objectified. To do so would have caused a stir in French circles because one doesn't consume one's friends, generally speaking – that was taboo. Therefore, to make his painting a success Ingres had to make doubly sure that it was clear the object in his painting was not French, in fact it had to be clear she wasn't even European.

To best show case things that were meant to be consumed but to indicate that it wasn't considered culturally wrong to do so, the creator the image engaged in what is now called *Othering*. “Othering’ is the way members of one social group distance themselves from, or assert themselves over, another by construing the latter as being fundamentally different (the ‘Other’)...It is a term that is associated with discourses of colonialism, and, in particular, with the work of Edward Said.”¹ Ultimately, it creates an ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary that allows for virtuous behaviours on the part of the ‘us’ and indulgence in taboo behaviours for the ‘them’. But who is the ‘us’ and who is the ‘them’? In this case, the them is the “Orient” – in this time period of the 1800s that would be anyone from the the Near East, Northern Africa, and the eastern Mediterranean (although the Far East could also be included) – and the ‘us’ is the “Occident” – the north and western hemispheres.

In this particular case, Ingres created a clear indication that the woman in his image was not ‘one of us’ and was therefore ‘one of them’ by including visual clues to establish the woman as a foreign “other”; which is what we now call *Orientalizing*. Orientalizing, strictly speaking, is the idea of creating an image of someone who is from the Orient but, it is actually a bit more insidious than that. The image it creates is not a true image, it's a fantasized image that is built on imagination and othering – constructed in such a

1. Scott Thornbury, "O is for Othering," An A-Z of ELT, August 14, 2012, <https://scottthornbury.wordpress.com/2012/04/08/o-is-for-othering/>

way that those creating and consuming the image didn't feel bad about it because the people in the image were 'others' and not one of 'us.' Orientalizing creates an image made up of assumptions and beliefs about the exotic aesthetics and non-western behaviours of the peoples of the lands that were currently being colonized by European countries. By creating beautiful and often sexually charged images and written works, the creators of the Western world strengthened stereotypes and feelings of superiority on the part of the West.



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *The Turkish Bath*, oil on canvas, 1862.

In his eighties, Ingres painted *The Turkish Bath*, and because Ingres always held to the position that he hated the sensual and emotive Romantics and he was always a faithful and true Neoclassical artist it begs the question:

Is *The Turkish Bath* very Neoclassical (i.e. logical, edifying, free of sensory indulgence, and about Roman times)? Or is it more sensual,

emotional, and 'natural' (i.e. Romantic)?

It seems more closely related to the sensual, emotional, and natural. However, always keep in mind that Romantic art (with a capital 'R') really has nothing to do with romantic or sexual feelings, so this isn't really Romantic art either. It's just closer to Romantic than it is to Neoclassical.

Ingres is often considered a proto-Romanticist and this is largely due to the difficulty in labelling the art he created. It does not neatly fit in a Neo-Classical category as his subject matter was often so exotic and sensual. Yet, he did not agree with the ideals of the Romantics and his work lacks the sweeping dynamic emotion that typifies those works. At best, he can be positioned as a bridge between the two genres, and yet it seems most likely he was simply

an artist who did work that pleased himself whenever he felt so inclined.

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Academic Genre Hierarchies

At the beginning of the Revolution the Royal Academy had been abolished and in its place was the Arts Commune. The Arts Commune was presided over by David, and it then became the National Institute – which had many other disciplines under its domain but also included the fine arts. After the exile of Napoleon, in 1816 King Louis XVIII reinstated the Royal Academy or as it was now called, the Académie des Beaux-Arts. This is a quick time-line of the rise and re-invention of the art academy in France:

1793 – Royal Academy Abolished – becomes the ‘Arts Commune’ under Jacques-Louis David

1795 – National Institute adds Fine Arts to its classes

1816 – Royal Academy re-instated, now called the Académie des Beaux-Arts

1819 – Ecole de Beaux-Arts, a division of the Académie, is the primary place for prestigious artists to learn, teach, and show work

One of the major changes in the Academy during the early 1800s was that those who were allowed to become members of the

academy where no longer young artists, but rather older and more established gentlemen who elected members in. It was this system that made it so hard for new art forms to get into the Academy by the mid 1800s. This system also created a distinct and celebrated hierarchy of painting genres – those that were at the top of the ranking were eligible to win their creators prizes and great prestige, while those at the bottom of the hierarchy would be considered only suitable for dabbling artists.

In the mid-1800s in France the hierarchy was, in most cases, arranged as follows:

History Painting – Painting that depicted historical events were the best of the best and often the biggest.

Portraits – Portraiture wasn't really considered the most amazing thing, but it was considered to be decently good because people where the focus and everyone likes to look at pictures of themselves or people they know.

Landscape Painting – Landscape painting was okay, but really only if it was of historical landscapes. And only occasionally should it be cluttered up with people. If it *did* have to have people make them historical. Or peasants. But pretty peasants. Landscape painting had been recently promoted from lower in the hierarchy during the early to mid-1800s due to outside influences after the Revolution.

Genre Painting – Genre painting was the painting of anything not on the list but that included humans in a rustic or moralizing way. Often it was paintings of peasants or pseudo-peasants (what the higher classes imagined peasants to be).

Still Life – The last thing was still life painting – which was anything not living and arranged. Animal paintings, specifically paintings of pets and other owned creatures, held a place on this list at certain times – above still life. While paintings of dead animals were more in the Still Life category, although still somewhat more exciting than images of fruit and glass.

This list changed order at different times but History painting always stayed on top, and the higher up on the list, the bigger the

piece could be, which is why French History paintings tend to be huge.

The Restoration

The world's fastest recap of the Restoration of France:

Basically by 1814 the French had had enough war and enough death and they deposed Napoleon to the Island of Elba. He stayed there until 1815, came back to France and ruled for 100 days and then was shipped back to Elba where he later died. His autopsy said he died of stomach cancer, but other people think he died of Arsenic poisoning. Hard to say but that doesn't stop people from *still* talking about it. People had been trying to kill him for a very long time. Once, when he was married to Josephine a cart-bomb had been placed in the road in an effort to kill him and/or Josephine as his carriage drove past. Yes. CART BOMB.

Anyway, with the Emperor disposed, Louis the XVIII – younger brother of King Louis the XVI – who had been hiding around Europe saying he was king of France, came back to 'help out'. He became a constitutional monarch who shared power with the parliament. Louis XVIII was succeeded by his younger brother Charles X who was eventually forced to abdicate after a three day revolution in 1830.

So after a while as Emperor Napoleon was out and the traditional French monarchy were back in. Then Napoleon was back in, then the he was back out, then the monarchy was back in, and then Napoleon's relatives came back and the monarchy was out, and then...I think you get the picture. The era of long lasting rulers was over for France.

Romanticism in France in audio:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=48#audio-48-6>

Romanticism in France

In the decades following the French Revolution and Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo (1815) a new movement called Romanticism began to flourish in France. If you read about Romanticism in general, you will find that it was a pan-European movement that had its roots in England in the mid-eighteenth century. Initially associated with literature and music, it was in part a response to the rationality of the Enlightenment and the transformation of everyday life brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Like most forms of Romantic art, nineteenth-century French Romanticism defies easy definitions. Artists explored diverse subjects and worked in varied styles so there is no single form of French Romanticism.

Intimacy, spirituality, colour, yearning for the infinite. Even when Charles Baudelaire wrote about French Romanticism in the middle of the nineteenth century, he

found it difficult to concretely define. Writing in his Salon of 1846, he affirmed that “romanticism lies neither in the subjects that an artist chooses nor in his exact copying of truth, but in the way he feels.... Romanticism and modern art are one and the same thing, in other words: intimacy, spirituality, colour, yearning for the infinite, expressed by all the means the arts possess.”

In 1810, Germaine de Staël introduced the new Romantic movement to France when she published *Germany* (De l'Allemagne). Her book explored the concept that while Italian art might draw from its roots in the rational, orderly Classical (ancient Greek and Roman) heritage of the Mediterranean, the northern European countries were quite different. She held that her native culture of Germany—and perhaps France—was not Classical but Gothic and therefore privileged emotion, spirituality, and naturalness over Classical reason. Another French writer Stendhal (Henri Beyle) had a different take on Romanticism. Like Baudelaire later in the century, Stendhal equated Romanticism with modernity. In 1817 he published his *History of Painting in Italy* and called for a modern art that would reflect the “turbulent passions” of the new century. The book influenced many younger artists in France and was so well-known that the conservative critic Étienne Jean Delécluze mockingly called it “the Koran of the so-called Romantic artists.”

The first marker of a French Romantic painting may be the *facture*, meaning the way the paint is handled or laid on to the canvas. Viewed as a means of making the presence of the artist’s thoughts and emotions

apparent, French Romantic paintings are often characterized by loose, flowing brushstrokes and brilliant colours in a manner that was often equated with the painterly style of the Baroque artist Rubens. In sculpture artists often used exaggerated, almost operatic, poses and groupings that implied great emotion. This approach to art, interpreted as a direct expression of the artist's persona—or “genius”—reflected the French Romantic emphasis on unregulated passions. The artists employed a widely varied group of subjects including the natural world, the irrational realm of instinct and emotion, the exotic world of the “Orient” and contemporary politics.



Théodore Géricault, Raft of the Medusa, oil on canvas, 1819.

The theme of man and nature found its way into Romantic art across Europe. While often interpreted as a political painting, Théodore Géricault's remarkable *Raft of the Medusa* (1819) confronted its audience with a scene of struggle against the sea. In



Antoine Louis Barye, Lion and Serpent, bronze, 1835.

the ultimate shipwreck scene, the veneer of civilization is stripped away as the victims fight to survive on the open sea. Some artists, including Géricault and Delacroix, depicted nature directly in their images of animals. For example, the animalier (animal sculptor) Antoine-Louis Barye brought the tension and drama of “nature red in tooth and claw” to the exhibition floor in *Lion and Serpent* (1835.)



Théodore Géricault, Portrait of a Woman Suffering from Obsessive Envy, also known as The Hyena of the Salpêtrière, oil on canvas, c.1819-20.

Another interest of Romantic artists and writers in many parts of Europe was the concept that people, like animals, were not solely rational beings but were governed by instinct and emotion. Géricault explored the condition of those with mental illness in his carefully observed portraits of the insane such as *Portrait of a Woman Suffering from*

Obsessive Envy (The Hyena), 1822. On other occasions artists would employ literature that explored extreme emotions and violence as the basis for their paintings, as Delacroix did in *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827-28.)

Eugène Delacroix, who once wrote in his diary “I dislike reasonable painting,” took up the English Romantic poet Lord Byron’s play *Sardanapalus* as the basis for his epic work *Death of Sardanapalus* (below)

depicting an Assyrian ruler presiding over the murder of his concubines and destruction of his palace. Delacroix's swirling composition reflected the Romantic artists' fascination with the "Orient," meaning North Africa and the Near East—a very exotic, foreign, Islamic world ruled by untamed desires. Curiously, Delacroix preferred to be called a Classicist and rejected the title of Romantic artist.

Whatever he thought of being called a Romantic artist, Delacroix brought his intense fervour to political subjects as well. Responding to the overthrow of the Bourbon rulers in 1830, Delacroix produced *Liberty Leading the People*. Brilliant

colours and deep shadows punctuate the canvas as the powerful allegorical figure of Liberty surges forward over the hopeful and despairing figures at the barricade.



Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Sardanapalus*, oil on canvas, 1827.



Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, oil on canvas, 1830.

Today, French Romanticism remains difficult to define because it is so diverse.

Baudelaire's comments from the Salon of 1846 may still apply:

“romanticism lies neither in the subjects that an

artist chooses nor in his exact copying of truth, but in the way he feels.”

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Claire Black McCoy, “Romanticism in France,” in *Smarthistory*, September 1, 2018, <https://smarthistory.org/romanticism-in-france/>.

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While French Romanticism can be difficult to limit to a specific aesthetic or ideal and can be hard to define clearly, there are some things that Romantic artists and Romantic pieces across Europe shared. The approach tended to value feelings of:

- Emotion
- Faith
- Spirituality
- Individuality
- The Natural

And it tended to de-emphasize or outright de-value:

- Intellect
- Reason
- Conformity
- Cultural Constraints

Romanticism came late to France because of the upheaval of the Revolution, so its expression doesn't follow closely on the aesthetic or ideological 'rules' that other countries explored. In later chapters a more clear picture will emerge regarding the ideas and

approaches that Romanticism valued but the foundation can be described in the list above.

Consider the following questions:

Think about the artists, like Ingres and Gros, who grew up in the Revolution.

- What was their response to what they had experienced growing up in that environment? How is their art different than that of David or even Prud'hon?
- Do you think that there are more recent or more ancient examples of how tumultuously violent environments have changed the art/performance/values of the youth who grew up in it?

Thinking about the French Romantic artists

- Considering the individual work of a single artist, how do you feel their work exhibits some of the foundational elements of Romanticism (keeping in mind that Romanticism has nothing to do with romantic love and everything to do with overwhelming emotion and dramatic elements of nature)?
- If Romantic works were about emotional responses and feelings, explain what emotions you feel when looking at some of the works by Romantic artists in this chapter.



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4. Chapter 4 - British Romanticism and the Picturesque Tradition

Britain

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Identify the works of Benjamin West, Henry Fuseli, William Blake – British Romantics
- Explain the six types of painting categories and how they generally ranked in Britain as compared to France at the same time
- Define the Picturesque Tradition and Picturesque Composition
- Recognize and explain the satirical works of Thomas Rowlandson
- List and define the 7 categories of landscape painting
- Recognize the works of J.M.W. Turner, John Martin, and John Constable – the British Landscape Romantics

Chapter opening in audio



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Let's start this chapter with something really fun. Dictionary definitions!

If you see the word 'Sublime' what do you generally see the word to mean? (All jokes about less than perfect limes aside, I mean.)

Oxford Lexico defines 'sublime' as:

"Of very great excellence or beauty. Producing an overwhelming sense of awe or other high emotion through being vast or grand."¹

Merriam-Webster defines it as:

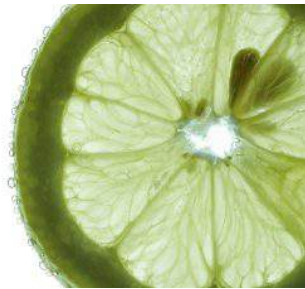
"a: lofty, grand, or exalted in thought, expression, or manner

b: of outstanding spiritual, intellectual, or moral worth

c: tending to inspire awe usually because of elevated quality (as of beauty, nobility, or grandeur) or transcendent excellence.

1: grand or noble in thought, expression, or manner

2: beautiful or impressive enough to arouse a feeling of admiration and wonder."²



1. Oxford Lexico, (2020), s.v. "Sublime."

2. Merriam-Webster, (2020), s.v. "Sublime."

Webster's 1828 dictionary defines it as:

1. High in place; exalted aloft.
2. High in excellence; exalted by nature; elevated.
3. High in style or sentiment; lofty; grand.
4. Elevated by joy; as sublime with expectation.
5. Lofty of mein; elevated in manner.

SUBLIME, noun A grand or lofty style; a style that expresses lofty conceptions."³

In Wikipedia's entry regarding the Sublime in philosophy:

"What is "dark, uncertain, and confused" moves the imagination to awe and a degree of horror. While the relationship of sublimity and beauty is one of mutual exclusivity, either can provide pleasure.

Sublimity may evoke horror, but knowledge that the perception is a fiction is pleasurable."⁴

"The sublime in literature refers to use of language and description that excites thoughts and emotions beyond ordinary experience.

Though often associated with grandeur, the sublime may also refer to the grotesque or other extraordinary experiences that "takes us beyond ourselves."⁵

According to Wikipedia, Edmund Burke defined "Sublime" as follows:

"Burke defines the sublime as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger... Whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror." Burke believed that the sublime was something that could provoke terror in the audience, for terror and pain were the strongest of emotions. However, he also believed there was an inherent "pleasure" in this emotion. Anything that is great, infinite or obscure could be an object of terror and the

3. Webster's Dictionary, (1828), s.v. "Sublime."

4. Wikipedia, (July 5, 2020), s.v. "Sublime (philosophy)."

5. Wikipedia, (June 22, 2020), s.v. "Sublime (literary)."

sublime, for there was an element of the unknown about them.”⁶

In his book *The World as Will and Representation* from 1818, Arnold Schopenhauer outlined the difference between Beauty and the Sublime as follows:

Feeling of Beauty – Light is reflected off a flower. (Pleasure from a mere perception of an object that cannot hurt observer).

Weakest Feeling of Sublime – Light reflected off stones. (Pleasure from beholding objects that pose no threat, yet themselves are devoid of life).

Weaker Feeling of Sublime – Endless desert with no movement. (Pleasure from seeing objects that could not sustain the life of the observer).

Sublime – Turbulent Nature. (Pleasure from perceiving objects that threaten to hurt or destroy observer).

Full Feeling of Sublime – Overpowering turbulent Nature. (Pleasure from beholding very violent, destructive objects).

Fullest Feeling of Sublime – Immensity of Universe’s extent or duration. (Pleasure from knowledge of observer’s nothingness and oneness with Nature).

Excerpted from: Ben Pollitt, “John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/martin-the-great-day-of-his->

6. Wikipedia, (June 22, 2020), s.v. "Sublime (literary)."

[wrath/](#).

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It's pretty clear that something that is 'sublime' is more than just a really good tasting piece of pie when it comes to the Arts. The idea of the Sublime often relates to exciting, emotional, and uplifting vistas – like mountain scenes where unbridled nature sits in unbending grandeur in the face of puny human existence. But it is also the idea of something experiential. It calls to mind the reaction in the mind and soul of the viewer as they look at something bigger and more powerful than themselves. And in this understanding of the all-enveloping nature of the natural scene before them the viewer feels a kind of horror.

For the Romantic poet and artist, the idea of the Sublime often defined what their works were meant to do. They meant to encapsulate the veneration, awe, and prickling anxiety caused by a human understanding of the ferocity of nature. This could also encompass the grotesque and purposefully fearful, but often the fear was embedded in the grandiosity of the idea and scene. For

**Herein lies the
entertainment value of
Romantic art.**

viewers of Romantic art,
especially art that dealt with
ideas of the Sublime, the
beauty was a two-fold
experience; partly it was

beautiful in an aesthetic sense, and partly it was beautiful in how it made the viewer feel. Prickling fear mixed with wonder and awe was a delicious experience when felt in the safety of an art venue. Much like how horror movies are an entertainment in the twenty-first century *because* they cause a feeling of fear-while-still-in-safety, so the sublime Romantic art of the nineteenth century

enraptured the viewer who revelled in emotional responses.
America's Raphael – Benjamin West in audio



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here: [https://openeducationalberta.ca/
19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-2](https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-2)

America's Raphael – Benjamin West

Benjamin West was known in Britain as America's Raphael, but don't worry, this didn't go to his head. He only named his first born son Raphael, but that's probably just a coincidence. Right?

Born in the U.S, West claimed in Britain that he was largely self taught. The story he told of his art upbringing reads more like an origin story of epic feats of mastery than a simple artist's training. His story was that he taught himself everything he knew after the American Indians taught him how to mix pigments and his mother's praising kiss of a childhood drawing motivated him to make more art. Stories like this make good tales but they really build into the idea of the artist as genius, sprung full formed from Creativity's head. It's not that West's story is likely false. It is possibly true, but when you hear stories like that take them with a good dose of skepticism and recognize that while heroes do exist, they often aren't nearly as heroic as we want them to be. Lest it seem that we are underselling the hurdles that West's early-American background caused, it should definitely be highlighted that West did not present himself as a well-schooled man. He was born in Pennsylvania and

when, later in life, he was president of the British Royal Academy, he could barely spell. But it really does beg a question: how did a young artist who swore he had immense lack of access to European-type education find his way into the very highest levels of British society?

Well, the answer lies in, well, lies.

As Dr. Brian Zygmunt explains;

In 1760, two wealthy Philadelphian families paid for the young Benjamin West's passage to Italy so he could learn from the great European artistic tradition. He was only 21 years old. He arrived in the port of Livorno during the middle of April and was in Rome no later than 10 July. West remained in Italy for several years and moved to London in August of 1763. He found quick success in England and was a founding member of the Royal Academy of Art when it was established in 1768. West was clearly intoxicated by the cosmopolitan London and never returned to his native Pennsylvania. West's fame and importance today rest on two important areas:

1. West as teacher

West taught two successive generations of American artists. All of these men travelled to his London studio and most returned to the United States. Indeed, a list of those who searched out his instruction comprises a "who's who" list of early American artists,

2. West as history painter

If his role as a teacher was the first avenue to West's fame, surely his history painting is the

second. Of the many he completed, *The Death of General Wolfe* is certainly the most celebrated.



Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, oil on canvas, 1770

In this painting, West departed from conventions in two important regards. Generally, history paintings were reserved for narratives from the Bible or stories from the classical past. Instead, however, West depicted a near-contemporary event, one that occurred only seven years before. *The Death of General Wolfe* depicts an event from the Seven Years' War (known as the French and Indian War in the United States), the moment when Major-General James Wolfe was mortally wounded on the Plains of Abraham outside Quebec.

Secondly, many—including Sir Joshua Reynolds and West's patron, Archbishop Drummond—strongly urged West to avoid painting Wolfe and others in modern

costume, which was thought to detract from the timeless heroism of the event. They urged him to instead paint the figures wearing togas. West refused, writing, “the same truth that guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil [paintbrush] of the artist.”

Yet despite West’s interest in “truth,” there is little to be found in *The Death of General Wolfe*. Without doubt, the dying General Wolfe is the focus of the composition. West paints Wolfe lying down at the moment of his death wearing the red uniform of a British officer. A circle of identifiable men attend to their dying commander. Historians know that only one—Lieutenant Henry Browne, who holds the British flag above Wolfe—was present at the General’s death.

Clearly, West took artistic license in creating a dramatic composition, from the theatrical clouds to the messenger approaching on the left side of the painting to announce the British victory over the Marquis de Montcalm and his French army in this decisive battle. Previous artists, such as James Barry, painted this same event in a more documentary, true-to-life style. In contrast, West deliberately painted this composition as a dramatic blockbuster.

This sense of spectacle is also enhanced by other elements, and West was keenly interested in giving his viewers a unique view of this North American scene. This was partly achieved through landscape and architecture. The St. Lawrence River appears on the right side of the composition and the steeple represents the cathedral in the city of Quebec. In addition to the

landscape, West also depicts a tattooed Native American on the left side of the painting. Shown in what is now the universal pose of contemplation, the Native American firmly situates this as an event from the New World, making the composition all the more exciting to a largely English audience.

Perhaps most important is the way West portrayed the painting's protagonist as Christ-like. West was clearly influenced by the innumerable images of the dead Christ in Lamentation and Depositions paintings that he would have seen during his time in Italy. This deliberate visual association between the dying General Wolfe and the dead Christ underscores the British officer's admirable qualities. If Christ was innocent, pure, and died for a worthwhile cause—that is, the salvation of mankind—then Wolfe too was innocent, pure, and died for a worthwhile cause; the advancement of the British position in North America. Indeed, West transforms Wolfe from a simple war hero to a deified martyr for the British cause. This message was further enhanced by the thousands of engravings that soon flooded the art market, both in England and abroad.

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Bryan Zygmunt, "Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*," in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/benjamin-wests-the-death-of-general-wolfe/>.

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“Noble Savage” – emergence of a stereotype in audio



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-3>

“Noble Savage” – emergence of a stereotype

If you look up the phrase “Noble Savage” on Wikipedia, a detail of Benjamin West’s *The Death of General Wolfe* pops up. The depiction of the tattooed North American Indian who calmly contemplates the noble sacrifice of Wolfe’s martyrdom is a philosophical stereotype that occurs in art frequently, but is especially popular in art of the 1800s in Europe.

Dr. Charles Cramer and Dr. Kim Grant use movies to explain the concept of the “noble savage”:
One of the defining concepts of primitivism is that of the “noble savage,” an oxymoronic phrase often attributed to the eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, although he never used it. Now recognized as a stereotype, the noble savage is a stock character of literature and the arts who may lack education, technology, and cultural

refinement, but who lives according to universal natural law and so is inherently moral and good. Many popular books and films exemplify the concept of the noble savage, including *Tarzan*, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, *Dances With Wolves*, and *Avatar*.

In *Avatar*, for example, the indigenous, blue-skinned Na'vi are technologically inferior to the humans who come to mine their Eden-like world for resources, but they are morally superior and closer to nature. Although the Na'vi are loosely based on Native Americans, it is important to remember that the primitivist concept of the noble savage is essentially mythic, not documentary.

Excerpted from: Dr. Charles Cramer and Dr. Kim Grant, "Primitivism and Modern Art," in *Smarthistory*, March 7, 2020, accessed September 19, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/primitivism-and-modern-art/>.

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Where Benjamin West's earlier work was very influenced by the Neo-Classical tradition, his later works fit firmly within the parameters of Romanticism. *Death on the Pale Horse* is a Romantic Biblical painting: it has all the stormy, gothick, impetuous, terrifying, titillating elements of a Gothick



Benjamin West, Death on the Pale Horse, oil on canvas, painted in 1796, shown in 1817

Sublime painting. And to create a fully immersive viewing experience, it was also absolutely enormous. Almost 15 feet by 25 feet!

The story depicted is based on the vision in the Book of Revelation in chapter 4, verse 8:

“And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

Now this painting is called *Death on the Pale Horse*, but really all four horses of the Apocalypse are there. The White horse with the ruler. The Red horse with War. The black horse with the balances in his hand – Famine.

Death on the Pale Horse was a painting hated by the king of England, but loved by West.⁷ The king of England found it repulsive its chaos, while Jacques-Louis David who saw it in Paris 1802, said it was a cheap replica of Peter-Paul Rubens work for the 1600s.⁸ Because of the French Revolution Romanticism came later to France than it did to England and therefore this Romantic style of painting would have seemed horribly emotional compared to the Neo-Classical work so honoured in France. The first version of this painting by West was completed the same year as David's *Oath of Horatii*.⁹

Henry Fuseli in audio



7. Allen Staley, "West's "Death on the Pale Horse"; Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts., 58, no. 3 (1980): 141-142.

8. Staley, "West's," 142.

9. Staley, "West's," 142.



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Henry Fuseli

In 1755 a horrendous earthquake shook Lisbon and shattered the lives of countless people. The sheer force of this quake defied logic and explanation; its unimaginable affects cracked the smooth surface of [the] common-sense” of an entire era founded on common sense, rationality and science.¹⁰ “It is arguable that the Romantic Movement first showed itself as an expression of fear” and this fear is extremely evident in one of the first Romantic paintings – Henry Fuseli’s *The Nightmare*.¹¹ Fuseli’s painting is a perfect specimen to showcase the Romantic Movement’s themes – specifically the themes of iconography, sexual desire, fear and the irrationality in dreams.¹² More specifically, *The Nightmare* reveals Fuseli’s personal themes of desire, love’s betrayal and the mysteries of his psyche.

It is important to note, before analyzing Fuseli’s *The*

10. Kenneth Clark, *The Romantic Rebellion: Romantic versus Classic Art*, (London, UK: Futura Publications Limited, 1973) 45.
11. Clark, *Nightmare*, 45.
12. Clark, *Nightmare*, 45.

Nightmare, that there are two versions of this painting. Both were painted by the same artist and are titled the same thing and contain very similar imagery. However, the second version, from 1791, contains some iconographical significant differences from the 1781 version. To speak of one of these versions is to also consider the other. To speak of meaning in one painting requires comparison and corroboration from the other.



Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, oil on canvas, 1781

According to some critics, *The Nightmare* holds social and political implications; however, Frederick Antal the author of *Fuseli Studies*, considers Fuseli to not have been sufficiently politically- minded” to

consciously convey a political message in his art.”¹³ Though it is true that Fuseli’s image was used by many political caricaturists after its exhibit in the 1783 Royal Academy exhibition, Fuseli was likely not expressing a political view as much as he was exorcising private demons and psychological obsessions.

The title is one of the first things to consider when beginning to dissect the meaning of this work. In the 1700’s a dream that was classified as a ‘nightmare’ was a special sort of dream that is distinctly different from the catch-all meaning of the term today.¹⁴ The term comes from the combining of night and the word ‘*mara*’ – which was a spirit that tormented and suffocated sleepers. A nightmare, in Fuseli’s time, was clinically defined as a type of sleep paralysis, when the “principle symptom is someone or something sitting on the chest.”¹⁵

The Nightmare is a painting that depicts a dream. True to its era, it shows both the person dreaming and the dream they are experiencing. A woman dressed in a diaphanous white robe or night dress lies prostrate across and almost off the bed. The room is one that would have been considered to be conservatively contemporary during the time it was painted – the Rococo era.¹⁶ Through an opening in the bed-chamber curtains a horse head appears, looking into the room with strangely globular, dead eyes. On the woman’s mid-section sits a strange and horrible creature. This creature, in the 1781 rendition, is a horrible ape-man that casts the shadow of an owl. In the 1791 version, this creature has changed

13. Frederick Antal, *Fuseli Studies*, (London, UK: Routledge, 1956), 93.
14. Nicolas Powell, *Fuseli: The Nightmare*, (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1972), 49.
15. Peter Tomory, *The Life and Art of Henry Fuseli*, (London, UK: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 182.
16. Powell, *Fuseli*, 75.

into something even more demonic – a cat-ape creature that is clenching a pipe between his hideously grinning teeth. While these entities are in the room with this dreaming, sleeping woman they are not what she is seeing in her dream – they are symbols of the terror and suffocating oppression which she feels.¹⁷

A viewer of *The Nightmare* knows that these creatures are not what the sleeper is seeing because of the furniture in the painting and the position of the sleeping woman. The mirror, in the 1791 version, has been moved so that the viewer can see that it holds no reflection. Because it holds no images, even though it is angled in a way “that could reflect the figure of the incubus squatting on the sleeper’s stomach”, the viewer is to understand that this creature is not present in the corporeal world.¹⁸ As well, the incorporation of a mirror into a nightmare painting would reference the literary work of the English writer, John Locke (whom Fuseli would be aware of), who stated that those who do not remember their dreams are like looking-glasses they receive a variety of images...but retains none.¹⁹ The final clue that these creatures are not being seen by the sleeper is her position



Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, oil on canvas, 1791.

17. Powell, Fuseli, 49.

18. Powell, Fuseli, 49.

19. Powell, Fuseli, 48.

across the bed. Her position is such, that even if her eyes were to open she could see neither horse nor demon.”²⁰



Henry Fuseli, *Portrait of a Lady (on reverse side of *The Nightmare*)*, oil on canvas, c. 1781

An important part of the painting that the viewer can not see when viewing the 1781 version, is the unfinished portrait of a woman that is on the back of the canvas. This portrait is believed to be the portrait of Anna Landolt, with whom Fuseli fell hopelessly in love.²¹ Due to this woman's presence on the back of such a violently erotic painting, it is important to understand her relationship with Henry Fuseli. While Fuseli had been in Zurich visiting a friend, he had met his

friend's niece – Anna. Unfortunately, for Fuseli, she was already engaged to a merchant and it is unclear as to what extent she was aware of Fuseli's attraction, as he was naturally very shy and below her in economic status.²² As well, letters that reveal his passion are all addressed to Anna's uncle. In one of the letters, Fuseli relates an erotic dream that he had dreamt of Anna and himself stating that she was now completely his and anyone who got in the way was committing adultery.²³ Fuseli had worked himself into a fever pitch that seems to have culminated with *The Nightmare*. It is not a broad

20. Powell, Fuseli, 49.

21. Anne K. Metter, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, (New York: Routledge, 1989), 243.

22. Powell, Fuseli, 60.

23. Powell, Fuseli, 60.

jump to consider the woman in *The Nightmare* to be “a projection of Anna Landolt.”²⁴ As Nicolas Powell, author of *Fuseli: The Nightmare*, relates that even if the woman on the back of the canvas is not Anna Landolt, it is evident that “*The Nightmare* was inspired by his hopeless passion for her, the painting is deeply impregnated with Fuseli’s obsessive, ambivalent sexual feelings.”²⁵ Because of Fuseli’s feelings for Anna and his dreams about her, *The Nightmare* is a “deliberate allusion to traditional images of Cupid and Psyche meeting in her bedroom at night; here the welcomed god of love has been transformed into a demonic incubus of erotic lust.”²⁶

Henri Fuseli part 2 in audio



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The horse, which the creature rode into the room on, is an ancient and important symbol. A horse in a painting is “associated with sexual energy, impetuous desire or lust,” and this is especially true in Fuseli’s painting.²⁷ It is an “ancient masculine symbol of sexuality” that is often “associated with the devil.”²⁸ A very noticeable

24. Powell, *Fuseli*, 60.

25. Powell, *Fuseli*, 60.

26. Metter, *Mary Shelley*, 243.

27. Jack Tresidder, *The Complete Dictionary of Symbols in Myth, Art and Literature*, (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2004), 242.

28. Powell, *Fuseli*, 56.

difference between the 1781 and the 1791 paintings is colour of the horse – in the early version it is a dark horse and in the later it is white. The black horse is a representation of death, while the white horse is “a solar symbol of light, life and spiritual illumination.”²⁹ The change in colour of the horse could be a manifestation of the changing ideas of the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) group, with which Fuseli was associated. By the beginning of the 1780’s, *Sturm und Drang* had become aware of new theories of electricity and electromagnetic impulses from books that had been published.³⁰ “The moment of Terror” that the Romantics sought to depict had become a “violent electrical discharge, with its accompanying light and smell.”³¹ Thus, on a symbolic level, a horse that was the black of death, would become white – a symbol of light. On a less theoretical level, during a shot of lightning, even things that had previously been a very dark colour will reflect enough of the light to appear to be a ghastly and ghostly white colour.

It is not completely unthinkable to see the second version of the painting to be painted in the light of a sheet lightning strike.³² The first version of the painting is rich with colour, especially red, but everything contains what could be perceived as the ‘correct’ sort of colour. However, the second version is almost completely monochromatic. With the exception of the tiniest bit of pinkish pigment in the sleeper’s skin, the entire painting is shades of grey. This sudden shift into a monochromatic palette could be easily understood to be due to Fuseli’s and *Sturm und Drang*’s ideas of electricity and lightning.

This reference to electricity would also refer back to the clinical definition of a nightmare. While the nightmare was a form of sleep

29. Tresidder, *Complete Dictionary*, 241.

30. Tomory, *Life*, 125.

31. Tomory, *Life*, 125.

32. Tomory, *Life*, 125.

paralysis, the treatise on electricity had found that a paralyzed limb could be made to move through the application of an electrical shock.”³³ Thus, a painting of a nightmare with the light of electrical lightning would be a circular reference to the new sciences of the time.

As mentioned before, the first version of the painting is alive with the colour red. It is almost the only colour in the room other than white. Fuseli’s use of this colour was not a simple stylistic choice. In his *Aphorisms on Art*, from 1818, Fuseli stated that colors can have stimulating or relaxing affects, much like music.³⁴ Of the colour red, in particular, Fuseli said that “scarlet or deep crimson rouses [and] determines.”³⁵ Symbolically, red was an “active and masculine colour of ...energy, aggression, danger...emotion, passion.. [and] strength”; it was the colour most associated with sexuality and was “the colour of arousal”; it is important then, to notice that the woman is completely encircled by red fabric.³⁶ It is the colour of the curtains as well as the colour of the blanket that is under her. However, it is interesting to note that while she is engulfed in red, the only colour to actually touch her in the 1781 version is white – the colour of purity. Fuseli’s aggressive desires, while encompassing her, have no impact on the actual state of her pureness in his eyes.

The female sleeper is completely surrounded and overtaken by masculine sexuality. She is encompassed by the masculine, sexual colour red. The masculine and sexual image of the incubus sits

33. Tomory, *Life*, 125.

34. Henry Fuseli, "Aphorisms on Art," in *Art in Theory, 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 952.

35. Fuseli, *Aphorisms*, 952.

36. Tresidder, *Complete Dictionary*, 409.

on her, overcoming her with his gothick allure and hideousness.³⁷ The horse is what brought the incubus to her and it also is a male sexuality symbol. To further show masculine sexuality, the 1791 version of the painting has the incubus playing a pipe or flute, which is a phallic symbol of masculine sexuality.³⁸ Her passive posture of sexual acceptance shows that she is completely overcome by this overwhelming masculine presence.³⁹ A circumstantial detail of interest is the sleeper's single adornment on her nightgown. A tiny yellow heart is pressed against her chest. Yellow is sometimes seen to be the traditional colour of betrayal, cowardice, and disloyalty—could this be a reference to her 'betraying heart'?

Fuseli's *The Nightmare* is a painting that shows the desires of its creator, reveals the betrayal of unrequited love and contains the mysteries of his psyche.⁴⁰ It shows his sexual lust and passion for Anna Landolt and reveals his angst over the un-reciprocated desires. It displays his sadistic/masochistic predilection of dominant and submissive relationships – something that can also be seen in his drawings.⁴¹ It also shows the emotional irrationality and fear so prevalent in Romantic painting. *The Nightmare* was considered to be a highly disturbing painting in its time and it “continues to hold the modern observer because it represents an everyday – or every night- phenomenon in terms which are instantly comprehensible”; it would seem that Fuseli made a raid on what Jung was to call the ‘collective unconscious.’⁴²

37. Metter, Mary Shelley, 121.

38. Powell, Fuseli, 75.

39. Metter, Mary Shelley, 121.

40. Andrew Webber, *The Doppelganger: Double Visions in German Literature*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 240.

41. Powell, Fuseli, 64.

42. Powell, Fuseli, 64.

William Blake section audio



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-6>

William Blake

William Blake is famous today as an imaginative and original poet, painter, engraver and mystic. But his work, especially his poetry, was largely ignored during his own lifetime, and took many years to gain widespread appreciation.

The third of six children of a Soho hosier, William Blake lived and worked in London all his life. As a boy, he claimed to have seen 'bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars' in a tree on Peckham Rye, one of the earliest of many visions. In 1772, he was apprenticed to the distinguished printmaker James Basire, who extended his intellectual and artistic education. Three years of drawing murals and monuments in Westminster Abbey fed a fascination with history and medieval art.

In 1782, he married Catherine Boucher, the steadfast companion and manager of his affairs for the whole of his checkered, childless life. He taught Catherine to read and write, as well as how to make engravings. Much in demand as an engraver, he experimented with combining poetry and image in a printing process he invented himself in 1789. Among the spectacular works of art this produced were ‘The Marriage of Heaven and Hell’, ‘Visions of the Daughters of Albion’, ‘Jerusalem’, and ‘Songs of Innocence and Experience’.

Excerpted from: “William Blake,” in *LumenLearning: English Literature II*, accessed September 19, 2020, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/atd-bhcc-englishlit/chapter/biography-william-blake/> Lumen Learning material is shared via the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](#) (CC: BY 4.0)



William Blake, The Ancient of Days, Relief and white-line etching with color printing and hand coloring, 1794

Blake experimented with relief etching, a method he used to produce most of his books, paintings, pamphlets and poems. The process is also referred to as illuminated printing, and the finished products as illuminated books or prints. Illuminated printing involved writing the text of the poems on copper plates with pens and brushes, using an acid-resistant medium. Illustrations could appear alongside words in the manner of earlier illuminated manuscripts. He then etched the plates in acid to dissolve the untreated copper and leave the design standing in relief (hence the name).



William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul* title page, Relief etching with hand coloring, 1826.

This is a reversal of the usual method of etching, where the lines of the design are exposed to the acid, and the plate printed by the intaglio method. Relief etching was intended as a means for producing his illuminated books more quickly than via intaglio. The pages printed from Blake's plates were hand-coloured in watercolours and stitched together to form a volume. Blake used illuminated printing for most of his well-known works, including *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, *The Book of Thel*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *Jerusalem*.⁴³

43. J. Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), n.p.; M. Phillips,

Excepted and adapted from: Wikipedia, September 19, 2020, s.v. “William Blake.”

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British Landscape Painting in audio



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British Landscape Painting

British Landscape painting has its roots in land ownership. Before the era of democratized literacy, new land owners would commission painters to paint their land – the painting would then be kept as a land deed. Sometimes the land owner and his family would be included in the painting foreground, but these paintings were always about the reproduction of the land owner’s boundaries (not unlike aerial photos of farmland in the twentieth century). When military endeavours came to Canada, landscape painters – both in the French and British troops – were part of the military and many high ranking officers were highly trained in landscape

William Blake: *The Creation of the Songs*, (London: The British Library, 2000), n.p.

sketching. Part of this was that old tradition of ownership via reproduction, but also there was the more practical need for record of terrain to help with map making.



John Robert Cozens, *Lake Albano*, watercolour, c. 1777.

Eventually landscape painting in Britain was no longer a tool – it was considered an art form and it was a perfect vehicle for Romanticism and the Sublime. But bear in mind that the old idea that ‘what you see you own’ was (and is) quite prominent in the British

perspective of the world and no matter how dramatic a Romantic Landscape may have been, that cultural aspect was often present in some way.

Watercolour made for the perfect medium for painting on the spot. Watercolour painting rose to prominence in the 1700’s. The best academies, particularly the British Woolwich Military Academy, placed great emphasis on introducing field officers to drawing and painting, a vital talent when planning attacks or sieges. These men, invariably from the upper classes, took this skill into their civilian lives and the idea of keeping a personal sketching or painting journal became part of the expected accomplishments of a classical education.

The Grande Tour

Landscape painting was a major part of the traditional *Grand Tour* of the coming-of-age middle and upper class after the 16th century. This tour, through Western Europe



Winsor & Newton ad published on The Photographic Journal, 1914

was one of the final moments of training of a young person before they entered full adulthood. Throughout the journey, there were scheduled stops to enjoy the scenery and paint small travel journal paintings of the landscape. Young men on the Grand Tour were frequently accompanied by a drawing master. Watercolours were ideal for these travellers. They were highly portable, quick drying, and a kit needed only some paints and a few brushes. However, the colours had to be ground and mixed at each artist's studio. The popularity of the medium created a demand for good materials. Winsor-Newton, still in business today, began to produce colours for both the government's academies and for private individuals. Early in the 1700s the scheduled stops during the Grand Tour were all about documenting the ruins and city-scapes, but later in the 1700s and into the 1800s British travellers wanted to paint the landscape around them – generally in watercolour or ink – and use them as a 'photo album' of their trip.

John Robert Cozens was a British landscape painter who achieved fame and deeply influenced future generations of British landscape painters. In 2003, his watercolour and pencil work of *Lake Albana* (shown above) sold for over 2.4 million pounds, the highest price a watercolour painting has even sold for. His work, usually showing vistas of Italy and Roman ruins, does not quite reach the Romantic and Sublime heights of the artists who would come after him, but he was part of establishing a strong and vibrant landscape tradition in Britain at the turn of the 1700s into the 1800s.

Popular stops and destinations during the Grand Tour (depending on one's personal tastes and financial standings) was a trip to Rome via Paris but, as the French Revolution progressed it became more and more impossible for people in Britain to travel down to Italy without going a very long way or travelling through dangerous (and forbidden) territory in France. As a result, they began to travel throughout the British Isles, doing a pared down, domestic version of the Grand Tour. This democratized the travel and the art created a bit, because it was much less expensive to travel so close to home. It also meant that the later watercolours were of home but

with a southern European-looking flair. (It was good old England, but it *looked* like Italy.) To do this, artists employed a compositional scheme called “The Picturesque”.

The Picturesque in audio



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-8>

The Picturesque



It was late in the 1700s that Rev. William Gilpin used the term ‘Picturesque’ to describe a *kind* of painting – previously the word had meant ‘like a picture’ but in Gilpin’s usage it had a prescribed and particular

meaning. For Gilpin, the picturesque fell somewhere between beautiful and sublime, and both texture and composition were important in a “correctly picturesque” scene. According to his prescription, the texture of the scene should be rough, intricate, varied, or broken, and without obvious straight lines. The composition could work as a unified whole, incorporating several elements: a dark foreground with untamed growth and rocks or a front screen or side screens of trees or bushes or other foliage element, a brighter middle distance usually consisting of some kind of body of water but not always, and at least one further, less distinctly depicted distance. A ruin of some kind would add interest, but was not necessary. A low viewpoint, which tended to emphasize

the Sublime, was always preferable to a perspective from a high vantage point (although this rule was open to interpretation).The rules generally meant:

- the foreground should be rocky and unkempt, and if not, then at least darkened.
- the sides should have trees framing, possibly a screen of trees creeping into the foreground.
- the mid-ground should be bright, with water if possible. Maybe some ruins or possibly some calm animals or people – never working hard, mostly in leisure. If working then working picturesquely.
- the background should contain aerial perspective of hills or mountains.
- All should be unkempt and untouched looking – the wild and foreboding wilderness or the quaint forgotten past. Never manicured, never contrived.



Which sounds like a strict set of rules that would have fallen out of fashion, right? Yet, all these landscape photos follow many of the rules of the Picturesque. While it is true that not every landscape photo or painting in existence follows a Picturesque composition, many of the landscapes that, even in the twenty-first century, are considered the most ‘beautiful’ follow Rev. Gilpin’s suggestions.



This is a passage from a book, printed in Britain in 1827 by a woman named Jane Webb Loudon, a friend of John “Mad” Martin who we’ll get to later, set in the far flung future (2126) where women of the royal court wear trousers and things

are run by steam (yes, this is sort of a steampunk book – although not so much about the steam as about galvanized mummies) called *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*. Which isn't the sort of book you'd expect to have much in common with the picturesque tradition, and yet...

“The windows of the library opened to the ground, and looked out upon a fine terrace, shaded by a verandah, supported by trelliswork, round which, twined roses mingled with vines. Below, stretched a smiling valley, beautifully wooded, and watered by a majestic river winding slowly along; now lost amidst the spreading foliage of the trees that hung over its banks, and the shining forth again in the light as a lake of liquid silver. Beyond, rose hills majestically towering to the skies, their clear outline now distinctly marked by the setting sun, as it slowly sank behind them, shedding its glowing tints of purple and gold upon their heathy sides; whilst some of its brilliant rays even penetrated through the leafy shade of the veranda, and danced like summer lightning...”⁴⁴

Sound like something you've seen recently?

44. Jane Webb Loudon, *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, (Project Gutenberg, 1827), n.p.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/56426/56426-h/56426-h.htm>[



Robert S. Duncanson, *Scottish Landscape*, oil on canvas, 1871

Maybe the photos, the description in an old steampunk book, and some old paintings don't convince you that the Picturesque is still a well-loved and culturally relevant compositional device. Perhaps you feel that these examples have been hand-

picked (they were). But consider, if you will, what a child draws when given the opportunity. Children will draw what they experience and what they are familiar with, so the compositions they will create by default are heavily influenced by the culture and environment they grow up in.

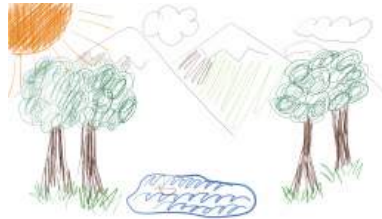
The Picturesque part 2 in audio



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-9>

When I was a child, this was a the kind of drawing I would draw when I wasn't sure what to draw next (this is assuming I wasn't ritualistically drawing all my family over and over like they were in peril of forgetting their children or sibling and



also in the unlikely event that I had grown tired of drawing brides in fancy dresses). I grew up with the Rocky Mountains just on the edge of the horizon so my attempts at grand vistas always included them.

However, children who grow up without mountains as part of their environment tend to not include mountains and will instead include rolling hills, or some other device to denote the horizon, but utilizing elements of the Picturesque appears to be common. It seems that many children in Canada, when drawing the landscape, will default to using Picturesque compositional devices. Is this because the Picturesque is an instinctual way to communicate the land? No, not at all. It is largely because of Canada's connection to British traditions. Every free photo calendar from a grocery store or bank will have at least a few Picturesque landscape photos. So many inspiring computer wallpapers, nearly all the 'good' vacation photos, and a variety of moving Canada tourism commercials in Canada use this composition. As a former British colony some cultural communication devices don't die when legal ties are cut.

Canada has a tradition of using the land as a way to bind the country together. Landscape painting was used as a way to seem to legally claim the lands that had been taken in breach of British law. Landscape painting was used as a way to call the diverse and widespread settlers of the country together. Landscape painting was used as a way to advertise the region's riches of natural resources and alluring adventures. The Group of Seven were a group of seven settler artists (plus Tom Thomson) with the purpose of creating Canadian art. This 'new' Canadian art had to be:



Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, oil on canvas, 1916-17

- “Autochthonic” – Native. Born from the Land itself. Words like “Indigenous” and “Native” were words used to describe this new national art,
- Must be free of outside, European influences,
- First Nations must never appear (nor can French-Canadians), and as a result
- The group travelled by box car,

although they were all more or less financially stable, on the newly completed CPR railway across Canada as a service to the government – ‘documenting’ the ‘wilderness.’⁴⁵

Over a hundred years after Rev. Gilpin codified the rules of the Picturesque, on an entirely different continent, those same rules were being applied over and over to make highly marketable art and to strengthen cultural heritage.

Hierarchy of Painting Genres in Britain

Remember how painting genres were dealt with in a hierarchical order in France? It wasn't much different in England – History painting was still at the top, Still Life at the bottom, Landscape and Portrait and Genre in the middle, but before this sudden interest in nature and the British Landscape, the lowly landscape painting was only slightly better than the painting of somebody's dog.

- Painting Hierarchy
- Historical Painting
- Portrait
- Genre
- Landscape
- Animal
- Still Life

45. Dr. Leslie Dawn, "The Group of Seven and Tom Thompson", (lecture, ARTH 3151: Canadian Art History, Lethbridge, AB, 2006).

John Constable section audio



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-10>

John Constable



John
Constable,
The
Haywain, oil
on canvas,
1821

Constable was born in East Bergholt, Suffolk and was largely self-taught. As a result, he developed slowly as an artist. While most landscapists of the day travelled extensively in search of picturesque or sublime scenery, Constable never left England. He had many children and his wife died; he had financial troubles and stayed close

to home to take care of his family. By 1800 he was a student at the Royal Academy schools but only began exhibiting in 1802 at the Royal Academy in London. His paintings were not well respected in Britain, even as Romantic Landscape painting was becoming popular. But later at the Paris Salon (where his *British Landscape* won the gold medal). He later influenced the Barbizon School, the French Romantic movement, and the Impressionists.

Watch a video that analyzes Constable's *The Haywain* here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVmczLwIU00&feature=youtu.be>

Studying the English painter John Constable is helpful in understanding the changing meaning of nature during the industrial revolution. He is, in fact, largely responsible for reviving the importance of landscape painting in the 19th century. A key event, when it is remembered that landscape would become the primary subject of the Impressionists later in the century.

Landscape had had a brief moment of glory amongst the Dutch masters of the 17th century. Ruisdael and others had devoted large canvases to the depiction of the low countries. But in the 18th century hierarchy of subject matter, landscape was nearly the lowest type of painting. Only the still-life was considered less important. This would change in the first decades of the 19th century when Constable began to depict his father's farm on oversized six-foot long canvases. These "six-footers" as they are called, challenged the status quo. Here landscape was presented on the scale of history painting.

Why would Constable take such a bold step, and perhaps more to the point, why were his canvases celebrated (and they were, by no less important a figure than Eugène Delacroix, when Constable's *The Hay Wain* was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1824)?

The Hay Wain does include an element of genre (the depiction of a common scene), that is the farm hand taking his horse and wagon (or wain) across the stream. But this action is minor and seems to offer the viewer the barest of pretenses for what is virtually a pure landscape. Unlike the later Impressionists, Constable's large polished canvases were painted in his studio. He did, however, sketch outside, directly before his subject. This was necessary for Constable as he sought a high degree of accuracy in many specifics. For instance, the wagon and tack (harness, etc.) are all clearly and specifically depicted, The trees are identifiable by species, and Constable was the first artist we know of who studied meteorology so that the clouds and the atmospheric conditions that he rendered were scientifically precise.

Constable was clearly the product of the Age of Enlightenment and its increasing confidence in science. But Constable was also deeply influenced by the social and economic impact of the industrial revolution.

Prior to the 19th century, even the largest European cities counted their populations only in the hundreds of thousands. These were mere towns by today's standards. But this would change rapidly. The world's economies had always been based largely on agriculture. Farming was a labour intensive enterprise and the result

was that the vast majority of the population lived in rural communities. The industrial revolution would reverse this ancient pattern of population distribution. Industrial efficiencies meant widespread unemployment in the country and the great migration to the cities began. The cities of London, Manchester, Paris, and New York doubled and doubled again in the 19th century. Imagine the stresses on a modern day New York if we had even a modest increase in population and the stresses of the 19th century become clear.

Industrialization remade virtually every aspect of society. Based on the political, technological and scientific advances of the Age of Enlightenment, blessed with a bountiful supply of the inexpensive albeit filthy fuel, coal, and advances in metallurgy and steam power, the northwestern nations of Europe invented the world that we now know in the West. Urban culture, expectations of leisure, and middle class affluence in general all resulted from these changes. But the transition was brutal for the poor. Housing was miserable, unventilated and often dangerously hot in the summer. Unclean water spread disease rapidly and there was minimal health care. Corruption was high, pay was low and hours inhumane.

What effect did these changes have on the ways in which the countryside was understood? Can these changes be linked to Constable's attention to the countryside? Some art historians have suggested that Constable was indeed responding to such shifts. As the cities and their problems grew, the urban elite, those that had grown rich from an industrial economy, began

to look to the countryside not as a place so wretched with poverty that thousands were fleeing for an uncertain future in the city, but rather as an idealized vision.

The rural landscape became a lost Eden, a place of one's childhood, where the good air and water, the open spaces and hard and honest work of farm labour created a moral open space that contrasted sharply with the perceived evils of modern urban life. Constable's art then functions as an expression of the increasing importance of rural life, at least from the perspective of the wealthy urban elite for whom these canvases were intended. *The Hay Wain* is a celebration of a simpler time, a precious and moral place lost to the city dweller.

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, "Constable and the English landscape," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/constable-and-the-english-landscape/>.

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Joseph Mallord William Turner in audio



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Joseph Mallord William Turner



J. M. W. Turner, *Christchurch, Oxford*, watercolour on paper, c. 1794.

James Mallord William Turner was a child prodigy who had no idea he would develop into one of the premier Romantic Landscape painters of his time. At age 14 he was accepted into the Royal Academy by Sir Joshua Reynolds and by age 16 or 17 he was creating watercolour pieces like the one above. By the age of 21 he was exhibiting oil paintings, starting with *Fisherman at Sea*, with the Academy.



Joseph Mallord William Turner,
Fishermen at Sea, oil on canvas, 1796.

Turner was financially independent, although not due to family money as he was born into a staunchly lower-middle class family, and as an established artist he travelled extensively every year. Basically, he was the opposite of Constable, who was one year his junior. He was also very popular with the Academy

because of his technical abilities and his ability to innovate. As with most who rise to fame based on innovation, his good name in the mainstream art world didn't last forever. Starting out as highly talented artist meant that he also became a bit of an egotist and pushed his artistic innovations further than made his fellow Academy members (and the critics) comfortable. However, during his earlier years he found a name for himself as a painter of Seascapes. He also found good fortune in painting real-world events – contemporary history paintings of the sea.

Ambiguity was on Turner's mind when he began work on his painting, whose full title is *The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last berth to be broken up*, 1838. He was familiar with the namesake ship, HMS Temeraire, as were all Britons of the day. Temeraire was the hero of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, where Napoleon's forces were defeated, and which secured British naval dominance for the next century.

By the late 1830s, however, Temeraire was no longer relevant. After retiring from service in 1812 she was

converted into a hulk, a ship that can float but not actually sail. She spent time as a prison ship, housing ship, and storage depot before she was finally decommissioned in 1838 and sent up the River Thames to a shipyard in London to be broken into scrap materials. That trip on the Thames was witnessed by Turner, who used it as inspiration for his famous painting.



J. M. W. Turner, *The Fighting Temeraire*, oil on canvas, 1849

For many Britons, *Temeraire* was a powerful reminder of their nation's long history of military success and a living connection to the heroes of the Napoleonic Wars. Its disassembly signaled the end of an historical era. Turner celebrates *Temeraire's* heroic past, and he also depicts a technological change which had already begun

to affect modern-day life in a more profound way than any battle.

Rather than placing *Temeraire* in the middle of his canvas, Turner paints the warship near the left edge of the canvas. He uses shades of white, grey, and brown for the boat, making it look almost like a ghost ship. The mighty warship is being pulled along by a tiny black tugboat, whose steam engine is more than strong enough to control its larger counterpart. Turner transforms the scene into an allegory about how the new steam power of the Industrial Revolution quickly replaced history and tradition.

Believe it or not, tugboats were so new that there wasn't even a word for what the little ship was doing to *Temeraire*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Turner's title for his painting is the first ever recorded use of the word "tugged" to describe a steamship pulling another boat.

In addition to the inventive title, Turner included in the exhibition catalog the following lines of text, which he modified from a poem by Thomas Campbell's "Ye Mariners of England":

**The flag which braved
the battle and the
breeze
No long owns her**

This was literally true:
Temeraire flies a white
flag instead of the British
flag, indicating it has
been sold by the military
to a private company.

Furthermore, the poem acknowledges that the ship now

has a different function. Temeraire used to be a warship, but no more.

In 1838 Temeraire was towed approximately 55 miles from its coastal dock to a London shipyard, and untold numbers of Britons would have witnessed the ship's final journey. However, the Temeraire they saw only lightly resembled the mighty warship depicted by Turner. In reality her masts had already been removed, as had all other ornamentation and everything else of value on the ship's exterior and interior. Only her barren shell was tugged to London.

Turner's painting doesn't show the reality of the event. He instead chose to depict Temeraire as she would have looked in the prime of her service, with all of its masts and rigging. This creates a dramatic juxtaposition between the warship and the tiny, black tugboat which controls its movements.

In fact there would have been two steamships moving Temeraire, but Turner exercised his artistic creativity to capture the emotional impact of the sight. Contemporary viewers recognized that *The Fighting Temeraire* depicts an ideal image of the ship, rather than reality.

Strong contrast is also visible in the way Turner applied paint to the various portions of his canvas. Temeraire is highly detailed. If you were to stand inches away from the painting, you would clearly see minuscule things like individual windows, hanging ropes, and decorative designs on the exterior of the ship. However, if you looked over to the sun and clouds you would see a

heavy accumulation of paint clumped on the canvas, giving it a sense of chaos and spontaneity.

J. M. W. Turner part 2 in audio



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-12>



J. M. W. Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway*, oil on canvas, 1844.

Many works by Turner in this period of his life, like *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* and *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (left), use the same effect, but *The*

Fighting Temeraire stands out because of the naturalistic portrayal of the ship compared to the rest of the work.

Turner thought *The Fighting Temeraire* was one of his more important works. He never sold it, instead keeping it in his studio along with many of his other canvases. When he died in 1851 he bequeathed it and the rest of the paintings he owned to the nation. It quickly became

seen as an image of Britain's relationship to industrialization. Steam power has proved itself to be much stronger and more efficient than old technology, but that efficiency came with the cost of centuries of proud tradition.

Beyond its national importance, *The Fighting Temeraire* is also a personal reflection by the artist on his own career. Turner was 64 when he painted it. He'd been exhibiting at the Royal Academy of Arts since he was 15, and became a member at age 24, later taking a position as Professor of Painting. However, the year before he painted *The Fighting Temeraire* Turner resigned his professorship, and largely lived in secrecy and seclusion.

Although Turner remained one of the most famous artists in England until his death, by the late 1830s he may have thought he was being superseded by younger artists working in drastically different styles. He may have become nostalgic for the country he grew up in, compared to the one in which he then lived. *Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway* would reflect a similar interest in the changing British landscape several years later, focusing on the dynamic nature of technology. *The Fighting Temeraire* presents a mournful vision of what technology had replaced, for better or for worse.

Excerpted from: Dr. Abram Fox, "J. M. W. Turner, *The Fighting Temeraire*," in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, accessed September 20, 2020, [https://smarthistory.org/turner-the-fighting-](https://smarthistory.org/turner-the-fighting-temeraire/)

[temeraire/](#).

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By 1840, Turner's innovations, which were not universally accepted as good workmanship by all, collided with the British Empire's historical connections to slavery. Dredging up that shameful history, since slavery was now illegal in England, and combining it with Turner's frenzied, brush-y style created an art-world scandal. And scandal and derision is not something Turner was used to. The young man who used to purposely delay finishing his paintings so he could put the finishing touches on them while they were being hung at a show (so he could hear the compliments and gather attention) was not in a position that was prepared for the newspapers ran biting, negative reviews about his work.



Edwin Henry Landseer, *Laying Down the Law*, oil on canvas, 1840.

It would be unfair to judge the mainstream art world without establishing what they were expecting at the show. This piece, by Sir Edwin Landseer was the painting that took best in show in 1840 and it was the kind of lighthearted satire that viewers enjoyed. The dogs represent their various owners (or personalities) of the judicial system of London and while it may have been a slight jab at individuals in the legal profession, it was in no way a judgement of British culture as a whole. Unlike, Turner's *Slave Ship*...



J. M. W. Turner, *The Slave Ship: Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon Coming On*, oil on canvas, 1840.

Throwing slaves overboard when a storm was coming was a common insurance fraud perpetrated by slave runners. Like other commodities and goods, slaves were insured against loss and damage by those that transported them. However, if they died of natural causes (like illness) during the journey, the insurance did not pay out. Therefore, it was common for slavers to see a storm coming and then throw overboard anyone who was ill, dying, or deceased and then claim them as lost at sea due to the storm. While this practice was no longer in practice by British ships (as slave running was now illegal), this was part of their cultural history. Lest viewers felt unprovoked by this image or were at a loss for its subject, Turner included an excerpt of an unfinished poem that he had written in 1812 titled *Fallacies of Hope*.

*“Aloft all hands, strike the top-masts and belay;
You angry setting sun and fierce-edged clouds*

Declare the Typhoon's coming.
Before it sweeps your decks, throw overboard
The dead and dying- ne'er heed their chains
Hope, Hope, fallacious Hope!
Where is thy market now?"⁴⁶

Ultimately, Turner was determined, as a British Romantic painter, to make landscape equal to history painting and raise its standing in the Academy. In his earlier works he incorporated elements of composition and atmosphere like those of the famous 17th and 18th century landscape painter Claude Lorrain. He added meaning and narrative in his landscapes. Yet, the logical progression of his innovative painting techniques and fascination with depicting light was for him to be drawn to the sublime power of nature.

John "Mad" Martin in audio



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=199#audio-199-13>

John "Mad" Martin

There's a story that to paint *Rain Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* Turner hung his head out of a train car window during a rainstorm to experience the speed. It's highly likely that that story is more legend than fact, considering that during this time

46. A. J. Finberg, "The Life of J.M.W. Turner," (R.A., 1961), 474.

period it was quite common for most carriages in trains to have windows with no glass, so it wouldn't really matter if your head was out the window or not you'd still be getting wet. But Turner had a contemporary that definitely did something like that.

John 'Mad' Martin

John Martin, always an inventor and engineer with a sense of adventure, stood on the front-end footplate of a train that was doing a test run to prove that trains *could* go faster than horses and achieve speeds of faster than 50 MPH (about 80 KPH). Born a few years after Constable and Turner (about eight years their junior), Martin is normally considered a Victorian painter with entertainment-level use of the Romantic Sublime. He, like Fuesli and West, painted huge paintings and lived off the sales of the print copies of those paintings. His paintings really were usually of epic proportions: think sizes of six feet by ten feet at any given time.

Martin's nick name as John "Mad" Martin really didn't have a lot to do with him or his mental state. It wasn't really John who was mad, but his younger brother Jonathan (yes, a John and a Jonathan in the same family. Their parents were not all that inventive when it came to names, apparently). Jonathan suffered a few mental breakdowns and tried to burn down a church because the organ buzzed...although to tell the whole story, Jonathan had an ongoing dispute with that particular church's minister regarding doctrinal understandings and after many letters and notes, Jonathan hid in the choir loft, removed all the bibles from the building, and set fire to the hymnals. Those kind of actions are easy to poke fun of once history has moved on, and make for amusing jokes at Jonathan's expense but Jonathan is a classic example of a manic depressive or bi-polar arsonist. Unfortunately, for his brother John, Jonathan's last public outburst would deplete John's funds and set the artist on a path of financial ruin for a time. (Between the legal fees for his brother's trial and the repeated lack of success with his engineering inventions - the pursuit he loved the most - Martin's finances became quite strained at one point.)

Martin is one of these strange artists that don't follow the rules

of fine art as we know them. Usually, we think that artists are poor and unknown during their life and famous after death. Martin was the opposite. Famous and sought-out during his life, his work epitomized the Sublime. However, after his death the Sublime fell so far out of fashion that it became a source of ridicule and now he is largely forgotten by art history.



John Martin, *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion*, oil on canvas, 1812

Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion from 1812 was shown at the Academy. Martin painted the painting in a month and got really worried when he overheard the framer/hangers trying to figure out which end was up. However, despite his early concern, it went over well and sold at that very show.

Sadak was a fictional character from a pseudo-Orientalist story (completely made up by James Ridley and published in 1764) about a man sent on an impossible journey by a cruel Sultan to obtain the

Waters of Oblivion, which make the drinker forget everything they knew. The Sultan wants to use this water on Sadak's extremely beautiful wife so he can make her forget Sadak and seduce her for himself. (He feels it's a win/win situation really. If Sadak dies on the perilous journey or if he obtains the water, either way the Sultan will still be able to obtain Sadak's wife.) However, Sadak goes through his journey with trouble after trouble – this depiction of him here showing him just before he reaches the waters – and brings the water back. In the inevitable twist, the Sultan somehow ends up the victim of the water and Sadak becomes Sultan himself. (This story seems corny now, but the story was so popular at the time that it was made into a play and into an opera as well.)

The Last Judgement in audio



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The Last Judgement

The three works that follow were meant to be seen as a triptych (a grouping of three paintings hung in a row) and they were his last paintings, finished two years before his death in 1854. Collectively they're called *The Last Judgement*, but they have individual names as well. He started these paintings in 1849 or so, but it took him until 1852 to finish them.



John Martin, *The Last Judgement*, oil on canvas, 1852

The centre piece of the triptych is the first painting. *The Last Judgement* (the title of this single painting and the triptych as a whole) is an event related in the book of Revelations. During this event everyone on earth is judged by God and the Book of Life, shown on Christ's lap in the centre background of the first painting, is searched for their name while the four and twenty elders watch from either side. If, during their lifetime on Earth, the individuals being judged have been found to believe that the death and resurrection of Christ was the sacrifice needed to redeem the debt and repair the separation from God caused by the wickedness that is innately in their being, their name will be found in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Martin's first painting in his depiction of this even shows he had distinct thoughts of who would and wouldn't be found in the Lamb's Book of Life, and included portraits of people he felt would definitely be there. Scholars are still identifying portraits of people from the left side of the painting – those who were welcome in the heavenly city in the mid-ground on the left.

However, if an individual's name was not found in the Book of Life because they did not believe that Christ's sacrifice was either enough, or real in any way, they would be damned and cast into the Lake of Fire. Those souls are portrayed on the right side of the painting and here you also find Martin's personal thoughts on who would not be found in the Book. Interestingly, he didn't think much of the Pope – fully believing that it wasn't religion that would get people's names into the Book but rather their personal beliefs. In the background there are trains falling off the abyss, labelled with the names a few of the major cities of Europe. (Elements of Martin's post-apocalyptic judgement scenes have been recreated in many movies in the twentieth and twenty-first century due to their sublime use of epic emotion and horrifying symbolism.)



John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*, oil on canvas, 1952

A continuation of the right side of the first painting, *The Great Day of His Wrath* shows the fate of those that did not find their names written in the Book of Life. Here Martin is illustrating another part of the same story in Revelation when the Sixth Seal is opened.

*“...when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth...
And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the*

wrath of the Lamb:

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"⁴⁷

As you can see, he illustrated that cataclysmic destruction very well. Entire cities of people falling into the abyss, the mountains crumbling, and the sublime pyroclastic sky complete with the lightning that can be caused by intense volcanic activity. Very much in the sublime tradition but with all the stops, guards, and safeties removed.

But the Sublime horror and apocalyptic terror in his depiction of the damned melts away into Picturesque calm in a depiction of the redeemed in the final painting of the triptych, *The Plains of Heaven*.



John Martin, *The Plains of Heaven*, oil on canvas, 1852

The last picture of the triptych was meant to be hung on the left side, showing the plains of Heaven. Some say what Martin painted

47. Revelations 6: 12-17 KJV

here was related to his memory of his childhood in Allendale, as well as based on sketches by Turner, and also related to some of his own earlier, personal landscape sketches. Regardless of its aesthetic influences, it also follows very closely what the book of Revelation relates.

The river flows into the painting from the right, clear as crystal, and issuing from the throne of God that is depicted in the middle piece of the triptych. It pools in the centre – the Water of Life. The shrubby tree in the foreground would be the Tree of Life bears a variety of fruit and flowers. In the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the ground was cursed because of their sin and forever laboured to produce life, but here there is no curse on the land. Everything is clean, pure and growing well. In Heaven there no night, so notice the source of light in this painting is coming from the painting beside it- glowing from the Throne of God.

About a year after these paintings were finished Martin had a massive stroke and died a year later. However, during that time these paintings went on a colossal tour and it's said that over eight million people saw these during that tour.

The drama felt in Martin's *The Great Day of His Wrath*, is partly the reason his work fell out of fashion after his death. It was considered too theatrical and too emotional to be respected, as a new age of Realism was ushered in.

Consider the following:

For your own notes, create a time-line of the following events that have been covered and/or occurred during the time covered in chapters 1 through 4:

- French Revolution

- American Revolution
- Empire Style
- Neo-Classicism
- Bourbon Restoration Period
- French Romanticism
- Napoleonic Era
- Georgian Period
- Industrial Revolution
- Rococo
- British Romanticism
- Victorian Period

Reflect, in your own notes and for your own learning, on the following:

- Landscape painting in Britain has a long history – from relaying ownership, to depicting perfection, to narrating stories, to changing how the landscape (in paintings and in life) was thought about. Considering your own experiences, do you think the landscape has as much importance or influence now?



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5. Chapter 5 - Romanticism in Spain and Germany

Spain & Germany

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Identify the works of Francisco Goya
- Explain Goya's general philosophical and/or political motivations for his work
- Outline the basic beliefs of the German Nazarenes and explain how they relate to Germanic Romanticism
- Explain the importance of Philipp Otto Runge's relationship to landscape painting & colour theory
- Define the art term *Rückenfigur* and who invented the compositional device

Audio recording of chapter opening:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-1>

Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cFfnJ5-ly-kXdGezJSf9TCwpqV9caI4N/view?usp=sharing>

A Home Invasion is when people come into a home to steal property, but also have the intent to damage the property and/or perpetrate violence against the home occupants. In many cases the home invader breaks into the dwelling through force, but sometimes they can gain access through false pretenses and therefore can, initially, be there by the invitation and welcome of the home owner.

But what is it called when the home invaders have the intent to steal, not just items from inside the property, but they intend to steal the property itself from the rightful dwellers?

This is the case with Napoleon and Spain.

Napoleon was in a scuffle with Portugal and asked his ally, the King of Spain, if he could gain access to Portugal by moving his military through Spain. The King of Spain agreed and Napoleon used the pretext of bulking up military presence in Portugal and giving aid to the Spanish army as an ally to take control of the Spanish throne and put his brother – Joseph-Napoléon Bonaparte – on the throne. The royal family of Spain, much like the royal family of Portugal, quietly vacated the premises in the face of Napoleon's force and King Joseph I took the throne.

Napoleon felt that there were those in the Spanish royal court who were a little too anti-French and too pro-British for his comfort; so to ensure Spanish support in his planned maneuvers against Portugal (Britain's ally) and Britain, he took control of Spain. What may have seemed to Napoleon back in France as one part liberation of the Spanish people from their tired monarchy and three parts a guaranteed political union between Spain and France against Britain was not necessarily how the people of Spain saw it. The removal of the royal family caused unexpected uprisings among the people because as much as the monarchy *was* tired and corrupt

and generally just not the best, they were beloved by their subjects in the kind of way that saw the citizens of Spain not welcoming the French troops and rule.



Francisco Goya, *The Second of May 1808 or The Charge of the Mamelukes*, oil on canvas, 1814

On May 2nd, 1808 the people of Madrid rose up and resisted the elite French Imperial Guard – depicted in Francisco Goya’s painting as the historical enemy of the Spanish people, the Moors. The citizens of Madrid had gathered to protest the change in government and the removal of their royal family and the French Imperial Guard were ordered to disperse an angry, rioting, crowd by charging the people. Instead of running the people stood their ground and fought back and bloody skirmish resulted.

And that was the beginning of the Dos de Mayos uprisings.

The results, besides a long and gruesome war that created a brand new kind of warfare and caused death and suffering to innumerable

people, where law changes. Such as: anyone who was found with a weapon would be punished by death. We will see the result of *that* ruling in a little while.

Audio recording of Francisco Goya segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-2>

Francisco Goya

In Spain, there was one major job for artists – court painter – many of the famous painters from Spain in art history were court painters and this is, in part, because art and the art world in Spain was different than anywhere else in Europe. This can be traced to the impact of the Spanish Inquisition on Spanish life and culture. I always thought that the Spanish Inquisition was a thing of the medieval days and Edgar Allan Poe spine-tinglers. (Incidentally, Poe’s Inquisition-inspired *The Pit and the Pendulum* is set in the same time period as we are about to discuss, but be warned – it’s terrifying.) And while the Spanish Inquisition was *most* active during the 1300 and 1400s they definitely saw a resurgence of power after Napoleon’s reign in Spain. Interestingly, the Spanish Inquisition – or Holy Office as it was called officially – took issue with those who fought against the Napoleonic claim to the throne. Even though the Holy Office was abolished under Napoleon (remember the mind games with the Catholic Church at Napoleon’s coronation?). It is possible that as the Inquisition was losing power under the

monarchy in Spain and saw Napoleon as an opportunity; by the late 1700s the Holy Office was simply a censorship body and only prosecuted the rich who were deemed 'not Roman Catholic enough.' The Holy Office would also have been terrified of the ideals of the Enlightenment that had been creeping into Spain, despite their best efforts to censor. It is logical that they could have thought that Napoleon – a good Catholic emperor – would reinstitute their waning power. He didn't. They were disbanded and only brought together again once the Bourbon monarchy had been re-established. (And then disbanded completely and forever after that monarchy failed).



Francisco Goya, *La Maja Vestida* (The Clothed Maja) and *La Maja Desnuda* (The Nude Maja), oil on canvas, 1797-1805



Francisco Goya, *The Black Duchess* (Portrait of the Duchess of Alba), oil on canvas, 1797

Now, I say all that to talk about Francisco Goya. In 1815 Goya was brought before the Inquisition to answer for this set of paintings – which they had confiscated. The artistic nude was considered unacceptable to the Church before the Peninsular Wars, so after they were over Goya had to answer for this picture – specifically the one the right. He was asked repeatedly who his model was; not so much because the act of modeling nude was more punishable than the act of painting a nude, but because of who the model was suspected to be. There was a

saying late in the Inquisition, “Only the rich burn,” meaning that the Holy Office would only target and fully prosecute those who had property and possessions that could be forfeited to the Roman Catholic Church. It was rumoured that the model was the Duchess of Alba – and if it was, she was rich and would be a source of good money if they could confiscate her holdings on account of immoral, heretical behaviour. In this painting of Duchess of Alba, called *The Black Duchess* is pointing to an inscription in the sand that says Only Goya – which may be a reference to a bit of a crush she had on Goya (and maybe Goya on her) after the death of her husband. However, it may also simply be a device to refer to his signature, as the other painting in the Duchess series, *The White Duchess*, also shows her pointing to his signature.

But back to the Maja paintings. The first one took three years to paint, the second took five. They were returned, after being confiscated, to the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts in the late

1830s. One hundred years later, in the 1930s, Spain issued stamps with Goya's *Majas* on them. This was the first time a nude woman was on a stamp and the U.S. Mail system didn't really know what to do with that. The U.S. postal system refused to accept any incoming mail with the nude stamp (the clothed edition was fine) and returned to Spain all the mail with the *Maja Desnuda* on it.

While Goya was never actually put on trial for this painting and there isn't any record that he ever said who the model was or why he painted the picture, being called before the Inquisition caused him to lose the practical applications of his position as court painter. He kept his salary and his title, but was forced to move to the country. He bought *Quinta del Sordo* (the house of the deaf man) – called such because the previous owner had suffered an illness that had left him deaf. However, Goya was also in a state of decreasing health and bouts with an undiagnosed illness had left him with vertigo, tinnitus and deafness, so the name of his new house seemed to be a fitting choice.

All the paintings he did after he moved to *Quinta del Sordo* in 1813 were either for himself or for his friends, however while he had been in the court of the King of Spain he had created a number of works that are still well known today.



Francisco Goya, *The Family of Charles IV*, oil on canvas, 1800-01

This painting of the royal family inserts the artist into the painting in the background on the left, and it is just as confusing as Velázquez's *Las Meninas* from the 1600s that influenced it. In Valzquez's painting, it shows the scene as if the painter is painting the viewer who is standing with their back to the king and queen (which was a punishable offence – standing with one's back to the monarchy). In both



Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, oil on canvas, 1656

paintings it is a strange vantage point for the viewer because of the presence of the artist. Goya idolized Velazquez and perfected Velazquez's strange viewer placements.

Even just taking a quick look at the painting of the family of King Charles IV, it is plain to see that Goya didn't sanitize or idealize the looks of the royal family. Huge birthmark here, bulging eyes there. And strangely enough while some of these figure are firmly cemented in the portrait, some, like the two princes on the left, seem like they are pasted overtop. Obviously, it wasn't that Goya couldn't control his lighting and this was a mistake, Goya was making stylistic choices.

Also. Notice the fifth figure in from the left – the woman looking away from the viewer. This was not a comment on the intelligence or beauty of that member of the royal family, but rather an artistic choice common in royal portraits at the time. The prince – Fernando VII – was not betrothed when the painting was painted. So, it was asked that Goya would paint in his future wife and the tradition was that the face would be obscured because, obviously, he would have a wife eventually, they just didn't know what face she'd have.

Look at the King and Queen in the center. They are not idealized in the Rococo fashion, but 'realistic' or honest – as the case may be. Some say that Goya was poking fun at the royal family and they were too stupid to realize, but others think this was a calculated move on the royal family's part – by showing their riches and their faults they were showing they were honest and open and self-aware. Not hiding in frippery. Although, of course they weren't actually being completely honest or open or self-aware. The king was terribly manipulated by his wife who slept with the Prime Minister and the crowned prince bossed the king around, too. But that probably was more honesty than they wanted to share with the public... And Goya wasn't unkind for the sake of being unkind. Some of the people in this painting look just fine. Not idealized in the Rococo way, but quite unblemished. The grouping of the three on the right is the duke of Parma – Don Luis de Parma, his wife, and baby Carlos

Luis, the future Duke of Parma and they are painted quite pleasantly. One last thing to look for: notice how the head floating behind the king looks so much like the king? That's his brother.

Audio recording of Los Caprichos segment:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-3>

Often this painting is considered a kind of satire or mockery of the royal family. But this projects a different cultural lens on things than was a reality in Spain. Because of the Spanish Inquisition there wasn't a lot of room for satire or humour in art; anything too offensive would have drawn the attention of the Holy Office. As well, the Spanish people were not French – they did not dispose of their king after decades of publicly making fun of the royal family and satirizing their roles, personalities, or looks. In Spain there was obviously laughter and fun, but it did not frequently appear in art of the court, directed at the court. And on the occasion that satire did appear, if it was not carefully executed, it caused the artist to be called before the Holy Office. Goya's *Los Caprichos* series did both.



Francisco Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters from Los Caprichos*, print, 1799

The Los Caprichos series, as the title suggests was one of invention and fantasy.

Goya's use of the term is a nod to the followers of this tradition: Botticelli and Dürer and the later Tiepolo and Piranesi. It denoted the promotion of the artist's imagination over reality; invention over mere representation. However, Goya uses this trope in a very new way. Where previous caprices had been fantastic and escapist, Goya's Los Caprichos were different, as David Rosand points out: "Goya turned the inventive powers of the artist back upon his audience with indicting moral force. Pressing the limits of poetic license, he effectively annulled the contract between artist and society that had sustained the development of the capriccio.". Whereas today many people are perfectly happy to believe or accept that art can exist for art's sake, arguably, Goya believed that art should ultimately make a



Francisco Goya, *Now They're Sitting Pretty* from *Los Caprichos*, 1797-1799

The front plate of Goya's *Los Caprichos* series was *The Sleep of Reason Produces*

Monsters. In this print a man sleeps, apparently peacefully, even as bats and owls threaten from all sides and a lynx lays quiet, but wide-eyed and alert. Another creature sits at the center of the composition, staring not at the sleeping figure, but at us. Goya forces the viewer to become an active participant in the image--the monsters of his dreams even threaten us.

On 6 February 1799, Francisco Goya put an advertisement in the *Diario de Madrid*. "A Collection of Prints of Capricious Subjects," he tells the reader, "Invented and Etched by Don Francisco Goya," is available through subscription. We know this series of eighty prints as *Los Caprichos* (caprices, or follies).

Los Caprichos was a significant departure from the subjects that had occupied Goya up to that point--tapestry cartoons for the Spanish royal

residences, portraits of monarchs and aristocrats, and a few commissions for church ceilings and altars.

Many of the prints in the *Caprichos* series express disdain for the pre-Enlightenment practices still popular in Spain at the end of the Eighteenth century (a powerful clergy, arranged marriages, superstition, etc.). Goya uses the series to critique contemporary Spanish society. As he explained in the advertisement, he chose subjects “from the multitude of follies and blunders common in every civil society, as well as from the vulgar prejudices and lies authorized by custom, ignorance or interest, those that he has thought most suitable matter for ridicule.”

The *Caprichos* was Goya’s most biting critique to date, and would eventually be censored. Of the eighty aquatints, number 43, “The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters,” can essentially be seen as Goya’s manifesto and it should be noted that many observers believe he intended it as a self-portrait.

In the image, an artist, asleep at his drawing table, is besieged by creatures associated in Spanish folk tradition with mystery and evil. The title of the print, emblazoned on the front of the desk, is often read as a proclamation of Goya’s adherence to the values of the Enlightenment—without Reason, evil and corruption prevail.

However, Goya wrote a caption for the print that complicates its message, “Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters; united with her, she is the mother of the arts and source of their

wonders.” To make things even more complicated, his inscription meant to accompany the entire *Los Caprichos* etching series reads, “The artist dreaming. His only purpose is to banish harmful, vulgar beliefs and to perpetuate in this work of caprices the solid testimony of truth”.

In other words, Goya believed that imagination should never be completely renounced in favor of the strictly rational. For Goya, art is the child of reason in combination with imagination.

Audio recording of the beginnings of romanticism in Spain:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-4>

The beginnings of Romanticism in Spain

With this print, Goya is revealed as a transitional figure between the end of the Enlightenment and the emergence of Romanticism. The artist had spent the early part of his career working in the court of King Carlos III who adhered to many of the principles of the Enlightenment that were then spreading across

Europe--social reform, the advancement of knowledge and science, and the creation of secular states. In Spain, Carlos reduced the power of the clergy and established strong support for the arts and sciences.

However, by the time Goya published the *Caprichos*, the promise of the Enlightenment had dimmed. Carlos III was dead and his less respected brother assumed the throne. Even in France, the political revolution inspired by the Enlightenment had devolved into violence during an episode known as the Reign of Terror. Soon after, Napoleon became Emperor of France.

Goya's caption for "The Sleep of Reason," warns that we should not be governed by reason alone—an idea central to Romanticism's reaction against Enlightenment doctrine. Romantic artists and writers valued nature which was closely associated with emotion and imagination in opposition to the rationalism of Enlightenment philosophy. But "The Sleep of Reason" also anticipates the dark and haunting art Goya later created in reaction to the atrocities he witnessed—and carried out by the standard-bearers of the Enlightenment—the Napoleonic Guard.

Goya brilliantly exploited the atmospheric quality of aquatint to create this fantastical image. This printing process creates the grainy, dream-like tonality visible in the background of "The Sleep of Reason."

Although the aquatint process was invented in 17th century by the Dutch printmaker, Jan van de Velde, many consider the *Caprichos* to be the first prints to fully exploit this process.

Aquatint is a variation of etching. Like etching, it uses a metal plate (often copper or zinc) that is covered with a waxy, acid-resistant resin. The artist draws an image directly into the resin with a needle so that the wax is removed exposing the metal plate below. When the scratch drawing is complete, the plate is submerged in an acid bath. The acid eats into the metal where lines have been etched. When the acid has bitten deeply enough, the plate is removed, rinsed and heated so that the remaining resin can be wiped away.

Aquatint requires an additional process, the artist sprinkles layers of powdery resin on the surface of the plate, heats it to harden the powder and dips it in an acid bath.

The acid eats around the resin powder creating a rich and varied surface. Ink is then pressed into the pits and linear recesses created by the acid and the flat surface of the plate is once again wiped clean. Finally, a piece of paper is pressed firmly against the inked plate and then pulled away, resulting in the finished image.

Excerpted and adapted from: Sarah C. Schaefer, "Francisco Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015,

<https://smarthistory.org/goja-the-sleep-of-reason-produces-monsters/>.

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The *Los Caprichos* series was quickly recalled by Goya after it had been published and it was the reason for his first visit to the

Inquisition's interrogation.



Francisco Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, oil on canvas, 1814

Audio recording of May 2, 1808 segment:



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[https://openeducationalberta.ca/
19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-5](https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-5)

On May 2, 1808, hundreds of Spaniards rebelled. On May 3, these Spanish freedom fighters were rounded up and massacred by the French for crimes as serious as attacking the French Imperial Guard and for crimes as petty as having a weapon in their possession. Their blood literally ran through the streets of Madrid. Even though Goya had shown French sympathies in the past, the slaughter of his countrymen and the horrors of war made a profound impression on the artist. He commemorated both days of this gruesome uprising in paintings. Although Goya's *Second of May, 1808* (at the beginning of this chapter) is a tour de force of twisting bodies and charging horses reminiscent of Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari*, his *The Third of May, 1808 in Madrid* is acclaimed as one of the great paintings of all time, and has even been called the world's first modern painting.

We see row of French soldiers aiming their guns at a Spanish man, who stretches out his arms in submission both to the men and to his fate. A country hill behind him takes the place of an executioner's wall. A pile of dead bodies lies at his feet, streaming blood. To his other side, a line of Spanish rebels stretches endlessly into the landscape. They cover their eyes to avoid watching the death that they know awaits them. The

city and civilization is far behind them. Even a monk, bowed in prayer, will soon be among the dead.

Goya's painting has been lauded for its brilliant transformation of Christian iconography and its poignant portrayal of man's inhumanity to man. The central figure of the painting, who is clearly a poor laborer, takes the place of the crucified Christ; he is sacrificing himself for the good of his nation. The lantern that sits between him and the firing squad is the only source of light in the painting, and dazzlingly illuminates his body, bathing him in what can be perceived as spiritual light. His expressive face, which shows an emotion of anguish that is more sad than terrified, echoes Christ's prayer on the cross, "Forgive them Father, they know not what they do." Close inspection of the victim's right hand also shows stigmata, referencing the marks made on Christ's body during the Crucifixion.

The man's pose not only equates him with Christ, but also acts as an assertion of his humanity. The French soldiers, by contrast, become mechanical or insect-like. They merge into one faceless, many-legged creature incapable of feeling human emotion. Nothing is going to stop them from murdering this man. The deep recession into space seems to imply that this type of brutality will never end.

This depiction of warfare was a drastic departure from convention. In 18th century art, battle and death was represented as a bloodless affair with little emotional impact. Even the great French Romanticists were more concerned with producing a beautiful canvas

in the tradition of history paintings, showing the hero in the heroic act, than with creating emotional impact. Goya's painting, by contrast, presents us with an anti-hero, imbued with true pathos that had not been seen since, perhaps, the ancient Roman sculpture of The Dying Gaul. Goya's central figure is not perishing heroically in battle, but rather being killed on the side of the road like an animal. Both the landscape and the dress of the men are nondescript, making the painting timeless. This is certainly why the work remains emotionally charged today.

Adapted and excerpted from: Christine Zappella, "Francisco Goya, *The Third of May, 1808*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, accessed October 2, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/goya-third-of-may-1808/>.

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Francisco Goya, *For a Clasp Knife from the Disasters of War*, etching, 1810-1820

Audio Recording of The Disasters of War segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-6>

The Disasters of War Series, 1810-1820. 82 plates.

Content warning: disturbing imagery and themes of violence and death

Goya never said why he created the *Disasters of War*, but it is

generally accepted that he made them to protest the Peninsular War and other uprisings during that time period. The only thing that is known that he said about these was his original title – which wasn't the *Disasters of War* (or *Horrors of War* as it is sometimes called). It was, translated: Fatal consequences of Spain's bloody war with Bonaparte, and other emphatic caprices – which may show that he considered them another chapter of his *Caprichos* series. The series shows the brutal things that humans can do to other humans, but they are not accompanied with much (or any) written artists statement of intent.

In the piece above, *For a Clasp Knife* a clergyman is shown tied to a pole by his neck and on his chest is pinned the account of his crime – possession of a knife. The knife is strung around his neck and is a common clasp knife. However, it was illegal for citizens to possess weapons and what was likely use to cut food and pull slivers, was now considered a weapon of war and the repercussions were horrible.

Francisco Goya created the aquatint series *The Disasters of War* from 1810 to 1820. The eighty-two images add up to a visual indictment of and protest against the French occupation of Spain by Napoleon Bonaparte. The French Emperor had seized control of the country in 1807 after he tricked the king of Spain, Charles IV, into allowing Napoleon's troops to pass its border, under the pretext of helping Charles invade Portugal. He did not. Instead, he usurped the throne and installed his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, as ruler of Spain. Soon, a bloody uprising occurred, in which countless Spaniards were slaughtered in Spain's cities and countryside. Although Spain eventually expelled the

French in 1814 following the Peninsular War (1807-1814), the military conflict was a long and gruesome ordeal for both nations. Throughout the entire time, Goya worked as a court artist for Joseph Bonaparte, though he would later deny any involvement with the French “intruder king.”



Francisco Goya, *There is Nothing to Be Done from the Disasters of War*, drypoint etching, 1810-1820

The first group of prints, to which *There is Nothing to Be Done* belongs, shows the sobering consequences of conflict between French troops and Spanish civilians. The second group, of which *Cartloads for the Cemetery* is part, documents the effects of a famine that hit Spain in 1811-1812, at the end of French rule. The final set of

pictures depicts the disappointment and demoralization of the Spanish rebels, who, after finally defeating the French, found that their reinstated monarchy would not accept any political reforms. Although they had expelled Bonaparte, the throne of Spain was still occupied by a tyrant. And this time, they had fought to put him there.



Francisco Goya, *Cartloads for the Cemetery from the Disasters of War*, drypoint etching, 1810-1820



Francisco Goya, *This is Worse from the Disasters of War*, drypoint etching, 1810-1820

Although *There's Nothing to Be Done* may have crystallized the theme of *The Disasters of War*, it is not the most gruesome. This honor may belong to the print *Esto es peor* (*This is Worse*), which captures the real-life massacre of Spanish civilians by the French army in 1808. In the macabre image, Goya copied a famous Hellenistic Greek fragment, the *Belvedere Torso*, to create the body of the dead victim. Like the ancient fragment, he is armless, but this is because the French have mutilated his body, which is impaled on a tree. As in *There is Nothing to be Done*, the corpse face stares out at the viewer, who must confront his own culpability in allowing the massacre to take place. *There is Nothing to be Done*, can also be compared to the plate *No se puede*

mirar (One cannot look), in which the same faceless line of executioners points their weapons at a group of women and men, who are about to die.



Francisco Goya, *One Can't Look from the Disasters of War*, drypoint etching, 1810-1820

The *Disasters of War* were Goya's second series, made after his earlier *Los Caprichos*. This set of images was also a critique of the contemporary world in Spain that caused most people to live in poverty and forced them to act immorally just to survive. Goya condemned all levels of society, from prostitutes to clergy. But *The Disasters of War* was not the last time that Goya would take on the subject of the horrors of the Peninsular War. In 1814, after completing *The Disasters of War*, Goya created his masterpiece *The Third of May, 1808* which portrays the ramifications of the initial

uprising of Spanish against the French, right after Napoleon's takeover. Sometimes called "The first modern painting," its resemblance to *There is Nothing to Be Done* is undeniable. In this painting, a Christ-like figure stands in front of a firing squad, waiting to die. This line of soldiers is nearly identical to the murderers in the aquatint. In *The Third of May, 1808* the number of assassins and victims is countless, indicating, once again, that "there is nothing to be done." Although it is impossible to say whether the print or the painting came first, the repetition of the imagery is evidence that this theme—the inexorable cruelty of one group of people towards another—was a preoccupation of the artist, whose imagery would only become darker as he became older.

Goya's *Disasters of War* series was not printed until thirty-five years after the artist's death, when it was finally safe for the artist's political views to be known. The images remain shocking today, and even influenced the novel of famous American author Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a book about the violence and inhumanity in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Hemingway shared Goya's belief, expressed in *The Disasters of War*, that war, even if justified, brings out the inhumane in man, and causes us to act like beasts. And for both artists, the consumer, who examines the dismembered corpses of the aquatints or reads the gruesome descriptions of murder but does nothing to stop the assassin, is complicit in the violence with the murderer.

Audio recording of The Artist's Process segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-7>

The Artist's Process

Goya created his *Disasters of War* series by using the techniques of etching and drypoint. Goya was able to use this technique to create nuanced shades of light and dark that capture the powerful emotional intensity of the horrific scenes in the *Disasters of War*.

The first step was to etch the plate. This was done by covering a copper plate with wax and then scratching lines into the wax with a stylus (a sharp needle-like implement), which thus exposed the metal. The plate was then placed in an acid bath. The acid bit into the metal where it was exposed (the rest of the plate was protected by the wax). Next the acid was washed from the plate and the plate was heated so the wax softened and could be wiped away. The plate then had soft, even, recessed lines etched by the acid where Goya had drawn into the wax.

The next step, drypoint, created lines by a different method. Here Goya scratched directly into the surface

of the plate with a stylus. This resulted in a less even line since each scratch left a small ragged ridge on either side of the line. These minute ridges catch the ink and create a soft distinctive line when printed. However, because these ridges are delicate and are crushed by repeatedly being run through a press, the earliest prints in a series are generally more highly valued.

Finally, the artist inked the plate and wiped away any excess so that ink remained only in the areas where the acid bit into the metal plate or where the stylus had scratched the surface. The plate and moist paper were then placed atop one another and run through a press. The paper, now a print, drew the ink from the metal, and became a mirror of the plate.

Adapted and excerpted from: Christine Zappella, “Francisco Goya, *And there’s nothing to be done* from *The Disasters of War*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/goya-and-theres-nothing-to-be-done-from-the-disasters-of-war/>.

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Francisco Goya, *Two Old Men Eating Soup*, wall mural moved to canvas, 1819-1823

The last group of paintings that have been attributed to Goya are called the *Black Paintings*. Found on the walls of his home, they were gruesome and dark in technique and theme.

The reasons for these paintings were never explained by Goya. (I think by now you can see that he wasn't the biggest talker.) He didn't often explain his art – probably partly because of the era he lived in. It's likely that artists didn't want to write down something that could then be used as evidence of sedition or treason.

The *Black Paintings* were painted directly on the plaster of his house and were later removed from the wall and mounted on canvas for their move to the museum that purchased them (this happened many years after Goya's death. The paintings depict wildly disturbing scenes that were never meant to be seen by strangers. They represent Goya's own thoughts and statements for himself and all were titled after his death (if he gave them titles, they have been lost with him) and therefore the titles do not faithfully represent what Goya meant to communicate with the works.

While *Saturn Devouring His Son* may be the most popularly known piece from Goya's *Black Paintings*, his painting *The Dog* – depiction of what is commonly thought to be a drowning dog – has had the biggest impact on artists who followed after him because of his use of colour gradients and implied themes (but mostly the colour gradients).



Francisco Goya, *Saturn Devouring His Son*, wall mural moved to canvas, 1819-1823



Francisco Goya, *The Dog from the Black Paintings*, wall mural moved to canvas, 1819-1823

There is, of course, a major debate regarding Goya's *Black Paintings*. Most scholars firmly believe that Goya's son and grandson told the truth and that the famous artist painted

these paintings while living at *Quinta del Sordo*. But there are some who feel this may be one of the art world's most successful con jobs.

The problem with the *Black Paintings* is this: there is actually **no** evidence that Goya painted them.

So first the lack of evidence: no visitor ever mentioned them. Ever. And when you think about living in the early 1800s and giving Goya a visit and that painting of Saturn is hanging around as you sip your coffee and talk about the weather, you'd probably mention them to someone after you left the Goya residence. Probably. (I mean, I would. Hey, I wasn't even *in* the Goya house and I'm telling out about them!)

Then there's the reputed character of Goya's offspring: the sad fact is that his son was the kind of businessman that would have sold his

own mother and that his grandson was a down-on-his-luck type.¹ Then there is the work of art historian Juan José Junquera. While his work is disputed by other Goya scholars, Junquera lays the groundwork of a convincing argument. Junquera claims that according to land deeds at the time of purchase *Quintas del Sordo* was a single story home when Goya bought it.² He also found that there was no permit for an expansion to add a second floor until after Goya's death.³ These home repair and renovation facts don't seem all that interesting until we realize half of the paintings were found on the second floor walls.⁴

These findings make some people think that the paintings were painted by his son and sold either by his son or by his grandson for the money his famous name would give.

When asked if museums would remove the *Black Paintings* or re-attribute the work in face of the evidence Junquera discovered, museum curators said they would not because paintings like *The Dog* had been too influential to artists in the 1900s to be changed

1. Arthur Lubow, "The Secret of the Black Paintings," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 27, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/27/magazine/the-secret-of-the-black-paintings.html>
2. Lubow, "The Secret," <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/27/magazine/the-secret-of-the-black-paintings.html>
3. Lubow, "The Secret," <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/27/magazine/the-secret-of-the-black-paintings.html>
4. Lubow, "The Secret," <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/27/magazine/the-secret-of-the-black-paintings.html>

in their standing.⁵ And while it might seem a bit like the museum curators are playing a little more freely with the facts than one would expect, this is not an uncommon stance in museum culture. There are many famous pieces of art that are seen by contemporary viewers in ways that were never meant by the artist. Rembrandt's *The Nightwatch* was neither called "The Nightwatch" nor was it a night scene when the artist first completed it, but years of grime darkened the painting and the scene became recognized as a night view of military maneuvers. When it was suggested that the piece be cleaned (which it finally was in 2019), many suggested it be left as it was as the darkened state was how it was recognized. For some art is not firmly rooted in the realm of facts and truth, but rather in aesthetics and perceptions.

But returning to the *Black Paintings*. Are these the cleverest forgeries ever? Or are they really Goya's work? Lots of people say they know one way or the other, but what stands is that they are exceptional paintings that have influenced the path of modern art.

Audio recording of German Romanticism segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-8>

5. Lubow, "The Secret," <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/27/magazine/the-secret-of-the-black-paintings.html>

German Romanticism

Compared to English Romanticism, German Romanticism developed relatively late, and, in the early years, coincided with Weimar Classicism (1772–1805). In contrast to the seriousness of English Romanticism, the German variety of Romanticism notably valued wit, humor, and beauty.

Romanticism was also inspired by the German *Sturm und Drang* movement (Storm and Stress), which prized intuition and emotion over Enlightenment rationalism. This proto-romantic movement was centered on literature and music, but also influenced the visual arts. The movement emphasized individual subjectivity. Extremes of emotion were given free expression in reaction to the perceived constraints of rationalism imposed by the Enlightenment and associated aesthetic movements.

Sturm und Drang in the visual arts can be witnessed in paintings of storms and shipwrecks showing the terror and irrational destruction wrought by nature. These pre-romantic works were fashionable in Germany from the 1760s on through the 1780s, illustrating a public audience for emotionally charged artwork. Additionally, disturbing visions and portrayals of nightmares were gaining an audience in Germany as evidenced by Goethe's possession and admiration of paintings by Fuseli, which were said to be capable of "giving the viewer a good fright."

The early German Romantics strove to create a new synthesis of art, philosophy, and science, largely by viewing the Middle Ages as a simpler period of integrated culture, however, the German romantics became aware of the tenuousness of the cultural unity they sought. Late-stage German Romanticism emphasized the tension between the daily world and the irrational and supernatural projections of creative genius. Key painters in the German Romantic tradition include Joseph Anton Koch, Adrian Ludwig Richter, Otto Reinhold Jacobi, and Philipp Otto Runge among others.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Curation and Revision. **Provided by:** Boundless.com.

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-arthistory/chapter/neoclassicism-and-romanticism/>

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Philipp Otto Runge



Philipp Otto Runge, The Hülsenbeck Children, oil on canvas, 1805-06

Philipp Otto Runge was of a mystical, deeply Christian turn of mind, and in his artistic work he tried to express notions of the harmony of the universe through symbolism of colour, form, and numbers. He considered

blue, yellow, and red to be symbolic of the Christian trinity and equated blue with God and the night, red with morning, evening, and Jesus, and yellow with the Holy Spirit.



Philipp Otto Runge, *Der Morgen* (Morning), oil on canvas, 1808

As with some other romantic artists, Runge was interested in *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total art work, which was an attempt to fuse all forms of art. He planned such a work surrounding a series of

four paintings called *The Times of the Day*, designed to be seen in a special building, and viewed to the

accompaniment of music and his own poetry. The four paintings were to be installed in a Gothic chapel accompanied by music and poetry, which Runge hoped would be a nucleus for a new religion.⁶

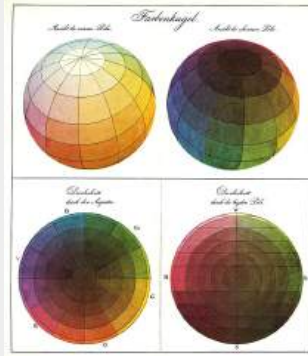
In 1803 Runge had large-format engravings made of

6. Robert Hughes, *Nothing if Not Critical : Selected Essays on Art and Artists*, (New York: A.A. Knopf) 114.; *German Masters of the Nineteenth Century: Paintings and Drawings from the Federal Republic of Germany*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1981) 190.

the drawings of the *Times of the Day* series that became commercially successful and a set of which he presented to his friend, the writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He painted two versions of *Morning* but the others did not advance beyond drawings, due to Runge's death. *Morning* was the start of a new type of landscape, one of religion and emotion. It is also considered to be his greatest work.

Runge's interest in color was the natural result of his work as a painter and of having an enquiring mind. Among his accepted tenets was that "as is known, there are only three colors, yellow, red, and blue" (said in a letter to Goethe in 1806). His goal was to establish the complete world of colors resulting from mixture of the three, among themselves and together with white and black. In the same lengthy letter, Runge discussed in some detail his views on color order and included a sketch of a mixture circle, with the three primary colors forming an equilateral triangle and, together with their pair-wise mixtures, a hexagon.

He arrived at the concept of the color sphere sometime in 1807, as indicated in his letter to Goethe in November of that year, by expanding the hue circle into a sphere, with white and black forming the two opposing poles. A color mixture solid of a double-triangular pyramid had been proposed by Tobias



Philipp Otto Runge, *Farbenkugel* or *Colour Sphere*, 1810

Mayer in 1758, a fact known to Runge. His expansion of that solid into a sphere appears to have had an idealistic basis rather than one of logical necessity. With his disk color mixture experiments of 1807, he hoped to provide scientific support for the sphere form. Encouraged by Goethe and other friends, he wrote in 1808 a manuscript describing the color sphere, published in Hamburg early in 1810. In addition to a description of the color sphere, it contains an illustrated essay on rules of color harmony and one on color in nature written by Runge's friend Henrik Steffens. An included hand-colored plate shows two different views of the surface of the sphere as well as horizontal and vertical slices showing the organization of its interior.

Runge's premature death limited the impact of this work. Goethe, who had read the manuscript before publication, mentioned it in his *Farbenlehre* of 1810 as "successfully concluding this kind of effort." It was soon

overshadowed by Michel Eugène Chevreul's hemispherical system of 1839. A spherical color order system was patented in 1900 by Albert Henry Munsell, soon replaced with an irregular form of the solid.

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia.com,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Otto_Runge

Audio Recording of The Nazarene Movement segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-9>

The Nazarene Movement

The epithet Nazarene was adopted by a group of early 19th-century German Romantic painters who aimed to revive spirituality in art. The name Nazarene came from

a term of derision used against them for their affectation of a biblical manner of clothing and hair style, but those in the group didn't really mind.

In 1809, six students at the Vienna Academy formed an artistic cooperative in Vienna called the Brotherhood of St. Luke or *Lukasbund*, following a common name for medieval guilds of painters. In 1810 four of them, Johann Friedrich Overbeck, Franz Pforr, Ludwig Vogel and Johann Konrad Hottinger moved to Rome, where they occupied the abandoned monastery of San Isidoro. They were later joined by other German-speaking artists with the same interests.

The principal motivation of the Nazarenes was a reaction against Neoclassicism and the routine art education of the academy system. They hoped to return to art which embodied spiritual values, and sought inspiration in artists of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, rejecting what they saw as the superficial virtuosity of later art.

In Rome the group lived a semi-monastic existence, as a way of re-creating the nature of the medieval artist's workshop. Religious subjects dominated their output, and two major commissions allowed them to attempt a revival of the medieval art of fresco painting. Two fresco series were completed in Rome for the Casa Bartholdy and the Casino Massimo, and gained international attention for the work of the "Nazarenes". However, by 1830 all except Overbeck had returned to Germany and the group had disbanded. Many Nazarenes became influential teachers in German art academies.

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia.com,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazarene_movement

Johann Friedrich Overbeck

While as a young artist Johan Friedrich Overbeck clearly accrued some of the polished technical aspects of the neoclassic painters he trained under at the Academy in Vienna, he was alienated by lack of religious spirituality in the themes chosen by his masters. Overbeck wrote to a friend that he had fallen among a vulgar set, that every noble thought was suppressed within the academy and that losing all faith in humanity, he had turned inward to his faith for inspiration.

In Overbeck's view, the nature of earlier European art had been corrupted throughout contemporary Europe, starting centuries before the French Revolution, and the process of discarding its Christian orientation was proceeding further now. He sought to express Christian art before the corrupting influence of the late Renaissance, casting aside his contemporary influences, and taking as a guide early Italian Renaissance painters, up to and including Raphael. Together with other disaffected young artists at the academy he started a group named the Guild of St Luke, dedicated to exploring his alternative vision for art. After four years, the differences between his group and others in the academy had grown so irreconcilable, that Overbeck (and his followers) were expelled from his own guild.



Einzug Christi von Friedrich Overbeck in der Photographie

*Johann Friedrich Overbeck,
Christ's Entry into Jerusalem,
reproduction of destroyed
painting, 1824*

He then left Germany for Rome, where he arrived in 1810, carrying his half-finished canvas of *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* (which was destroyed much later during Allied bombing during World War II). Rome became, for fifty-nine years, the centre of

his labor. He was joined by a company of like-minded artists who jointly housed in the old Franciscan convent of San Isidoro, and became known among friends and enemies by the descriptive epithet of Nazarenes. Their precept was hard and honest work and holy living; they eschewed the antique as pagan, the Renaissance as false, and built up a severe revival on simple nature and on the serious art of artist who came just before the Renaissance. The characteristics of the style thus eduved were nobility of idea, precision and even hardness of outline, scholastic composition, with the addition of light, shade and colour, not for allurements, but chiefly for perspicuity and completion of motive. Overbeck in 1813 joined the Roman Catholic Church, and thereby he believed that his art received Christian baptism.

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia.com,
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Johann_Friedrich_Overbeck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Friedrich_Overbeck)



Johann Friedrich Overbeck, Portrait of Franz Pfaff, oil on canvas, 1810

Overbeck painted his idealized portrait of Franz Pforr in Rome in 1810. It is one of the most important Nazarene works and was intended to show his friend in a state of complete happiness. Overbeck created this work in response to a dream of Pforr's, in which the latter saw himself as a history painter in a room lined with old masters, entranced by the presence of a beautiful woman. In


Overbeck's painting Pforr, finely dressed in old German costume, sits in the arch of a Gothic window. Like a Madonna, his "wife" is reading in the Bible as she kneels, holding her handwork. The background of an old German town and an Italian coast line evokes the Nazarene ideal of the inseparable bond uniting German and Italian art.⁷

Audio recording of Caspar David Friedrich segment:



One or more

7. Google Arts & Culture, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/portrait-of-the-painter-franz-pforr-friedrich-overbeck/PwHOJJbUWjvFVw?hl=en>, accessed October 3, 2020

 *interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=234#audio-234-10>*

Caspar David Friedrich



Caspar David Friedrich, *Wandered Above the Sea of Fog*, oil on canvas, 1818

It seems strange now but for a while the art world turned its back on the German painter Caspar David Friedrich. His art didn't look like that of the famous artists from France who were being heralded as the Fathers of Modern Art – the Impressionists. Their work

was brushy, captured the impression of a moment, and ran riot with colour. Friedrich's work in comparison was considered too meticulous, too precise, too finely detailed to warrant serious critical attention in the decades that followed. But in reality, while the Impressionist's fame had an impact on the popularity of Friedrich's work in the mid-twentieth century it is most likely that being labelled the ideological harbinger of Nazi philosophy is the thing that created a dramatic depopularization of his work.⁸ He had the misfortune, in the 1930s and 1940s, to have his art appropriated by the Third Reich and Hitler's regime and to be declared as one of Hitler's favorite artists. What this does to the popularity of an artist's work, even after the death of the artist, is something akin to taking a rock and dropping it off a cliff.

8. Alina Cohen, "Unraveling the Mysteries behind Caspar David Friedrich's "Wanderer"; Artsy.net, August 6, 2018, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-unraveling-mysteries-caspar-david-friedrichs-wanderer>



Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea*, oil on canvas, 1810

Over the last few decades though the tide of opinion has turned, after Friedrich was thrust back into the art historical lime light by a fanciful book, published in the 1970s, that traced the lineage of art influence from the Romantics to the New York Abstract Expressionists.⁹ Now it is generally accepted that both in his technical brilliance and theoretically in his views of what the purpose of art should be, Friedrich was as radical as they come. But if proof were ever needed again of his credentials as one of the great forerunners of modern art, then *The Monk by the Sea* would have to be it.

9. Cohen, "Unraveling," <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-unraveling-mysteries-caspar-david-friedrichs-wanderer>

Exhibited in the Academy in Berlin in 1810 along with its companion piece *Abbey in the Oak Forest*, it depicts a monk standing on the shore looking out to sea. The location has been identified as Rügen, an island off the north-east coast of Germany, a site he frequently painted.

The monk is positioned a little over a third of the way into the painting from the left, to a ratio of around 1:1.6. The same ratio can be found frequently in Western art and is known variously as the golden ratio, rule or section. Aside from this nod to tradition however there is little else about this painting that can be described as conventional.



Caspar David Friedrich, *The Abbey in the Oakwood*, oil on canvas, 1810

The horizon line is unusually low and stretches uninterrupted from one end of the canvas to the other.

The dark blue sea is flecked with white suggesting the threat of a storm. Above it in that turbulent middle section blue-grey clouds gather giving way in the highest part to a clearer, calmer blue. The transition from one to the other is achieved subtly through a technique called scumbling in which one colour is applied in thin layers on top of another to create an ill-defined, hazy effect.

The composition could not be further from typical German landscape paintings of the time. These generally followed the principles of a style imported from England known as the picturesque which tended to employ well-established perspectival techniques designed to draw the viewer into the picture; devices such as trees situated in the foreground or rivers winding their course, snake-like, into the distance. Friedrich however deliberately shunned such tricks. Such willfully unconventional decisions in a painting of this size provoked consternation among contemporary viewers, as his friend Heinrich von Kleist famously wrote: “Since it has, in its uniformity and boundlessness, no foreground but the frame, it is as if one’s eyelids had been cut off.”

There is some debate as to who that strange figure, curved like a question mark, actually is. Some think it Friedrich himself, others the poet and theologian Gotthard Ludwig Kosegarten who served as a pastor on Rügen and was known to give sermons on the shore. Kosegarten’s writings certainly influenced the painting. Von Kleist, for example, refers to its “Kosegarten effect”.

According to this pastor-poet nature, like the Bible, is a book through which God reveals Himself.

Similarly, stripping it of any literal Christian symbolism, Friedrich instead concentrates on the power of the natural climate and so charges the landscape with a divine authority, one which seems to all but subsume the figure of the monk. With nothing but land, sea and sky to measure him by, his physical presence is rendered fragile and hauntingly ambiguous.

Originally the figure was looking to the right. His feet still point in that direction. Friedrich altered this at some point, having him look out to sea. The technique of positioning a figure with their back towards the viewer is often found in Friedrich's art; the German word for it is the *rückenfigur*.

Monk by the Sea, the first instance of it in his work, is somewhat atypical in that the monk being so small and situated so low on the horizon does not 'oversee' the landscape the way Friedrich's *rückenfiguren* generally do, like in his *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*.

The *rückenfigur* technique is much more complex and intellectually challenging than those found in the picturesque. Acting as a visual cue, the figure draws us into the painting, prompting us, challenging us even, to follow its example and simply look. And so we do. Yet its presence also obscures our line of vision and rather than enhancing the view in the end disrupts it. In this sense, the *rückenfigur* while reminding us of the infinite beauty of the world also points to our inability to

experience it fully, a contradiction that we often find expressed in German Romantic art and literature.

Napoleon's army was occupying Prussia when the painting was completed and art historians have naturally looked to read the painting and its companion, which depicts of a funeral procession in a ruined abbey, as a comment on the French occupation. It would have been dangerous to be openly critical of Napoleon's forces so the paintings' political messages are subtly coded.

Both paintings – *Monk by the Sea* and *Abbey in the Oakwood* – were purchased by the young Crown Prince, Frederick William, whose mother, Queen Louise, had died a few months earlier at the age of 34. An extremely popular figure, she had pleaded with Napoleon after his victory to treat the Prussian people fairly. Her death surely would have been fresh in people's minds when they saw the paintings, a tragic loss which was very much associated with the country's own defeat to the French.

The presence of death is certainly felt in *The Monk by the Sea*, though in the monk's resolute figure we also find a source of spiritual strength, defiance even, standing, like that gothic abbey and those German oaks in its partner piece, as much perhaps a symbol of the resolve of the nation against the foreign military rule, as of the individual faced with his mortality.

Like the British painter John Constable, Friedrich drew on the natural world around him, often returning to the same area again and again. Unlike the English painter's more scientific or naturalist approach, though,

Friedrich condensed the image so as to communicate an exact emotion. As he put it, “a painter should paint not only what he sees before him, but also what he sees within himself.” It is this inward reaching project, using color and form to reveal emotional truths, that singles him out as one of the greatest and most innovative painters of his age: a true Romantic.

Adapted and excerpted from: Ben Pollitt, “Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/friedrich-monk-by-the-sea/>.

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Consider the following:

- Goya wrote that the artist’s “...only purpose is to banish harmful, vulgar beliefs and to perpetuate...the solid testimony of truth.” Do you feel this is true or do you feel there are other goals artists should have? Why do you feel that way?
- *Ruckênfigur* is a landscape compositional device and the text explains how it obscures while simultaneously enhancing the scene. Looking at Friedrich’s use of *ruckênfigur* as well as other image

you find that have this device, how does it make you feel? Do you feel invited into the piece? Why do you appreciate it (if you appreciate it) in some images, but don't appreciate (if you don't appreciate it) in others?



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6. Chapter 6 - French Realism

France

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By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of Realism
- List Realism's principle schools and artists (Barbizon, Daumier, Courbet, Bonheur, Millet, etc.)
- Identify the work of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
- Discuss Landscape painting in France in the mid-1800s
- Identify the works and philosophy of Honoré Daumier
- Identify the works of Gustave Courbet

Audio recording of chapter opening:



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Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SrFaITPpraZrRTnVWNtJo2ObOT5g5DBt/view?usp=sharing>

Remember how before Disney's remake of *The Lion King* came out in 2019, so many people were saying it was a 'live action' remake?

It was a pretty common statement and because of the realism in the movie trailers and the film stills, a lot of people didn't question the phrase. But they should have, because was *The Lion King* filmed with real lions and hyenas and warthogs? Of course not. Therefore, it really wasn't a 'live action' film – it was a film that was meant to look like real animals created through a variety of computer, CGI, and Artificial Intelligence animation. No live animals were used in the film, which means that while it was meant to look like it was real (although it may have spent more time in the Uncanny Valley than at Pride Rock in that regard) it wasn't reality. It, like its 1994 traditionally animated predecessor, was simply the creation of the filmmakers (with a little extra help from AI this time around).

Art History also had its troubles with reality falsely so called. Consider this painting by Eugene Delacroix – *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* from 1834:



Eugene Delacroix, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, oil on canvas, 1834

Delacroix told everyone who would listen when they came to see it at the 1834 Paris Salon that it was a depiction of reality; that he had gone into a harem during his trip to Algeria and had painted this based on the sketches he had created while there. The Salon attendees were enthralled by this vision of the real experiences of those in the Orient and his painting was a real favorite. A painter who would later

turn the art of painting on its head, Paul Cezanne, was intoxicated by the intense colours, while other viewers were enraptured by the exotic theme and intimate scene.¹ To have all their Orientalising desires fulfilled and proven true by this documentation of a harem was like finding treasure. The image of non-European women – sexually passive, indolent, un-industriously passing the time rather than working or reading or otherwise filling their day with activity – is how those in the Occident (Europe) viewed those in the Orient (Asia, India and Africa) and to have it laid out in such a beautiful composition was highly satisfying. It was like being told that French culture and society was the positive to the North African negative. And everyone likes it when their secret suspicions of superiority seem to proven to be correct. Obviously, it could be argued, this showed reality because it confirmed their biases.

However, just like *The Lion King* from 2019 wasn't actually real, even though people said it was and it looked like it was, so Delacroix's painting isn't Realism, even though people might say it is and it looks like it might be. First, there is the issue with Delacroix's story. He said he was given permission to enter an Algerian man's private harem. The term 'harem,' although highly sexualized and used to express both sexuality and a kind of ownership-like dominance in Western culture, was in reality quite simply a word to denote a place set aside for the women of an Islamic household. Usually only women were in that part of the house, and if men were allowed it would have only been male members of that household. In Islamic architecture the entry-ways and windows were frequently

1. Michael Prodger, "Damnation, Dante and Decadence: Why Eugene Delacroix is Making a Hero's Return," *The Guardian*, 5 February 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/05/damned-souls-decadence-eugene-delacroix-hero>.

designed to maximize light and air-flow but block out prying eyes, as the act of looking could be considered intrusive, ill-advised, or even malicious. It would have been considered quite improper for a man, who was not related to the women in Delacroix's painting, to see these women in such an intimate setting and state of dress. Because Islamic culture has such strongly held beliefs about seeing and being seen it casts doubt on Delacroix's story that he was given permission by the man of the house to enter the women's quarters to sketch them. It is unlikely that his story is entirely true, but his fellow Salon-goers back in Paris didn't know that and saw his painting as a reality.

Which brings us to the question of what is Realism? Listening to Delacroix's story, one might be tempted to say his painting of these Algerian women is Realism. It looks like its true and the artist said it was real. And one might be tempted to say that *The Lion King* is Realism too. But both of those temptations would lead you down the wrong path.

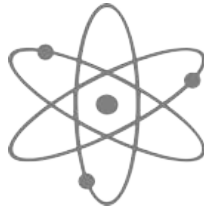
Realism, with a capital 'R', is something very specific. Just like Romanticism with a capital 'R' is something very specific. A painting that is a Realist painting might not look 'real' to the photo-trained eyes of a 21st century viewer – it might look like a painting and therefore be labelled something else. (And, while we're on the topic – a painting that looks like it could be a photograph might seem to be something that could be called Realism (because it looks 'real') but that's not capital-'R'-Realism; that's just a painting aesthetic that recreates what a camera can do.) But Realism wasn't about recreated reality on a canvas with the only goal for things to look like a replica of the original objects. Realism-with-a-capital-'R' was about capturing reality of existence. Realism paintings look like paintings, but they don't Romanticize their subject – making them more dramatic and emotionally impactful than they really are. Realism looked to faithfully reproduce the subject as a piece of a larger social picture.

Audio recording of Realism segment (con't):



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-2>



Whereas Romanticism was about emotion, Realism was about logic. Consider the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* – two characters, for much of the show’s run, live in the same apartment. One is logical and makes decisions based on eliminating as much emotion as possible. The other is emotional and makes decisions based less on logic and more on how he feels about things. Sheldon, the logical one, tends to react to Leonard, the emotional one, and in many ways Leonard serves as the impetus for Sheldon’s growth and interaction with new ideas or concepts beyond his narrower focus of interest. In many ways this could be a crude illustration of the relationship between Romanticism and Realism. Whereas Romanticism was an emotional reaction to the non-reality based logic and duty of the Neo-Classical (not unlike Leonard’s emotional response to his analytical mother), once Romanticism gained momentum the emotional indulgence of the genre was seen as too decadent or self-serving for some artists. In reaction to the emotional play of Romanticism that seemed to increasingly turn inward, the Realists rejected the inward gaze and made a declaration to depict the reality of life without the dynamic and manipulative use of emotion.

The Realists believed it was their duty to mirror the world back to the viewer and to not allow the viewer to hide in an exotic and escapist fantasy. The Realists were not interested in diving into metaphors of the Classical Era to express grandiose philosophies of noble simplicity and calm grandeur. Nor were they interested in theatrics and self-satisfaction. The Realists wanted viewers to be presented with a social reality that they could not ignore. They wanted to smack the public in the face with the plight and existence of others. However, these two art movements were roommates, so to speak, in the same house at the same time, and were the opposites needed to balance the whole; they occurred at the same time in France and reacted to each other in the Salons. It could be argued that Leonard, from *The Big Bang Theory*, could have functioned relatively fine and would have lived a fairly full and normal life without Sheldon; however, the same might not be so successfully argued regarding Sheldon in the absence of Leonard. The aggravation of Leonard's perpetually emotional existence aggravated Sheldon enough to create impetus for change, however reluctantly, especially in the beginning. Thus it was with Romanticism and Realism – Romanticism existed before Realism and could have continued to flourish without Realism, but Realism was aggravated into development by the emotional and dramatic existence of Romanticism, eventually eclipsing its emotional counterpart in popularity and evolution.



There is a genre of painting that can sometimes be mistaken for Realism, mostly because its artists always say their work show reality but really its not Realism because then it would be have

been rejected from the very institution that created it because it believed the present moment was not heroic enough to demand valued attention. The genre is *Academic Painting* and it's a genre that is rarely talked about too in depth in art history texts. At least, if it is talked about it, they don't mention it as Academic because...Academic painting and its privileged artists just isn't where it's at these days. Art History tends to tell the story of the spunky, if not at least slightly dysfunctional, underdogs of art. But in telling these stories it often makes them big and showy and attention grabbing by virtue of their conflict-driven storylines. Academic Art has less conflict, at least on the surface. The Academic artists' fight weren't against mainstream art culture, so their conflicts seem petty and individualistic by comparison. And the artists of the Academy didn't seem to function on the outskirts of societal norm so at first glance they were not plagued by the same foibles as the anti-establishment artists of the day. I say at first glance, because almost anyone, upon closer inspection, shows sign of dysfunction and drama. But don't let the present-day silence around the Academic art of the 1800s fool you – they were the big dogs of their time.

An Academic painter who would swear he only painted historical reality – in fact he said accuracy was of the highest importance to him – was Paul Delaroche. Closer scrutiny of Delaroche shows two things: fact maybe wasn't as important to him as he may have stated and he had his own secrets.

Let's start with the secrets (that probably weren't so secret). "Paul Delaroche" was not the name Delaroche was born with. His original name was Hippolyte De La Roche. If you have recently read or watched Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or if you are up on your Greek mythology you may recognize the name Hippolyte, also called Hippolyta. She features in Greek myth as the Queen of the Amazons, and also made her way to the big screen in 2017 in *Wonder Woman*. Hippolyte, while a female name in Greek myth and in the DC Comics universe, was an acceptable male name in France at this time and Hippolyte De La Roche shared the moniker,

at least partially, with his father. However, Hippolyte De La Roche didn't seem to like it all that much and changed his name to the diminutive 'Paul'. He also changed the arrangement of his last name from De La Roche to Delaroché. Which may or may not have been a good idea, because *de la roche* means 'The Rock' in French.

Paul "The Rock" Delaroché, became an Academic painter fairly early in his artistic career, exhibiting his historical paintings in the yearly Salon and eventually scoring a coveted life-time membership in the Academy. He felt that accuracy was his highest calling and prided himself on researching details of fashion and environment for his paintings. However, the critical eye of history has come to see that Delaroché took artistic liberties in ways that have no excuse if the artist is sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help them.

Audio recording of Delaroché segment (con't):



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-3>



Paul Delaroché, *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, oil on canvas, 1834

One of his most cited examples of artistic liberty winning out over honest representation is in his painting, *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*. Decisions were made in this painting that created a more dramatic feeling, and here, as in many of his other works, he was guilty of basing his paintings on superstitions

and urban legends, rather than careful research into the truth. In this execution scene a young, blindfolded woman in a kind of dungeon interior space and on a platform is being guided to an execution block. It is important to know that this is a painting depicting the beheading of Lady Jane Grey. But what is the story really? We may know Lady Grey as a flavour variation of Earl Grey tea, but Lady Grey was actually a real person. She was an English noblewoman and was put to death for treason in the 1500s. She is also known as the Nine Day Queen of England. She was the cousin of the fifteen year old king of England, King Edward VI. As the young king lay dying, he declared Lady Jane Grey his successor and new Queen of England because he knew his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth were scheming for the throne. One, a Roman Catholic, wanted the throne to take the now Protestant country back for the Catholic faith and both were illegitimate children of Edward VI's father. Edward knew that Lady Jane Grey, a year older than himself, was considered to be one of the best educated women in the country, was a devoted Protestant, and was a woman who led his country in a way he would appreciate. Lady Grey was declared *de facto* queen. But the sisters kept their scheming up and Mary used popular opinion to help her secure her desires. With the popular voice seeming to side with Mary, the Council decided to crown Mary and arrested Jane for treason. First her husband, and then she was executed. She was barely 17.

Looking at the painting, we might ask, "Where's the lie?" In this case, as is often the way, it's the details that reveal the truth of things. While the French traditionally used raised platforms to stage executions of noble persons, especially during and after the French Revolution, the British did not – they used the bare grass of the Tower Green outside the Tower of London. As well, the French would perform beheadings in indoor spaces like dungeons, but the British tended to do it outside and in the open (obviously, as they preferred that specific grassy space for executions). However, there may be some truth to the depiction of Lady Jane Grey groping with her hand for the block and being guided by another – this event is

said to have occurred after she blindfolded herself and then cried out in a panic unable to find the block. However, even with its truthful elements this historical painting is not a depiction of reality. It is the retelling of a historical story. Realism never shows history as it was believed to have happen; Realism depicted the present moment as it was observed to be.

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.

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.

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.

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Beth Gersh-Nesic, "A beginner's guide to Realism," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/a-beginners-guide-to-realism/>.

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By the early 1800s, the Academy was fully re-established as the center of the mainstream art world in France. However, they began to recognize that their obsessive focus on Neo-Classicism to the exclusion of all new art genres was starting to damage their reputation as the purveyors and trainers of the best and most innovative artists and so they began to shake things up a bit. But keep in mind they were an institution built on now-hallowed

traditions, so their shake up was subtle. Basically, landscape painting was moved up the hierarchy and a special category in the yearly art show was created specifically for landscape pieces. This might have been a radical move, if it wasn't for the fact that the Academy had done this to shore up interest in the Neo-Classical style. The new category was the *paysage historique* (historic landscape) and made landscapes eligible for consideration in the *Prix de Rome* awards – awards given to the artist of the best painting in a genre category in the show. The prize came, complete with a gold medal, with a paid stay in Rome at the French Academy there. As the most prestigious award the Academy could give out, the creation of the *paysage historique* category created a new competition field and young artists flocked to the Louvre to look at the Dutch and Flemish landscapes (the Dutch and Flemish had been into landscape centuries before the Parisian art scene gave them any serious thought) and to learn about this previously undervalued genre of painting. It also meant that viewers flocked to the Salon to view the newly created landscapes. By 1835 landscape paintings made up over a quarter of the art displayed at the Salon. Suddenly landscapes were cool and everybody was talking about them.

Historical Landscapes as an Academy genre paved the way for interesting developments in the art world. As landscape paintings took the Salon walls by storm (pun intended), the focus on including historical elements remained necessary. But as artists began to become more and more skilled at rendering the landscape in pleasing ways, and became more and more influenced by the Dutch, Flemish, and British landscape artists, the *paysage historique* began to slowly give way to another kind of landscape – a landscape of the present without much, or any, historical significance. Neo-Classicism may have been the the clinging goal for the Academy to change its mind about landscape painting, but it may have been a final nail in the coffin of the aging art style.

Audio recording of Corot part 1 segment:



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Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot was a quiet young man who didn't seem to excel at much of anything. Apprenticed to a draper after his schooling came to an end, he was bored and hated the business end of the job. But to please his father he continued in the job until he was ready to seek permission to pursue art as a career. Receiving that permission and a small yearly allowance, the artist, now in his mid-twenties, set up a studio and began to paint landscapes.

During the period when Corot acquired the means to devote himself to art, landscape painting was on the upswing and generally divided into two camps: one—historical landscape by Neoclassicists in Southern Europe representing idealized views of real and fancied sites peopled with ancient, mythological, and biblical figures; and two—realistic landscape, more common in Northern Europe, which was largely faithful to actual

topography, architecture, and flora, and which often showed figures of peasants. In both approaches, landscape artists would typically begin with outdoor sketching and preliminary painting, with finishing work done indoors. Highly influential upon French landscape artists in the early 19th century was the work of Englishmen John Constable and J. M. W. Turner, who reinforced the trend in favor of Realism and away from Neoclassicism.²

For a short period between 1821 and 1822, Corot studied with Achille Etna Michallon, a landscape painter of Corot's age who was a protégé of the painter Jacques-Louis David and who was already a well-respected teacher. Michallon had a great influence on Corot's career. Corot's drawing lessons included tracing lithographs, copying three-dimensional forms, and making landscape sketches and paintings outdoors, especially in the forests of Fontainebleau, the seaports along Normandy, and the villages west of Paris such as Ville-d'Avray (where his parents had a country house).³ Michallon also exposed him to the principles of the French Neoclassic tradition, as espoused in the famous treatise of theorist Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, and exemplified in the works of French Neoclassicists Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin, whose major aim

2. Gary Tinterow, Michael Pantazzi, and Vincent Pomarède, *Corot*, (New York: Abrams, 1996), 12.
3. Tinterow, *Corot*, 35.

was the representation of ideal Beauty in nature, linked with events in ancient times.

Though this school was declining in public popularity, it still held sway in the Salon, the foremost art exhibition in France attended by thousands at each event. Corot later stated, “I made my first landscape from nature...under the eye of this painter, whose only advice was to render with the greatest scrupulousness everything I saw before me. The lesson worked; since then I have always treasured precision.”⁴ After Michallon’s early death in 1822, Corot studied with Michallon’s teacher, Jean-Victor Bertin, among the best known Neoclassic landscape painters in France, who had Corot draw copies of lithographs of botanical subjects to learn precise organic forms. Though holding Neoclassicists in the highest regard, Corot did not limit his training to their tradition of allegory set in imagined nature. His notebooks reveal precise renderings of tree trunks, rocks, and plants which show the influence of Northern realism. Throughout his career, Corot demonstrated an inclination to apply both traditions in his work, sometimes combining the two.⁵

With his parents’ support, Corot followed the well-established pattern of French painters who went to Italy to study the masters of the Italian Renaissance and to draw the crumbling monuments of Roman antiquity. A

4. Tinterow, Corot, 14

5. Tinterow, Corot, 15

condition by his parents before leaving was that he paint a self-portrait for them, his first. Corot's stay in Italy from 1825 to 1828 was a highly formative and productive one, during which he completed over 200 drawings and 150 paintings.⁶ He worked and traveled with several young French painters also studying abroad who painted together and socialized at night in the cafes, critiquing each other and gossiping. Corot learned little from the Renaissance masters (though later he cited Leonardo da Vinci as his favorite painter) and spent most of his time around Rome and in the Italian countryside.⁷ The Farnese Gardens with its splendid views of the ancient ruins was a frequent destination, and he painted it at three different times of the day.⁸ The training was particularly valuable in gaining an understanding of the challenges of both the mid-range and panoramic perspective, and in effectively placing man-made structures in a natural setting.⁹ He also learned how to give buildings and rocks the effect of volume and solidity with proper light and shadow, while using a smooth and thin technique. Furthermore, placing suitable figures in a secular setting was a necessity of good landscape painting, to add human

6. Peter Galassi, *Corot in Italy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 199), 11.
7. Tinterow, *Corot*, 41
8. Tinterow, *Corot*, 42
9. Tinterow, *Corot*, 23-24

context and scale, and it was even more important in allegorical landscapes. To that end Corot worked on figure studies in native garb as well as nude.¹⁰ During winter, he spent time in a studio but returned to work outside as quickly as weather permitted.¹¹ The intense light of Italy posed considerable challenges, “This sun gives off a light that makes me despair. It makes me feel the utter powerlessness of my palette.”¹² He learned to master the light and to paint the stones and sky in subtle and dramatic variation.

During his two return trips to Italy, he visited Northern Italy, Venice, and again the Roman countryside. In 1835, Corot created a sensation at the Salon with his biblical painting *Agar dans le desert* (*Hagar in the Wilderness*), which depicted Hagar, Sarah’s handmaiden, and the child Ishmael, dying of thirst in the desert until saved by an angel. The background was likely derived from an Italian study.¹³ This time, Corot’s unanticipated bold, fresh statement of the Neoclassical ideal succeeded with the critics by demonstrating “the harmony between the setting and the passion or suffering that the painter chooses to depict in it.”¹⁴

10. Tinterow, Corot, 57

11. Tinterow, Corot, 22

12. Tinterow, Corot, 20

13. Tinterow, Corot, 156

14. Tinterow, Corot, 156



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Hagar in the Wilderness*, oil on canvas, 1835

Historians have divided Corot's work into periods, but the points of division are often vague, as he often completed a picture years after he began it. In his early period, he painted traditionally and "tight"—with minute exactness, clear outlines, thin brush work, and with absolute definition of objects throughout, with a monochromatic underpainting or *ébauche*.¹⁵ After he reached his 50th year, his methods changed to focus on

15. Sarah Herring, "Six Paintings by Corot: Methods, Materials and Sources," *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 3, (2009): 86.

breadth of tone and an approach to poetic power conveyed with thicker application of paint; and about 20 years later, from about 1865 onwards, his manner of painting became more lyrical, affected with a more impressionistic touch. In part, this evolution in expression can be seen as marking the transition from the plein-air paintings of his youth, shot through with warm natural light, to the studio-created landscapes of his late maturity, enveloped in uniform tones of silver. In his final 10 years he became the “Père (Father) Corot” of Parisian artistic circles, where he was regarded with personal affection, and acknowledged as one of the five or six greatest landscape painters the world had seen, along with Meindert Hobbema, Claude Lorrain, J.M.W. Turner and John Constable. In his long and productive life, he painted over 3,000 paintings.¹⁶

Audio recording of Corot part 2 segment:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-5>

Though often credited as a precursor of Impressionist

movement art practices, Corot approached his landscapes more traditionally than is usually believed. Compared to the Impressionists who came later, Corot's palette is restrained, dominated with browns and blacks ("forbidden colors" among the Impressionists), along with dark and silvery green. Though appearing at times to be rapid and spontaneous, usually his strokes were controlled and careful, and his compositions well-thought out and generally rendered as simply and concisely as possible, heightening the poetic effect of the imagery. As he stated, "I noticed that everything that was done correctly on the first attempt was more true, and the forms more beautiful."¹⁷

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia, (October 6 2020), s.v. "Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste-Camille_Corot

Corot was neither a Realist nor a Neo-Classicalist. Having trained in Italy and learned to paint *en plein air* (in the open air) his landscapes looked more real than other French landscape artists' works had. He was a painter who had a fraught relationship with the Academy due to his love of the landscape. He is sometimes said to be the link between Realism and Impressionism but using Corot as the link between the two is not completely true. He was never a Realist – one who wanted to capture the heroism of his own time; he just wanted to paint landscapes. His focus on landscape painting and

17. Vincent Pomarède, *Le ABCdaire de Corot et le Passage Français*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 33

his generous spirit with his students pushed landscape painting forward, even as the Academy attempted to hold it back. His later works, influenced by the camera, by practice, and by the good sales of a brushier style, were very silver-y and influenced the next two generations of artists. He used to get into arguments with a young artist named Claude Monet, who also loved the landscape, about the colour to prime one's canvas. Corot had stopped using the Academy's traditional dark brownish red grounding and had begun to paint his canvas a silvery grey before he applied his gentle colours. Claude Monet swore by the new synthetic pigment zinc white as a brighter and more effect ground for a colourful painting. The outcome of this argument came years later, when seeing how his own canvases quickly faded to the midtones but Monet's stayed bright and powerful, he said, "Monet was right." Of course, as is the way with rivaling friends, he never told Monet so. Besides, Corot never wanted to paint brightly coloured paintings, he just wanted to paint the land.



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Souvenir de Mortefontaine, oil on canvas, 1864

Audio recording of Barbizon School segment:



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The Barbizon School

Calling something a 'school' makes it seem like there was an institutionalized and codified training program in a single place. But in the case of the Barbizon School, the word 'school' is more in keeping with a paradigm or 'school of thought'. Barbizon was a small town on the edge of the forest and as landscape painting grew in public popularity and as intermittent plagues broke out in the cities and because new train tracks made travel around France easier, people flocked to small towns like Barbizon to enjoy the landscape. Barbizon is located on the edge of what had previously been the king's private hunting forest – Fontainebleau – and its unique weather made it a place of dense growth and beautiful scenery. As early as the 1820s artists began to journey to Barbizon to paint the landscape, some moving there permanently as living conditions in Paris worsened. Those who became known as the Barbizon School were most active from around 1830–1870, but saw the most interaction during the Revolution of 1848 – when they left Paris for safety, and then during the cholera outbreak in Paris right after the Revolution of 1848. The artists who frequented Barbizon became known as artists of the Barbizon School, and this is why Corot is sometimes lumped in with the artists of the Barbizon

School. He went there occasionally too and was friends with many of the artist we're about to discuss. But keep in mind, this is not what they would have called themselves. To themselves they were just a loosely grouped bunch of artists who were interested in investigating the same thing – the landscape and the reality of existence.

So what makes a Barbizon landscape different from, say, the Caspar David Friedrich paintings in the previous chapter?

Barbizon paintings don't have ruins. They aren't picturesque (strictly speaking). They show quiet corners of rustic France. Not far-flung places in Italy. Or place that look like Italy. Eventually they would also come to be known for their portrayal of simple people living simple lives in the simple landscape. But for the most part, the Barbizon School was all about the landscape.

All landscape all the time.

Théodore Rousseau



Théodore Rousseau, Barbizon Landscape, oil on canvas, circa 1850

Théodore Rousseau was the loudest voice for the call to artists to the outdoors. Some say the forest possessed him. He eventually purchased property in Barbizon and lived there in the later part of his life – but at first he just visited. He and his wife moved into the cottage he purchased in Barbizon and there he lived for most of the rest of his life between trips to Paris for art sales and shows and one disastrous trip to the Alps. Rousseau met with many artists who came to Barbizon and helped them find good painting spots in the woods, taught them how to paint trees, and had in-depth discussions with them about the importance of painting the land. But despite his reputation as a devout landscape painter, he had a serious run of bad luck later in his life. His wife became severely mentally ill and required serious care. His father became destitute

and relied on his son for monetary aid. While he and his wife were away from home in search of medical treatment for her mental illness, a young friend of the family who had been staying with them caused his own death in their cottage. Then, during that trip to the Alps, Rousseau caught pneumonia and the consequent weakening of his lungs plagued him the rest of his life. When he returned home he suffered insomnia and the lack of sleep weakened him. Possibly in response to being rejected (yet again) from receiving awards for his work, Rousseau had an undiagnosed but much debated attack of health and became paralyzed. Although he recovered he then suffered a relapse later that year and died, leaving his ill wife in the care of his fellow painter and friend Jean-François Millet.

Melancholy is the over arching theme in his painting, although he sought to paint the landscape as it was.



Théodore Rousseau, Exit of the Forest of Fontainebleau – Setting Sun, oil on canvas, circa 1850

All his landscapes were rejected from the Academy until after the 1848 Revolution – but under the monarchy? Nothin’. So he quit

trying. The lack of publicity at the Salon actually worked to his advantage – he became a *legend*.

Audio recording of Millet segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-7>

Jean-François Millet

Jean-François Millet is one of the “founders” of the Barbizon School in rural France. (Although, as a “founder” he was simply one of the artists who spent time in Barbizon and was friends with the other artists there.) Millet is noted for his scenes of peasant farmers and can be categorized as part of the Realism art movement.

One of the most well known of Millet’s paintings is *The Gleaners*. While Millet was walking the fields around Barbizon, one theme returned to his pencil and brush for seven years—gleaning—the centuries-old right of poor women and children to remove the bits of grain left in the fields following the harvest. He found the theme an eternal one, linked to stories from the Old

Testament. In 1857, he submitted the painting *The Gleaners* to the Salon to an unenthusiastic, even hostile, public.



Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners*, oil on canvas, 1857

One of his most controversial, this painting by Millet depicts gleaners collecting grain in the fields near his home. The depiction of the realities of the lower class was considered shocking to the public at the time, even as Realism gained momentum with many artists.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Curation and Revision.
Provided by: Boundless.com.

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-arthistory/chapter/realism/>

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Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide analysis and historical perspective on Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners*.



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#oembed-1>

Retrieved from: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “Jean-François Millet, *L'Angélus*,” in *Smarthistory*, November 27, 2015, accessed October 13, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/jean-francois-millet-langelus/>.

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Millet painted *The Sower* a year after he moved with his wife to Barbizon. They had moved to escape the cholera epidemics in Paris following the 1848 Revolution and had purchased a tiny cottage at Barbizon. (They lived in that tiny cottage with their *nine* children.) *The Sower* is indicative of his early style – loose, rough, and blunt. His work, even when it became more refined, always showed a very unpolished reality. Not a cruel reality, like other artists



Jean-François Millet, *The Sower*, oil on canvas, 1850

would, but reality as it existed without any romanticizing of the subject or hiding the plight of the modern peasant in narrative.

This painting has influenced many of the painters in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Van Gogh especially loved it and did his own version of it.

In *The Gleaners*, some people see beauty, some see the need for social reform, others see the pain in the bodies of the women's posture.

All of which was the point. Millet didn't create his work to show pretty pictures of indolent peasants living a pretty peasant life. Millet was not a "cottagecore aesthetic" artist (obviously, since that term is a strictly 21st century thing, but the concept does need to be stated). His work depicted the poorest of the poor – scraping up the leftovers after the crews have harvested and taken away the bulk. For the women in *The Gleaners*, if they don't gather the scraps their families *will* starve.



Jean-François Millet, *The Angelus*, oil on canvas, 1857-59

The *Angelus* was originally titled *Prayer for the Potato Crop* but the American that commissioned never picked it up, so Millet added the steeple and changed the name to *The Angelus* – which are the first word of the The Angelus prayer – said by Catholics during the Angelus bell (6pm usually, but it can be other times too). The

prayer was an evolution of the traditional three Hail Marys said at the 6pm bell. The prayer begins in Latin with *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ* – which means the “The Angel told Mary” and is said to remember the Annunciation.

The thing about this painting is that during his lifetime it was simply a good example of his style, but after Millet’s death the value of it went up so dramatically that it caused an uproar.

Even stranger, Salvador Dali, the Surrealist artist who rose to fame at the end of the 1800s and beginning of the 1900s, eccentric man that he was, always felt there was something traumatic about this painting. He felt this so strongly that eventually he used his artistic clout to get the painting x-rayed. He was sure there was something horrible under the paint and that they were not praying over a basket of potatoes, but rather the corpse of a child. (He also said this painting was about sexual repression. But Dali also thought women were secretly praying mantises and that the pose of the praying woman in the painting was evidence of that so it really can’t be put to too many people’s blame if they didn’t take him seriously about the painting needing to be x-rayed right away. He was prone to wildly unusual perspectives about things.)

Here’s the kicker though, as strange as Dali might have been – when they did the x-ray they found that the potato basket was a recent addition. Originally there had been a square/rectangular

thing between the couple! Some thought perhaps Dali was correct and it was a baby's coffin, others felt maybe not so much.

So that is one of the unexplained things regarding this painting. And one of the many unexplained things about Salvador Dali...



Jean-François Millet, *Dandelions*, pastel on paper, 1867-68

Audio recording of Bonheur segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-8>

Rosa Bonheur

Rosa Bonheur is often lumped in with the Barbizon School artists, but this is simply because she doesn't fit with the Parisian artists of her time. She unapologetically painted the reality of animals without romanticizing them or loading her paintings with narrative. But she was not a Barbizon painter in any way.



Rosa Bonheur, *Ploughing in the Nivernais*, oil on canvas, 1849

Rosa Bonheur is an interesting figure in art history and an harbinger of changes happening in Parisian society. Raised in an unusual family, Bonheur was educated and given the same opportunities as her male siblings. Her father supported the idea that women could do anything they wanted and should be given the tools to be able to do so. As a child she was unruly and active with little patience for most activities that required sitting still. Subsequently she had a hard time learning to read. Her mother encouraged her to learn by asking her to draw an animal for every letter of the alphabet and Bonheur later said that this was when she began to learn how to draw animals. She could sit still and draw for hours. Later, she was sent to school with her brothers but was expelled a number of

times. Then she was apprenticed to a seamstress; which for obvious reasons didn't go so well. Eventually she had a painter take her on as a pupil and she discovered her great passion in creating art at the age of twelve.

Woman sits on a bench in a garden wearing a smock and trousers while holding a hat

Photograph of Rosa Bonheur circa 1880-1890 in her garden at By

This photo is of Rosa Bonheur from later in the 1800s. Notice her choice of clothing. In the 1800s it was relatively unorthodox for women to wear trousers. In fact, a woman

needed a special license to wear things that were considered to be men's clothing, like trousers, or they could be accused or arrested for cross-dressing (which was a punishable offense in Paris at this time). Bonheur argued that for her work painting, sketching and observing at stockyards and horse fairs and cattle sales, she couldn't be dragged down in the mud by petticoats, skirts, and bustles. Those types of clothing could create dangerous situations in the event that she needed to move quickly and freely out of the way of an uncontrolled animal. Often the history books make it sound like Bonheur broke the law and created a big scandal with her clothing, but in reality it was simply a matter of applying to the Parisian police for a permit which she was granted. And while her clothing choices would have definitely turned heads in Paris, it is not likely that they 'caused an uproar.'

However, if you look at her photograph again, you will see that she is wearing trousers in a garden – not at a livestock exhibition. Bonheur wore what she wanted, when she wanted to wear it. Obviously, she was a spit-fire throughout her life and while biographical elements of an artist's life are often not important to relay when discussing their art, in the case of Bonheur a discussion about her private life is in order because of the road she would pave for later female artists.

Women were often only reluctantly educated as artists in Bonheur's day, and by becoming such a successful artist she helped to open doors to the women artists that followed her.¹⁸

Bonheur can be viewed as a "New Woman" of the 19th century – her choice of dress only part of that. In her romantic life, she never explicitly stated that she was a lesbian but she is accepted to have been a lesbian; she lived with her first partner, Nathalie Micas, for over 40 years until Micas' death, and later began a relationship with the American painter Anna Elizabeth Klumpke.¹⁹ In a world where gender expression was policed, Rosa Bonheur broke boundaries by deciding to wear pants, shirts and ties.²⁰ She did not do this because she wanted to be a man, though she occasionally referred to herself as a grandson or brother when talking about her family; rather, Bonheur identified with the power and

18. Theodore Stanton, *Reminiscences of Rosa Bonheur*, (n.p.: A. Melrose, 1910), 64.
19. Mary Blume, Mary, "The Rise and Fall of Rosa Bonheur," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/10/04/style/IHT-the-rise-and-fall-of-rosa-bonheur.html>
20. Albert Boime, "The Case of Rosa Bonheur: Why Should a Woman Want to be More Like a Man?" *Art History* 4, no. 4 (1981): 384–409. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8365.1981.tb00733.x

freedom reserved for men.²¹ Wearing men's clothing gave Bonheur a sense of identity in that it allowed her to openly show that she refused to conform to societies' construction of the gender binary. It also broadcast her sexuality at a time where the lesbian stereotype consisted of women who cut their hair short, wore pants, and chain-smoked. Rosa Bonheur did all three. Bonheur, while taking pleasure in activities usually reserved for men (such as hunting and smoking), viewed her womanhood as something far superior to anything a man could offer or experience. She viewed men as stupid and mentioned that the only males she had time or attention for were the bulls she painted.²²

Having chosen to never become an adjunct or appendage to a man in terms of painting, she decided that she would lean on herself and her female partners instead. Her partners focussed on the home life while she took on the role of breadwinner by focusing on her painting. Bonheur's legacy paved the way for other lesbian artists who didn't favour the life society had laid out for them.²³

21. Gretchen Van Slyke, "Gynocentric Matrimony: The fin-de-siècle Alliance of Rosa Bonheur and Anna Klumpke," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 20, no. 4 (1999): 489–502. doi:10.1080/08905499908583461

22. Boime, *The Case of Rosa*, 384–409

23. Laurel Lampela, "Daring to Be Different: A Look at Three

Along with other realist painters of the 19th century, for much of the 20th century Bonheur fell from fashion, and in 1978 a critic described *Ploughing in the Nivernais* as “entirely forgotten and rarely dragged out from oblivion”; however, that same year it was part of a series of paintings sent to China by the French government for an exhibition titled “The French Landscape and Peasant, 1820–1905”.²⁴ Since then her reputation has revived and interest in the art and life of this gifted artist grows each year.

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia, (September 19 2020), s.v. “Rosa Bonheur.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Bonheur

Even without taking her personal life into consideration, she was considered a very odd painter. Most artists, especially female artists, paid attention to the people (especially the Realists) or the landscape. Very few focused on animals in such a realistic way. Unromantically. There’s no double meaning in her painting *The Ploughing in the Nivernais*. There’s no lion attacking a horse as a metaphor for the monarchy causing violence to the people here. There’s no meaning imbued on these oxen. They’re just really realistic oxen doing a really realistic job. There *are* people in this

Lesbian Artists,” *Art Education* 54, no. 2 (2001): 45–54.
doi:10.2307/3193946

24. Xenia Muratova, “Current and Forthcoming Exhibitions: Paris and China,” *The Burlington Magazine*. 120, no. 901 (1978): 257–60.

painting, but they are really, really not the point. Even their rendering is different than the animals – the humans are painted in a way that makes them *look like paintings*, whereas the oxen look incredibly real and important.

It's for this reason that Bonheur is considered a Realist. She painted the present day reality as it existed. However, she doesn't really fit with the Realists because she's not actively seeking to portray the everyday hero or the contemporary strength of the day. She is simply painting animals as they are.



Rosa
Bonheur, *The
Horse Fair*,
oil on
canvas,
1852-55

The horses in *The Horse Fair* are pretty nearly lifesize. Which makes for a kind of an overwhelming experience when you see it. Each horse is just a little smaller than reality – which means the canvas is HUGE. It was paintings like this that made her get the license to wear pants.

This painting, and those like it, was also her rebellious spirit regarding societal norms showing through. Major thinkers of the day figured that the weaker sex, women, – so susceptible to hysteria – couldn't possibly be capable of the bravura (technical skill) or creative genius necessary for them to compete with men in any circuit, never mind art. She kind of had a bone to pick with that concept.

But mostly she just really liked painting animals and I don't think she really cared all that much what people thought about her.

Audio recording of Courbet part 1 segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-9>

Gustave Courbet – The First Realist



Gustave Courbet, *Self Portrait (The Desperate Man)*, oil on canvas, 1843-45

Gustave Courbet was the first real Realist. We know this because he's the one who literally wrote the Manifesto of Realism and created the guidelines for the movement.

His story follows an unusual arc, in that he started out wealthy,

handsome, and well liked but died poor and notorious. He was egotistical and cantankerous, but he had a vision for art.

Not that you would have known that he was going to be the artist to set the art-world on its ear. His early paintings sort of wander around in regards to subject matter. Wandering through ideas that are landscape based, then beauty based, then genre based. But nothing distinct seems to develop at first. But then, alongside all the scandalously raunchy nudes and suffering self portraits he was painting, he began to paint things like this:



Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, oil on canvas (copy), 1849

And eventually he began saying things like this:

“I am fifty years old and I have always lived in freedom. Let me end my life as a free man. When I am dead, they must be able to say of me, ‘That one never belonged to any church, to any institution, to any academy, and above all to any regime except the regime of liberty.’”²⁵

Which means we need to talk about Socialism because he is tied to that political position (not movement).

During Courbet’s time “Socialism” was a social

consciousness regarding the poor. The realization that those in the lower classes lived a different experience than those in the higher classes. The idea that those who were in the lower classes didn’t have access to as much opportunity as others might have. At this point it was a realization of difference, but eventually it would grow to an understanding that something could be done by the better off to change the situation of others, and eventually it became a movement that suggested that the better off *should* do things for the less fortunate. However, even then “Socialism” as it was understood then, was not as it is understood now.

Socialism as a movement and more along the lines of how it might be framed today:

- Wasn’t formally invented until the 1860s, and
- Didn’t become a real political force until after WWI

In Courbet’s *The Stone Breakers*, he is making a real commentary on the lives of the unfortunate – the crushing existence of the

25. Gustave Courbet, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, translated by Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

lowest classes of French society. “As one begins, in this class, so one ends,” is his statement.

If we look closely at Courbet’s painting *The Stonebreakers* of 1849 (painted only one year after Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote their influential pamphlet, *The Communist Manifesto*) the artist’s concern for the plight of the poor is evident. Here, two figures labor to break and remove stone from a road that is being built. In our age of powerful jackhammers and bulldozers, such work is reserved as punishment for chain-gangs.

Unlike Millet, who, in paintings like *The Gleaners*, was known for depicting hard-working, but somewhat idealized peasants, Courbet depicts figures who wear ripped and tattered clothing. And unlike the aerial perspective Millet used in *The Gleaners* to bring our eye deep into the French countryside during the harvest, the two stone breakers in Courbet’s painting are set against a low hill of the sort common in the rural French town of Ornans, where the artist had been raised and continued to spend a much of his time. The hill reaches to the top of the canvas everywhere but the upper right corner, where a tiny patch of bright blue sky appears. The effect is to isolate these laborers, and to suggest that they are physically and economically trapped. In Millet’s painting, the gleaners’ rounded backs echo one another, creating a composition that feels unified, where Courbet’s figures seem disjointed. Millet’s painting, for all its sympathy for these poor figures,

could still be read as “art” by viewers at an exhibition in Paris.

Courbet wanted to show what is “real,” and so he has depicted a man that seems too old and a boy that seems still too young for such back-breaking labor. This is not meant to be heroic: it is meant to be an accurate account of the abuse and deprivation that was a common feature of mid-century French rural life. And as with so many great works of art, there is a close affiliation between the narrative and the formal choices made by the painter, meaning elements such as brushwork, composition, line, and color.

Like the stones themselves, Courbet’s brushwork is rough—more so than might be expected during the mid-nineteenth century. This suggests that the way the artist painted his canvas was in part a conscious rejection of the highly polished, refined Neoclassicist style that still dominated French art in 1848.

Perhaps most characteristic of Courbet’s style is his refusal to focus on the parts of the image that would usually receive the most attention. Traditionally, an artist would spend the most time on the hands, faces, and foregrounds. Not Courbet. If you look carefully, you will notice that he attempts to be even-handed, attending to faces and rock equally. In these ways, *The Stonebreakers* seems to lack the basics of art (things like a composition that selects and organizes, aerial perspective and finish) and as a result, it feels more “real.”

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/courbet-the-stonebreakers/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org CC: BY-NC-SA



Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Jo (La belle Irlandaise)*, oil on canvas, 1865-66

Which isn't to say with all of his good will toward the poor, that he stopped painting absolutely scandalous nudes and completely devoted himself to social change. On more than one occasion he created stirrs with his nude paintings. One of which used the girlfriend of fellow artist and friend James Abbott MacNeil Whistler as a model. Whistler's girlfriend, Jo, (depicted in Courbet's *Portrait of Jo (La belle Irlandaise)*) was Courbet's model for a while. And Whistler was Courbet's close friend until a particularly pornographic painting – one that was scandalous enough to cause people to file police reports once it was exhibited – was painted by Courbet while Whistler's girlfriend was his main model. That was when Whistler, who had been very close with Courbet, suddenly went back to London to stay and never spoke to Courbet again.

Awkward.

And that wasn't even his most scandalous piece ever. His most scandalous nude was one the public never even knew about. It was a private commission (for the same man who had commissioned

Ingres' *Turkish Bath* from chapter 3) that didn't see public exhibition until the 1980s – over one hundred years after its completion!

For reasons that may never be fully explained, Courbet managed to have some influential and controversial paintings included in the Academy's Salon of 1850-51; his *Stone Breakers* and *Burial at Ornans* were both included.



Gustave Courbet, *Burial at Ornans*, oil on canvas, 1849-50

Audio recording of *Burial at Ornans* segment:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-10>

Burial at Ornans is one of Courbet's most important works. It records the funeral of his grand uncle which he attended in September of 1848.²⁶ People who attended the funeral were the models for the painting. Previously, models had been used as actors in historical narratives, but in *Burial at Ornans* Courbet said he "painted the very people who had been present at the interment, all the townspeople". The result is a realistic presentation of them, and of life in Ornans.

The vast painting—it measures 10 by 22 feet (3.0 by 6.7 meters) — drew both praise and fierce denunciations from critics and the public, in part because it upset convention by depicting a prosaic ritual on a scale which would previously have been reserved for a religious or royal subject.

According to art historian Sarah Faunce, "In Paris *the Burial* was judged as a work that had thrust itself into the grand tradition of history painting, like an upstart in dirty boots crashing a genteel party, and in terms of that tradition it was of course found wanting."²⁷ The painting lacks the sentimental rhetoric that was expected in a genre work: Courbet's mourners make no theatrical gestures of grief, and their faces

26. Sara Faunce and Linda Nochlin, *Courbet Reconsidered*, (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 79.

27. Faunce and Nochlin, *Courbet*, 4.

seemed more caricatured than ennobled. The critics accused Courbet of a deliberate pursuit of ugliness.²⁸

Eventually, the public grew more interested in the new Realist approach, and the lavish, decadent fantasy of Romanticism lost popularity. Courbet well understood the importance of the painting, and said of it, “The *Burial at Ornans* was in reality the burial of Romanticism.”

Courbet became a celebrity, and was spoken of as a genius, a “terrible socialist” and a “savage”.²⁹ He actively encouraged the public’s perception of him as an unschooled peasant, while his ambition, his bold pronouncements to journalists, and his insistence on depicting his own life in his art gave him a reputation for unbridled vanity.³⁰

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia, (October 6, 2020), s.v. “Gustave Courbet.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Courbet

One of the reasons Courbet’s *Burial at Ornans* was met with such derision in Paris, is because of political unrest in the country. Ornans was not in Paris, and it depicted a crowd of non-Parisian French peasants. The way voting worked in France at this time had just been changed, giving more voting sway to the provinces than they had previously had. Life outside of Paris and its districts

28. Faunce and Nochlin, Courbet, 4.

29. Faunce and Nochlin, Courbet, 8.

30. Faunce and Nochlin, Courbet, 8-9.

was nothing like life in Paris and its districts and Parisians feared that those outside the city would be convinced to vote for parties that did not have the best interests at heart. (The best interests of Parisians at heart, of course.) Specifically the Parisians feared that the new voting system could give power to those who would reinstate the monarchy. *Burial at Ornans* reminded the people of Paris that their future was no longer completely in their own hands, but in the hands of the provincial people they declared to be 'ugly'. (As it turned out, the Parisian fear of the voting power of the rest of the country was well-founded with the rise of Louis Napoleon and his questionable tactics to gain voters in the provinces.)

As is clear, Courbet managed to create a spectacle at every opportunity. So why should the International Art Exhibition of 1855 be an exception? It was at this Exhibition (or because of this Exhibition?) that Courbet became the name most associated with Realism. What's the story? Well hold onto your hats!

The International Art Exhibition of 1855 was a huge undertaking and in an effort to portray France as the best in the world, the exhibition planners had things figured out. They carefully orchestrated a show with retrospectives of Delacroix, Ingres and Vernet – some of the biggest names in French art in the 1800s that far. Other artists were invited to join the show by submitting work to the jury.

Courbet, like most other Parisian artists, jumped at the chance, but he made few *interesting* choices. First interesting choice: he submitted fourteen paintings! No one but the deceased artists in the showcased retrospectives would have that many on display. As could have been predicted, a few of his fourteen pieces were selected but not his incredibly huge painting like *The Artists' Studio* and *Burial at Ornans*. Second interesting choice: he decided to get huffy about the rejection of so many of his works. Pitching a Jim-Carrey-in-the-Grinch level fit at being excluded from an event he made sure he would be excluded from, he created a plan to retaliate. Third interesting choice: To retaliate and prove the deep abuses he had suffered at the hands of the jury, he built his own pavilion on the actual exhibition grounds off the Champs-Élysées

next to the official exhibition. This required that he dip deeply into his personal funds and utilize favours among his friends and allies. Fourth interesting choice: he charged admission. To charge admission to an event might not seem like that big of a deal to a North American in the 21st century, but to the French in the 1800s this was almost offensive. Art had been democratized during the Revolution and art was seen as the peoples' possession. To charge the people to see their own art was robbery! Once people paid their admission to see his exhibition of forty paintings, he presented them with copies of his Realism Manifesto and catalogue. The Realism Manifesto was the introduction to his catalogue and echoed the political manifestos of the age. In it he said:

The title of Realist was thrust upon me just as the title of Romantic was imposed upon the men of 1830. Titles have never given a true idea of things: if it were otherwise, the works would be unnecessary.

Without expanding on the greater or lesser accuracy of a name which nobody, I should hope, can really be expected to understand, I will limit myself to a few words of elucidation in order to cut short the misunderstandings.

I have studied the art of the ancients and the art of the moderns, avoiding any preconceived system and without prejudice. I no longer wanted to imitate the one than to copy the other; nor, furthermore, was it my intention to attain the trivial goal of "art for art's sake". No! I simply wanted to draw forth, from a complete acquaintance with tradition, the reasoned and independent consciousness of my own individuality.

To know in order to do, that was my idea. To be in a position to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my time, according to my own estimation; to be not only a

painter, but a man as well; in short, to create living art – this is my goal. (Gustave Courbet, 1855)³¹

Audio recording of *The Artist's Studio* segment:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-11>

The result of these four choices was not an exhibition that could be called a success on any front. It was pretty much a laughing stock to the public and a complete financial failure. While it did endear Courbet to the other Avant-Garde artists and established him as an inspiration to the next generation of artists, it did prove, in some small way that an individual artist with enough spunk and guts could compete with even the grandeur of King Louis Napoleon's seven years of reign! Which leads us one of the pieces of art he featured in his Realism Pavilion: a painting that contrasted seven years of his life (1848 to 1855) with the seven years of Louis Napoleon's reign.

31. Exhibition and sale of forty paintings and four drawings by Gustave Courbet, Paris 1855, Courbet speaks, Musée d'Orsay, <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/courbet-dossier/courbet-speaks.html>

That painting was *The Artist's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist*.



Gustave Courbet, *The Artist's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist*, oil on canvas, 1855

The title of Courbet's painting contains a contradiction: the words "real" and "allegory" have opposing meanings. In Courbet's earlier work, "real" could be seen as a rejection of the heroic and ideal in favor of the actual. Courbet's "real" might also be a coarse and unpleasant truth, tied to economic injustice. The "real" might also point to shifting notions of morality.

In contrast, an "allegory" is a story or an idea expressed with symbols. Is it possible that Courbet is using his title to alert the viewer to contradictions and double meanings in the image? Look, for instance, at the dim paintings that hangs on the rear wall of his Paris

studio. These large landscapes seem to form a continuous horizon line from panel to panel. They dissolve enough so that we are not sure if they are paintings, or if they are perhaps windows that frame the landscape beyond. Is it “real” or is it a representation? Courbet seems to muddy the distinction and allow for both possibilities.

The artist is immediately recognizable in the center of the canvas. His head is cocked back and his absurd beard is thrust forward at the same haughty angle seen in *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*. But here he is assessing and just possibly admiring the landscape that he is in the process of painting. The central composition is a trinity of figures (four, if you count the cat).

To Courbet's right stands a nude model. Note that her dress is strewn at her feet. There is nothing exceptional here; after all, this is an artist's studio, and models are often nude. However, Courbet does not look in her direction, as he would if she were actually posing for him. He doesn't need to. He is, after all, painting an unpopulated landscape. Oddly, the direction of the gaze is reversed. The model directs her attention to align with Courbet's, not vice-versa. She gazes at the landscape he paints. In the realm of the "real," she functions as the model, but as "allegory," she may be truth or liberty according to the political readings of some scholars and she may be the muse of ancient Greek myth, a symbol of Courbet's inspiration.

The boy to the left of the artist is also a reference. The smallest of the three central figures, he looks up (literally) to Courbet's creation with admiration. The boy is unsullied by the illusions of adulthood—he sees the truth of the world—and he represented an important goal for Courbet—to un-learn the lessons of the art academy. The sophistication of urban industrial life, he believed, distanced artists from the truth of nature. Above all, Courbet sought to return to the pure, direct sight of a child. The cat, by the way, is often read as a reference to independence or liberty.

The entire, rather crowded canvas, is divided into two large groups of people. In the group on the left, we see fairly rough types described. They are a cast of stock

characters: a woodsman, the village idiot, a Jew, and others. There are several other allusions, such as the inclusion of the current ruler of France, Louis-Napoléon, but let's focus on the larger theme at hand. Here then, are the country folk whom Courbet faces.

On the opposite side of the canvas are, in contrast, a far more handsome and well-dressed party. Gathered at the right lower corner of the painting are Courbet's wealthy private collectors and his urbane friends. At the canvas's extreme right sits Charles Baudelaire, the influential poet who was a close friend of the painter.



Giotto, *The Last Judgement on the west wall*, fresco, circa 1305

Is this composition familiar? Courbet is engaged in the act of painting, or as we might say, he is creating a landscape. Could the reference be to God the creator? The composition seems directly related to the traditional composition of the New Testament story, the Last Judgment. Think of Giotto's *Last Judgment* fresco on the back wall of the Arena Chapel in Padua (1305-06), or Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* painted on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel (1534-42). In those paintings, the blessed (those that were on their way to heaven) were on the right side of Christ (our left), and the damned (those on their way to Hell) were shown on Christ's left (our right).

Courbet has placed himself in the position of creator. But does he want us to use a capital "C"? What then of the model/muse? In the place of the blessed on the left are the country folk, a reference to the morality of nature? On the right side in place of the damned are the urban sophisticates—the notion of the corruption of the city. And in the bottom right corner, where Michelangelo placed Satan himself, we find, amusingly, Courbet's close friend, the poet Baudelaire, author of *The Flowers of Evil*.

Finally, note the crucified figure partly hidden behind the easel. Indeed, Courbet referred to himself as a kind of martyr (such paintings as *Self-portrait as Wounded Man*). He created these satirical portrayals of himself as

a martyred saint perhaps because of his metaphorical “suffering” at the hands of the French art critics.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#oembed-2>

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “Gustave Courbet, *The Painter’s Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/courbet-the-artists-studio/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org
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Audio recording of Daumier segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-12>

Honoré Daumier

Charles Baudelaire was a French philosopher. He challenged artists to paint the ordinary aspects of contemporary life and to find in them some grand and epic quality.

He said, “There are such things as modern beauty and modern heroism!”

Courbet’s big modern works were an answer to the challenge Baudelaire had put out in 1846 for large, heroic, modern life depictions but, out of all the artists he knew, loved, and supported, Baudelaire considered Honoré Daumier one of the most important figures of modern art.



Honoré Daumier, *Les Poires*, drawing printed in the newspaper *La Caricature*, 1831

Daumier made a living some of the time, especially earlier in his career as a satirical cartoonist. With biting wit and castigating charm, he frequented the pages of the newspaper *Le Charivari* and *La Caricature* with political cartoons commenting on the politics of the day. With *Les Poires* (French for pear, but also French slang for idiot), Daumier makes some pointed comments about King Louis-Philippe (a Bourbon King of the July Monarchy) as his portrait gradually turns into a pear.

Everybody who read the caricature in the *Le Charivari* or *La Caricature* understood

exactly what it meant and it wouldn't have made the king or his supporters too happy. The director of *La Caricature*, Charles Philipon felt the cartoon was a success. He stated: "What I had foreseen happened. The people, seized by a mocking image, an image simple in design and very simple in form, began to imitate this image wherever they found a way to charcoal, smear, to scratch a pear. Pears soon covered all the walls of Paris and spread over all sections of the walls of France."³²

Apparently, Daumier had quite a bit to say about the Bourbon king Louis-Phillipe.

Daumier's *Gargantua*, also published in *La Caricature* landed both

32. Wikipedia, (April 27, 2020,) s.v. "Les Poires", https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Poires

Daumier and Philipon in prison and caused a ban on every publication in which it was printed.

Gargantua was a medieval character in French Literature, but here he's been given the pear-shaped face of King Louis-Phillipe and has been placed on a nineteenth century toilet chair. He devours gold from the poor and expels paper documents – the inscriptions say that they are letters of nomination and appointment to



Honoré Daumier, Gargantua, drawing printed in the newspaper La Caricature, 1931

special individuals and court honors. But this isn't an illustration of taxes being used to help everyone, they were taxes being taken from the poorest and then used to fatten the already fat wallets of the rich.

After six months in prison and banning of the publication it was printed in, Daumier knew the risks associated with directly satirizing the king. He also recognized that censorship laws in France were about to get tough.



Honoré Daumier, *Rue Transnonain*, lithographic print, 1834

Everyone in Paris knew what had happened in the apartment building. It was on the corner of two streets—rue Transnonain and rue de Montmorency. On the night of April 13, 1834, soldiers of the civil guard entered the building going from apartment to apartment. Workers in the neighborhood had protested against the repression of a silk workers' revolt in the city of Lyon. The soldiers then entered the apartment building in response to shots fired from the top floor during the protest. Years later, survivors recalled hearing pounding on the apartment doors as the

soldiers made their way in shooting, bayonetting, and clubbing the hapless residents.

Monsieur Thierry was killed while still in his bedclothes, Monsieur Guettard and Monsieur Robichet met the same fate. A recipient of the French Legion of Honor, Monsieur Bon was killed while trying to hide under a table. They killed Monsieur Daubigny, a paralyzed man, in his bed and left his wife and child for dead. Monsieur Bréfort was killed as soon as he opened his door and Monsieur Hue and his four-year old child met the same fate. The conservative papers talked of a nest of assassins firing on soldiers, the more liberal papers offered detailed accounts of the victims.

Parisians had lived with political repression enforced by the police and civil guard for years and street battles were nothing new. The Revolution of 1830, inspiration for Delacroix's painting *Liberty Leading the People*, had overthrown the repressive monarchy that followed Napoleon's rule. The new ruler, Louis-Philippe called himself the King of the French and was supposed to be more liberal. Instead, he clamped down on public dissent and the press much like his predecessors. Those who wanted the freedoms promised by the French Revolution of 1789 attempted another rebellion in June 1832. The writer, Victor Hugo, memorialized that insurrection which left over 100 dead on the streets of central Paris, in his book *Les Misérables*. Somehow, what happened on rue Transnonain was different.

Today, such an event would still be covered by newspapers, but also on social media and on cell phone

cameras, but in 1834 it fell to Paris's renowned printmaker, Honoré Daumier, to show the Parisians just what had happened. But how? How do you show a massacre? And what would be the risk of publishing a print that challenged the government so directly?

Honoré Daumier came to Paris as a child when his father, a glazier and frame maker, moved his family to pursue his literary ambitions. The family was never well-off and Daumier worked from the age of twelve for booksellers and as an errand boy for a law firm to help support them. A friend of the family, the antiquarian and archeologist Alexandre Lenoir, gave young Daumier informal drawing lessons because the family could not afford any formal training for the gifted young artist.

Daumier continued to draw and study on his own, visiting the Louvre to draw sculpture and the Académie Suisse, an inexpensive studio without an instructor, where he could draw from the nude. Although he became a widely respected artist in Paris, Daumier never stepped away from his working-class origins, and perhaps this gave him the immense empathy found in his portrayal of those who perished on rue Transnonain.

The print is a lithograph—it used limestone and oil-based inks to create light and shadow similar to drawing or painting. Daumier experimented with this technique as a young teenager and later held a job working for a printmaker. By 1834, he had established himself as a caricaturist and political cartoonist, working for the publisher Charles Philipon by creating lithographs for his satirical, illustrated journals *La Caricature* and, after

1835, *Le Charivari*. Over his career, Daumier published well over 3,000 lithographs.

Among these many lithographs, *Rue Transnonain* stands alone for its brutal tone and unflinching commentary on what had only recently occurred. Daumier brings together a group of four bodies in one space, and extreme areas of light and darkness, to give the viewer one image that summed up the violence of that night.

Audio recording of *Rue Transnonain* part 2 segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-13>

A dead man in his bloody nightshirt, just roused out of the rumpled bed, lies prone across the composition with his body resting atop a bludgeoned child. The child's head and chubby hands just emerge from beneath the man. Perhaps these bodies, foreshortened and moving toward the viewer, allude to Monsieur Hue and his child. To the left of the man and the child, an older man's head enters the scene from the edge of the paper, in front of a toppled chair. These bodies, lit with a dramatic light, complement the darker portion of the composition on the other side of the sheet where a woman's dead body

moves away from the viewer into the darkness at the back of the apartment. Dark marks, likely smears of blood, litter the floor. The print is not a documentary image but one designed to evoke the brutality of the event in the starkest terms. There is no action or drama here; instead, Daumier leaves the viewer with only the stillness and silence of death.

In the years surrounding the publication of *Rue Transnonain*, journalists, publishers, and printmakers could face criminal charges, fines, and even imprisonment for their publications. In 1831, Daumier had created a print titled *Gargantua* depicting Louis-Philippe, the King of the French, as a corpulent blob with an oversized conveyor belt tongue consuming money provided by the laborers of France (*Gargantua* is also the name of a giant in a series of novels written in the 16th century by Rabelais). For this work, Daumier and his publisher Philipon were charged, tried, and sentenced to six months in prison. As he began work on the print, *Rue Transnonain*, Daumier understood the risk he was taking.

Daumier created *Rue Transnonain* for the print subscription, *L'Association Mensuelle Lithographique* and published it in August 1834. Founded by Philipon, while he was serving time in prison for the publication of *Gargantua*, *L'Association Mensuelle* distributed caricatures to subscribers on a monthly basis and the funds raised supported freedom of the press and helped to pay off Philipon's government fines.

Rue Transnonain was the last lithograph published in

that series. Although government censors had approved the print, when it was exhibited in the window of a print seller, the police took note and quickly attempted to track down as many copies as they could. The police also confiscated the lithographic stone so that no more prints could be made. The remaining original prints of Daumier's *Rue Transnonain* are among the most valued of Daumier's works. After they published *Rue Transnonain*, Daumier and Philipon avoided prosecution but the ultimate cost was high. The government passed a new law restricting freedom of the press and proscribed political caricature. As a result, Daumier changed his subject matter, turning his eye away from direct political critique and toward social commentary.

Excepted and Adapted from: Dr. Claire Black McCoy, "Daumier, *Rue Transnonain*," in *Smarthistory*, October 8, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/daumier-rue-transnonain/>.

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When the July Monarchy came to an end during the 1848 revolutions, you would think Daumier would have been ecstatic, but he quickly realized that the Louis Napoleon – elected leader of the government – was up to no good.



Honoré Daumier, *The Day in Review: Ratapoil and his Staff, Viva l'Empereur!*, drawing printed in *La Charivari*, 1851

The Revolution of 1848 again brought a few brief years of press freedom and political caricature. To be signalized among Daumier's work of this period is the creation of Ratapoil, the Bonapartist agent. Ratapoil is the personification of the *agent-provocateur*, the bully boy, a section leader of the Society of December 10, President Louis Bonaparte's private army of adventurers and lumpen-proletariat – a seventy-year anticipation of Benito Mussolini's first *fasci*. It was the Society of December 10 that Bonaparte shipped ahead when he toured France so they could impersonate the masses at each railroad station, shout, "Vive l'Empereur!" and beat up any opponents. Daumier shows Ratapoil as a sinister, seedy, middle-aged but wiry adventurer, with an imperial beard and mustache, carrying a half-concealed club up his sleeve. This figure incarnated all of Daumier's hate and contempt for Napoleon

the Little, by whom, to his credit, he had never been taken in as had such men of the left as Proudhon and Victor Hugo.³³

Images like Daumier's cartoons point to how Louis Napoleon got into power in the first place – elected by the peasant majority and by manipulating the crowds.

But when Louis Napoleon declared the Second Empire, Daumier had to retreat to less direct commentary and just comment about society at large.



Honoré Daumier, *The Third Class Carriage*, oil on canvas, 1863-65

33. George Lavan, "Daumier – Political Artist," *International Socialist Review* 19, no. 4 (1958):133-137.

Daumier's *The Third Class Carriage* represents early railroad travelers seated in a carriage. In this painting, Daumier did not choose to represent the wealthy bourgeois traveling in first class, but the poorer people in the third class, in order to denounce the misery that reigned in a large part of French society at that time. For the artist, it is the reflection of a reality that some preferred to hide.

This representation of reality is disturbing, not so much by what is shown, the characters, the clothes, these miserable children, as by the force of the glances. The dark eyes of the woman with the basket, in the foreground, fixing the viewer of the work, seem terribly accusing and reflect the deep disarray that inhabits these poor people, in their lives of suffering and misery. In the foreground we also have a woman with her child and a young boy. In the background we can see other people also living in suffering misery.

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia, (June 28, 2019), s.v. "Le Wagon de troisième classe."

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Wagon_de_troisdeuxieme_classe



Honoré Daumier, The Laundress, oil on panel, circa 1863

Daumier continued to paint everyday people in everyday situations, while bringing attention to the plight of the poor. Consider, for example, this depiction of a washerwoman. Washerwomen were usually the lowest of the lower class in Parisian society. Women who had found themselves cast out of society – usually single mothers who became pregnant through prostitution – and they took in the laundry of the other classes to make the little money they could. Laundry washing was not easy work in the 1800s.

Clothes were made of heavy and durable natural fibres and needed to be taken to the river to be beaten and wrung, which was heavy and labour-intensive work. Then the heavy, wet clothes needed to be hauled back to the apartment of the washerwoman where they were hung in her living quarters until they were dry enough to press and return to their owners. This meant that these laundry ladies lived in humid and dank conditions, while completing manual labour of the harshest category. Daumier painted washerwomen more than once during his career, but consider how this very real woman – a shadow who flitted through the streets of Paris – is not at all like this woman, the star of the 1863 Salon:

Alexandre Cabanel's *The Birth of Venus* made a real splash at the Salon of 1863. Immediately purchased for the private collection of Napoleon III, it was the center of attention. The woman was considered to be the best that French Art could supply and



Alexandre Cabanel, *The Birth of Venus*, oil on canvas, 1863

she proved a long tradition of the French nude. Of course, she was a Venus, and therefore her function was to goad the viewer into contemplation of the abstract and philosophical ideas of beauty. As a Venus, she was not an attractive and seductive nude, but rather a complicated and high-education symbol of higher thought. (Except...)

Obviously, Daumier and Cabanel approached art in very different ways. Cabanel's work evokes the mythic and the escapist, while Daumier's work forces the viewer to address class differences – if not to incite them to action to at least acknowledge the plight of the poor and disadvantaged.

Audio recording of Manet segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-14>

Édouard Manet

Manet, whose name is so similar to that of his friend Claude Monet, can be differentiated by the fact that he came first. The older and more experienced artist – his last name containing an ‘A’ – can be differentiated from his younger friend’s name Monet – containing a later letter in the alphabet, ‘O’. If one remembers that ‘A’ comes before ‘O’, the names of Manet and Monet can be kept straight. However, while these two artists were friends, one look at their art makes it clear that they are not similar artists in any regard. Édouard Manet may now be sometimes called a Pre-Impressionist but while he was friends with the young, rising Impressionists, he never identified with the Impressionist name. Manet believed his fight was against the Academy and he always said he needed to fight on the Academy’s own battleground – the Salon. For this reason he never exhibited with his Impressionist friends, even though he was invited to do so. Manet wanted to be an Academy painter and did not agree with the Academy’s judgement that he was never going to be of the mind or mettle that the Academy should have. He wanted to change the Academy from the inside, and help it shake off its old-fashioned and self-indulgent standards. He agreed with Baudelaire’s call to embrace the age they lived in and portray life as it is lived. He was a contemporary of Courbet and agreed with what he was trying to do as well. Manet was unaccepted by the Academy mostly because of his ‘color patch’ painting technique – almost completely flat paintings with very little transition between colors – as well as his flat out refusal to indulge in historical narrative or allegory. This rendered his paintings scandalous and confusing because of the lack of historical stories or allegorical value.



Édouard Manet, *The Absinthe Drinker*, oil on canvas, circa 1859

The Absinthe Drinker by Manet was rejected from the Salon, even though Delacroix liked it, because of its patchy colour, its visible brush strokes, and the awkward anatomy used in the painting. But most of all it was rejected because it took the honour of the full-length portrait and bestowed it on a man who was the lowest of the low – a drinker of absinthe. Alone and inebriated, and just in case you didn't figure it out from his bleary gaze the bottle reinforces the man's state.

Drinkers of absinthe were inveterate substance abuse sufferers. Having run through other self-harming vices,

absinthe drinkers, by the harsh nature of their intoxicant of choice, were soon to die from the ravages of their poison. For Manet to paint an absinthe drinker with a full length portrait, it was akin to creating a photo-shoot for a 21st century street person with a long history of substance abuse. Not a common practice and not a subject that viewers of art wanted to be reminded of.



Édouard Manet, *Luncheon on the Grass (Le déjeuner sur l'herbe)*, oil on canvas, 1863

Luncheon on the Grass was exhibited in the same year as Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*, but this painting was not received with the admiration that Cabanel's was. Here, the woman was considered ugly and flat – a naked French woman, unflattered and unidealized. This woman is looking at the viewer, fully aware of her state of (un)dress and in full control of it. This woman, in charge of her own sexuality, is not a nude. She is naked. The viewers at the *Salon des Refuses* (the Exhibition of Refused Art) were aghast. Her nakedness combined with modern dress of the clothed men, was met with scandalized scorn.



Raimondi after Raphael, *Judgement of Paris*, engraving, 1515



Titian, *The Pastoral Concert*, oil on canvas, circa 1509

Manet was actually practicing an age-old Academy device – taking the compositions of very old and famous paintings and bringing them forward to the present time with modern dress and new painting techniques. In this case, he was taking the concept of the Muses in Titan's *The Pastoral Concert* of the early

1500s and combining it with compositional elements from a print of Raphael's *The Judgement of Paris* from the same time period.

Manet was tackling Baudelaire's advice to portray his own era while paying homage to the old Masters. While the Academy would have been very aware of what he was doing, they didn't like it, so they simply didn't 'get' it. They felt that his paintings were not beautiful, but were simply regular French people re-enacting old paintings and they found it distasteful. (It's a good thing the French Academy members of the mid-1850s aren't around to see the 21st century's pandemic obsession of recreating old paintings with only the hoarded supplies that a person has on hand and then taking a photograph! If Manet's recreation of old paintings with modern people was unsavoury, they'd find toilet-paper tube fashion and cats-in-place-of-babies to be downright insulting.)



Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, oil on canvas, 1863

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.

Olympia features a nude woman reclining upon a chaise lounge, with a small black cat at her feet, and a black female servant behind her brandishing a bouquet of flowers. It struck viewers—who flocked to see the

painting—as a great insult to the academic tradition. And of course it was. One could say that the artist had thrown down a gauntlet. The subject was modern—maybe too modern, since it failed to properly elevate the woman’s nakedness to the lofty ideals of nudity found in art of antiquity —she was no goddess or mythological figure. As the art historian Eunice Lipton described it, Manet had “robbed,” the art historical genre of nudes of “their mythic scaffolding...”³⁴ Nineteenth-century French salon painting (sometimes also called academic painting—the art advocated by the Royal Academy) was supposed to perpetually return to the classical past to retrieve and reinvent its forms and ideals, making them relevant for the present moment. In using a contemporary subject (and not Venus), Manet mocked that tradition and, moreover, dared to suggest that the classical past held no relevance for the modern industrial present.



Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, oil on canvas, 1538

As if to underscore his rejection of the past, Manet used as his source a well-known painting in the collection of the Louvre—*Venus of Urbino*, a 1538 painting by the Venetian Renaissance artist Titian —and he then

34. Eunice Lipton, “Manet: A Radicalized Female Imagery,”
Artforum (March, 1975)

stripped it of meaning. To an eye trained in the classical style, *Olympia* was clearly no respectful homage to Titian's masterpiece; the artist offered instead an impoverished copy. In place of the seamlessly contoured voluptuous figure of Venus, set within a richly atmospheric and imaginary world, *Olympia* was flatly painted, poorly contoured, lacked depth, and seemed to inhabit the seamy, contemporary world of Parisian prostitution.

Why, critics asked, was the figure so flat and washed out, the background so dark? Why had the artist abandoned the centuries-old practice of leading the eye towards an imagined vanishing point that would establish the fiction of a believable space for the figures to inhabit? For Manet's artistic contemporaries, however, the loose, fluid brushwork and the seeming rapidity of execution were much more than a hoax. In one stroke, the artist had dissolved classical illusionism and re-invented painting as something that spoke to its own condition of being a painted representation.

Audio recording of *Olympia* part 2 segment:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=251#audio-251-15>

It was for this reason Manet is often referred to as the father of Impressionism. The Impressionists, who formed as a group around 1871, took on the mantle of Manet's rebel status (going so far as to arrange their own exhibitions instead of submitting to the Salon juries), and they pushed his expressive brushwork to the point where everything dissolved into the shimmering movement of light and formlessness. The 20th century art critic Clement Greenberg would later declare Manet's paintings to be the first truly modernist works because of the "frankness with which they declared the flat surfaces on which they were painted."³⁵

Manet had an immediate predecessor in the Realist paintings of Gustave Courbet, who had himself scandalized the Salons during the 1840s and '50s with roughly worked images of the rural French countryside and its inhabitants. In rejecting a tightly controlled application of paint and seamless illusionism—what the Impressionists called the "licked surfaces" of the paintings of the French Academy—Manet also drew inspiration from Spanish artists Velasquez and Goya, as well as 17th century Dutch painters like Frans Hals, whose loosely executed portraits seem as equally frank

35. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 86.

about the medium as Manet's some 200 years later. But Manet's modernity is not just a function of how he painted, but also what he painted. His paintings were pictures of modernity, of the often-marginalized figures that existed on the outskirts of bourgeois normalcy. Many viewers believed the woman at the center of *Olympia* to be an actual prostitute, coldly staring at them while receiving a gift of flowers from an assumed client, who hovers just out of sight (Manet here puns on the way French prostitutes often borrowed names of classical goddesses). The model for the painting was actually a salon painter in her own right, a certain Victorine Meurent, who appears again in Manet's *The Railway* (1873) and Auguste Renoir's *Moulin de la Galette* (1876).

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.

If Manet rejected an established approach to painting that valued the timeless and eternal, *Olympia* served to further embody, for his scandalized viewers, a sense of the modern world as one brimming with uncertainty and newness. *Olympia* occupies a pivotal moment in art history. Situated on the threshold of the shift from the classical tradition to an industrialized modernity, it is a perfect metaphor of an irretrievably disappearing past and an as yet unknowable future.

Consider the following:

Realism grew out of a need to express the contemporary era and to discuss the circumstances of the overlooked and silent classes. Eventually this began to take the form of journalism.

Do you feel that this is still a relevant way to effect change?

Do you think it has become too commonplace or predictable? What could be done differently to communicate, in a visual or non-visual way, situations that cry out for change?



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7. Chapter 7 - Victorian England and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

Britain

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- Explain the tenets of female beauty as described by mainstream Victorian society
- Describe Victorian society's obsession with narrative art
- Recount the basic plot points of the 'Fallen Woman' motif common in Victorian art and literature
- List the main artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
- Explain how the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was started and why
- Identify the works of Whistler and explain Whistler's art making motivations

Audio recording of chapter opening:





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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-1>

Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_s7c4KYNBAtd5KpPshm8SNK2iFAnWyU4/view?usp=sharing



Do you know the muffin
man,
The muffin man, the muffin
man.
Do you know the muffin
man,
Who lives on Drury Lane?

Oh Yes, I know the muffin
man,
The muffin man, the muffin
man,
Yes, I know the muffin man,
Who lives on Drury Lane.¹

1. I. Opie and P. Opie, *The Singing Game* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 379–82.



Gustave Doré, *Orange Court Drury Lane*, engraving, 1872

The interrogation scene between Lord Farquaad and Gingy in *Shrek* might make you feel a little differently about how Gingy's life has been going so far in Duloc if you have seen Gustave Doré's *Orange Court, Drury Lane* print from 1872.

While a Muffin Man is likely to have travelled throughout the city selling his wares, the fact that Gingy knows where the Muffin Man lives (and SPOILER ALERT: much later it is revealed that the Muffin Man is Gingy's creator), it could mean that Gingy lives or has lived nearby. In the realm of reality in 1870s London, England – Drury Lane was a place of destitute poverty.

Of Orange Court on Drury Lane, the artist said:

“On our way to the City on the tide of Labor we light upon places in which the day is never aired: only the high

points of which the sun ever hits. Rents spread with rags, swarming with the children of mothers forever greasing the walls with their shoulders; where there is an angry hopelessness and carelessness painted upon the face of every man and woman, and the oaths are loud, and the crime is continuous; and the few who do work with something like

system are the ne'er-do-weels of the great army. As the sun rises the court swarms at once: for here there are no ablutions to perform, no toilets to make—neither brush nor comb delays the outpouring of babes and sucklings from the cellars and garrets. And yet in the midst of such a scene as this we cannot miss touches of human goodness, and of honorable instinct making a tooth-and-nail fight against adverse circumstances. Some country wenches, who have been east into London – Irish girls mostly – hasten out of the horrors of the common lodging-house to market, where they buy their flowers for the day's huckstering in the City. They are to be seen selling roses and camellias, along the curb by the Bank, to dapper clerks.”²

Victorian England was a nation of extremes. Extreme poverty and extreme wealth. Extreme ugliness and extreme beauty. The reign of Queen Victoria was long and in many ways her reign was a time of stability for the nation. The ideas that swept artists up in a fevered outpouring of art production were not always the things that the general public felt inclined to embrace as readily. While ideas of Realism and the heroism of the everyday citizen were interesting, the British soul longed for story-telling and

2. Gustave Doré and Blanchard Jerrold, “London: A Pilgrimage,” Harper's Weekly (London) Nov 9, 1872.
https://books.google.ca/books?id=CsoIN5hjA_cC&pg=PA886&dq=%22On+our+way+to+the+City+on+the+tide+of+Labor%22&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjC64CX4bTsAhXHpZ4KHRcIDfgQ6AEwAHoECAEQAg#v=onepage&q=%22On%20our%20way%20to%20the%20City%20on%20the%20tide%20of%20Labor%22&f=false

narrative. Social change was a nice idea, but what about the soul-crushing stories that were available to be bought and sold as entertainment? The ability to create social-change with art was probably a good idea, but what about sweet paintings of mothers and children? Victorian art (and perhaps its culture as a whole) had a bit of an issue – vacillating from moralizing calls to better living to sweeping escapist fantasy. In the 21st century, mainstream Victorian art is frequently skipped over in art history – except to talk about its one band of bad boy artists who bucked the establishment – and a few select Academic artists. To the contemporary tastes of today, Victorian mainstream art was too sweet and syrupy to be palatable. It's somewhat ironic that the most famous Victorian artists in the 21st century are the artists who were not deeply sought after during their time.



Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Reading From Homer*, oil on canvas, 1885

Audio recording of *A Reading from Homer* segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-2>

The title is *A Reading from Homer*. And yet, we see no indications of anyone reading (either to themselves privately or aloud to others). In fact, the storyteller at right, crowned in a wreath of laurel leaves and gesticulating with his left arm, is decidedly looking away from the scroll that unfurls on his lap. Moreover, this painting does not even illustrate a specific scene from Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.

Despite the title, then, Alma-Tadema's painting showcases the oral transmission of culture across the ages. Unlike the Victorian (male) elite, who spent long hours studying ancient Latin and Greek texts in pedantic exercises at grammar schools and at university, Alma-Tadema favored a vision of the ancient world that was anything but dry. His paintings were accessible to those outside academia and thus more democratic in their appeal. In *A Reading from Homer*, the marble bench even seems to curve towards the viewer's space, as if offering us an invitation to participate in this gathering.

In fact, at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1885, art critic Claude Phillips perceived the populist element of

this painting, although he interpreted it negatively. While acknowledging that the painting demonstrates Alma-Tadema's "usual mastery . . . of light, color, texture, and drawing," Phillips nonetheless disapproved of the figures themselves: "The facial types, though they have an air of realistic truth, are of a low order, and not such as should have been selected for such a subject."³ Here Phillips draws upon the contemporary pseudo-scientific discourse of phrenology and physiognomy, which argued that an individual's character was legible through the shape of the head and facial features. For Phillips, the supposedly "low" nature of the figures' faces was corroborated by their lethargic attitudes, and he preferred paintings with classical themes that elevated the viewer by featuring noble people doing noble deeds. By Victorian standards the people in the painting were not beautiful, and Victorian culture equated physical beauty with goodness of character. Therefore, these less than beautiful people were exhibiting their lower characters with their indolent poses and slow responses in ways that only the unlovely could.

Alma-Tadema's vision of antiquity was decidedly different than that. He was a key figure in the mid- to late-Victorian Classical Revival. We can think back to the Neo-classical movement of a century before. A product of the Enlightenment, Neoclassical art favored the cerebral over the sensual and themes that promoted

3. Claude Phillips, "The Royal Academy," *The Academy* 679 (9 May 1885), p.336.

reason, civic virtue, and heroism. Think of Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784), which shows three brothers who vow to go to war and sacrifice their lives for Rome. By contrast, in *A Reading from Homer*, Alma-Tadema shows a group of languorous figures enjoying the sensory delights of a warm Mediterranean day by the sea, withdrawing into private worlds of reverie rather than being urged into collective, public action.

Here Alma-Tadema's classicism also engages with the mid-Victorian Aesthetic movement (which emphasized the aesthetic qualities of art over the narrative), and *A Reading from Homer* resembles Albert Moore's *A Musician* of c.1867. The lyres in both Moore and Alma-Tadema's paintings underscore the Aesthetes' "musical" approach to painting, encouraging the viewer to look at painting in terms of harmonies, rhythms, and contrasts rather than offering any specific narrative moment or moral meaning. In *A Reading from Homer*, the viewer can appreciate a series of visual contrasts that offer a pleasing sense of balance and harmony: the angular geometries of the marble architecture at left, which transforms into the sweeping curve of the bench at right; the figures resting in cool shadow against the bright, glowing marble and sun-lit water; the palette of whites, blues, and browns punctuated by the loud accents of the red tambourine and fuschia roses.

Alma-Tadema delighted in the day-to-day materiality of the past. In *A Reading from Homer* we can see the skill with which he depicted the translucency of the marble, tinged blue by the light from the sky and water; the soft

fur tunic worn by the reclining man; and the lyre with all strings carefully delineated.

Alma-Tadema's attention to artifacts and architecture represents an archaeological approach. The second half of the nineteenth century was a great age of archaeological study and excavation, with discoveries being made in Mediterranean and Near Eastern sites such as Knossos, Mycenae, and even the famed Homeric city of Troy. Alma-Tadema himself regularly visited Pompeii, the Museo Nazionale in Naples, the Vatican Museum, and Rome for archaeological inspiration; at home in London he also had a great resource in the British Museum.

Because of Alma-Tadema's pleasure in depicting the material objects and structures of the past, critics have sometimes been unkind in their view of him. Critic and curator Roger Fry, who helped introduce Post-Impressionism to Britain, denounced Alma-Tadema as representing "an extreme instance of the commercial materialism of our civilization."⁴ This view was further cemented by the fact that his art was collected by the wealthy capitalists of his day. A *Reading from Homer* was purchased by American financier Henry Marquand, then President of the Metropolitan Museum, to go in the music room of his New York mansion.

4. Roger Fry Reader, "The Case of the Late Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, O.M." (reprinted from *The Nation*, 18 January 1913, 666-67) p.149.

A *Reading from Homer* offered visitors to Marquand's home a sort of mirror for their own behavior. Like the figures in the painting, these Gilded Age elite would gather in the music room to listen to a performance or recital. They would also witness Alma-Tadema's artistic performance by proxy, in the form of this painting. Inscribed on the seat beneath the storyteller is Alma-Tadema's signature, suggesting the artist's identification with this figure. Like the Homeric storyteller, Alma-Tadema captivates his audience through his artistic performance, bringing visions of the ancient world to life.

Excepted and Adapted from: Dr. Chloe Portugeis, "Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Listening to Homer*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/alma-tadema-listening-to-homer/>.

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Audio recording of the Fallen Woman trope segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-3>

Beauty and the so-called character truths it revealed were an

important part of Victorian culture. This was deepened, in part, by the demographic ratios in the Victorian population. In Victorian England, due to wars and pandemics, the male to female ratio was one man to every ten women. This meant for every single woman who got married, nine others were left single. This might seem like a small matter in the 21st century, but in Victorian England this was a major cause for concern.

See, in England at this time a woman *had* to marry. Not because women were forbidden from remaining single, but because society was structured so that women needed to be married in order to access to the ability to care and provide for themselves. Life was divided into two overlapping spheres – the Public Sphere, realm of the male, and the Private Sphere, realm of the female. Only in the creation of a family home did the two spheres overlap. Therefore a woman without access to an overlapping Public Sphere would suffer destitution, ill-repute, and dead-ends in most efforts to access the goods and services of the Public Sphere. Thus, Victorian women *needed* to marry. Their only other option was to remain in their parent's home under the care of her father. However, the Industrialization of Britain during this period had changed the economic culture and many families in the lower and middle class were unable to care for adult children. Women who were unable to find a husband were often forced to care for themselves. Some were able to find work in the factories of the Industrial Revolution and scrapped together a mean existence. However, as hundreds of thousands flocked to the cities in search of work the factories had more prospective employees than work to give and thousands of women found it necessary to make a living via the world's oldest profession – prostitution. Yet, a prostitute in Victorian society was as invisible and as worthless as a French Laundress and thus the cycle of poverty persisted.

The rate of unwed mothers in a society that shut out the 'shamed' woman, create a voracious art market for stories of the 'Femme Fatale' and the 'Fallen Woman'. The *femme fatale* was, as she always is, beautiful and dangerous. A woman of ambition who lies about her

unseemly past and racks up societal taboos like Rachel Green racks up her credit card in *Friends*. The 'Fallen Woman' was the story of the failed *femme fatale* – the woman whose mistakes find her out and she is left with...nothing but shame.



Richard Redgrave, *The Outcast*, oil on canvas, 1851

The melodramatic moral work by Richard Redgrave – *The Outcast* – depicts a stern patriarch of inflexible puritanical morality casting out a fallen woman and her illegitimate baby – probably his daughter and grandchild – from his “respectable” house. Despite the snow visible on the ground outside, the paterfamilias stands by an open door, gesturing angrily for her to depart. Another young woman – probably another daughter – kneels, begging him to relent, while another weeps behind. The

mother of the family comforts a weeping son, while a fourth daughter looks on in confusion. An incriminating letter lies on the floor, and a biblical painting – probably Abraham casting out Hagar and Ishmael, but possibly Christ and the woman taken in adultery – hangs on the wall. The device of the incriminating letter was used to better effect in a similar context by Augustus Egg in his 1858 triptych *Past and Present*.

The painting is ambiguous: it could be meant as a warning to other women to avoid a similar fate, or could be intended to evoke sympathy for the plight of the young mother abandoned by her family.

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia, (August 17, 2020), s.v. “The Outcast (Redgrave painting).”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
The_Outcast_\(Redgrave_painting\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Outcast_(Redgrave_painting))



Augustus Egg, *Past and Present*, No. 1 – *Misfortune*, oil on canvas, 1858

But not just unwed mothers could be included in the ‘Fallen Woman’ narrative. In Augustus Egg’s triptych *Past and Present* he portrays the story of a mother who is found out in an affair and falls from her comfortable married position into utter destitution. The first piece, meant to be hung in between the other two pieces in the series, represented the Past, while the pieces on either side were two perspectives of the same moment in the Present.

Around this time the courts had just changed the divorce process, which made it more accessible to the middle classes – this may have been a discussion regarding the problems with easier divorces. It may have been a commentary on immorality. Or it may have been a judgement on promiscuous women who became wives.

The paintings were not individually titled when they were exhibited in the Royal Academy show of 1858 as they are now –

Misfortune, *Prayer*, and *Despair* but they were accompanied with this fictional excerpt from a journal:

August the 4th - Have just heard that B— has been dead more than a fortnight, so his poor children have now lost both parents. I hear she was seen on Friday last near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head. What a fall hers has been!⁵

In *Past and Present*, No. 1 - *Misfortune*, the mother lays in a pleading swoon on the floor having realized her husband had an incriminating letter clasped in his hand. He sits thunderstruck his face glazed and despondent, showing that their difference have become irreconcilable. The portrait of the other man is under his foot. The apple has been cut - one piece staying on the table, the other by her foot. The children jump at the commotion between their parents as their house of cards falls down. In the mirror the door is open and the bag and umbrella sit by the door.

5. Annabelle Rutherford, "A Dramatic Reading of Augustus Leopold Egg's Untitled Triptych," *Tate Papers*, no. 7 (2007). <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/07/a-dramatic-reading-of-augustus-leopold-egg-untitled-triptych>



Augustus Egg, *Past and Present, No. 2 – Prayer*, oil on canvas, 1858

According to John Ruskin, in the story being presented by Egg's paintings, five years have passed since the fateful day that the mother left the home.⁶ The children are older now and the older one's black mourning clothes and the younger one's crying shows that the father has died and they are alone in the world. Looking out the window as they pray for their wayward and estranged mother they look at the waxing moon.

6. Rutherford, "Dramatic", <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/07/a-dramatic-reading-of-augustus-leopold-egg-untitled-triptych>



Augustus Egg, *Past and Present*, No. 3 – *Despair*, oil on canvas, 1858

In the third painting of the triptych, the mother stares at the same moon with the same cloud that her daughters are looking at at the same moment. The naked legs of a baby stick out from her rags, causing the viewer to speculate if the baby is already dead or if it will survive. She sleeps under the bridge by the Strand. The posters on the walls are advertisements for two plays that feature destroyed marriages and an ad for a pleasure cruise to France.

Audio recording of Beauty Standards segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-4>

This triptych and *The Outcast* are paintings of “Fallen Women” – a *huge* theme in Victorian arts – poetry and literature explored it the most but the fine arts did as well. With the massive number of prostitutes and questionably careered women in London, it is not strange that there would have been an interest in the fallen woman. There were lots.

Which is an interesting thing because England at this time was in the middle of a moral revolution of sorts. You’ll see with the works of William Holman-Hunt, that morality was a *big* deal in Victorian England. But, it wasn’t like the Neo-Classical French call to morality – which was all about the many over the few and a single sacrifice for the greater good, etc. That was a very Roman Catholic, collective approach. The English moral revolution was very much in the domain of the individual for the *sake* of the individual, although society would benefit, the reason for morality wasn’t the betterment of the many, but the saving of the one – which was a very Protestant, individualistic approach.

With these moralizing reminders everywhere and the real threat of destitution behind every mistake, women were very conscious of the very real need to find a husband. One of the ways to win a husband was with beauty and grace and this needed to happen very early in the ‘coming out’ of a young woman.

Coming Out: The phrase meant something different back then. Girls too young for courtship were referred to as “in the schoolroom”; to “come out to society” meant to enter the marriage market. Often these girls were presented to the Queen at St. James – the Victorian equivalent of a Senior Prom spotlight dance. The girls had to make the most of

their first season. After two or three “failed seasons” – no engagement – they could be considered an old maid.⁷

This is also where the saying ‘Three times a bridesmaid, never a bride’ has some of its roots- you know, apart from the Medieval superstitions about bridesmaids absorbing the demons and bad luck from the happy couple. If a bridesmaid had been in a wedding three times – which would probably mean three wedding seasons (spring/summer) – dressed in her best – and still hadn’t caught the eye of any bachelors, she was doomed to be an old maid. To provide for herself becoming a school teacher, or governess, was a suitable occupation for an old maid of middle class education and social standing.

7. Emma Jameson, "Some Fun Facts about Victorian England," Official Site of Emma Jameson, New York Times Best Selling Author, January 21, 2012, <https://emmajamesondotcom.wordpress.com/category/facts-victorian/>



James Tissot, *On the Thames*, oil on canvas, 1882

In a society that values looks as an indicator of goodness, it makes sense that cosmetics were taboo. In other eras makeup would have been the way to perfect one's looks to meet the criteria of society, but 'proper' British women didn't wear makeup – or makeup that showed anyway. It was felt that wearing makeup or overly structured undergarments was akin to lying about who and what you were. According to beauty standards of the time the ideal complexion was called “the lily and the rose” – white, translucent skin with pale rose

tint fading into the cheeks. To achieve this coveted complexion many home-made beauty treatments and questionable tinctures were used frequently. And beauty ads definitely targeted the fear of old-maid-dom with ads that stated:

“How frequently we find that a slight blemish on the face, otherwise divinely beautiful, has occasioned a sad and solitary life of celibacy, unloved, unblest, and ultimately unwept and unremembered.”⁸

Basically, those who didn't have the most naturally derived good-looks were destined to die forever alone.

Every culture had ideals of beauty that changed from time to time – like France's over the top Rococo fashions. Anyone with

8. Mark Sandy, *The Persistence of Beauty: Victorians to Moderns*, (Abingdon-on-Thames, England: Routledge, 2015), 38.

enough money, head gear, and makeup could be beautiful in Rococo France. This was so well known, even during the Rococo period that many jokes were made about French women as disguisers and dissemblers. So, sixty years later in England it was almost impossible to scam the system. Bone structure, hair colour and body shape were tantamount and faking it (with the exception of minor to moderate body modifications with foundational wear) was a sign of deep character-flaws and scandal.

Entire books existed as to explain what was, and was not beautiful – the “Laws” of Beauty. Alexander Walker’s book *Beauty: Illustrated Chiefly by an Analysis and Classification of Beauty in Women* did its best to present itself as a scientific manual regarding the most important aspects of female beauty. But keep in mind that all these rules and laws of good looks were deeply supported by the cultural belief that can be summed up with a simple equation:

BEAUTIFUL = GOOD

UGLY = EVIL

Which is why ‘faking it’ with makeup or overly structured clothing was considered scandalous and the same as lying and cheating. Because how you looked conveyed everything about you and to lie about how you looked was lying about who you were. Facial bone structure was considered of the MOST importance – a strong chin, or a thin & long face, or pronounced eyebrow line could undo a woman’s marriage chances (or so they said. Because were ‘ugly’ women finding love and getting married in Victorian society? For sure. For all the so-called science in their approach, the science of beauty frequently forgot the subjective nature of attraction.) Chins were especially considered markers of daily character. Walker stated in his book,

Of the chin, it should be observed that it is a distinctive character of the human species, and is not found in any other animal. When well formed, it is full, united, and generally without a dimple; and it passes gently and almost insensibly into the neighboring parts. In woman especially,

the chin ought to be finely rounded; for when projecting, it expresses, owing to its connexion with muscular action and power, a firmness and a determination which we do not wish to discover in her character. In woman, the countenance is more rounded, as well as more abundantly furnished with that cellular and, fatty tissue which fills all the chasms, effaces, all the angles, and unites all the parts by the gentlest transitions. At the same time, the muscles are feebler, more mobile, resigned for a shorter time to the same contraction, and as inconstant as the emotions and passions which their rapid play expresses.⁹

So basically, the beautiful woman was inconstant, emotional, and not one to jut out her chin in defiance too frequently.

Audio recording of Beauty Standards (con't) segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-5>

Hair colour was also important. Blonde was considered the ideal hair color; lady's magazines of the time declared blondes were the

9. Alexander Walker, *Beauty: Illustrated Chiefly by an Analysis and Classification of Beauty in Women*, (New York : J. & H.G. Langley, 1840), 246-247.

only true beauties.¹⁰ Other colours could be nice or handsome, but only blondes were worth talking about.



George Goodwin Kilburne, *Penning a Letter*, oil on canvas, n.d.

This lady here, in George Goodwin Kilburne's painting, would be considered nearly ideal. The chin isn't really there as it gently fades into the neck, the face is a long oval, the eyes rounded and china blue. Her hair is blond and slightly curly – slightly curly is important here.

Too curly and she seems wild and unrulable, but slightly curly gives the idea of yielding and gentle, with no severity. The hands are small, the arms taper, the neck is not thick or short, and her chest is defined but not overwhelming. Lacking pointy or jutting features of any kind, this lady's only flaw may be that her nose is too straight and strong, giving her too much a Classical profile. However, her blond hair, round blue eyes, and cupid's bow lips come very close to the stereotypical standard of Victorian beauty.

Another canon of Victorian beauty, one not as beautiful as the blonde canon but still a lovely lady, was the auburn haired beauty. Auburn hair, to any readers of *Anne of Green Gables*, may seem to be a very red-headed type colour, but in this era it was a brown hair



James Tissot, *Young Lady in a Boat*, oil on canvas, 1870

10. Jameson, "Fun Facts,"

<https://emmajamesondotcom.wordpress.com/category/facts-victorian/>

colour that glowed with reddish warmth (rather than simply being a dark red). The auburn haired woman was considered almost beautiful by Victorian standards. She needed an ample chest – though that was never quite nearly enough to counteract her misfortune of not being blonde. She should have a tapered waist, but a good corset could help with that. And as with the blonde standard she should have small hands, tiny feet (not seen in James Tissot's painting), and tapering arms. In Tissot's *Young Lady in a Boat*, his model has a gentle chin and rounded oval face. Here, compared to Kilburne's painting, the eyes are more almond – she's simply not as beautiful. Her character would be considered in keeping with her eye and hair – possibly a little on the saucy side, but still upstanding. The auburn haired woman could be handsome.



Frank Dicksee, *Portrait of Elsa*, oil on canvas, n.d.

The last kind of woman in Victorian society was the dark haired woman.

They could never be beautiful. But if her skin was lily enough and her neck long enough, her bosom ample enough, her waist thin enough, her hands small enough, her disposition gentle enough, she could be considered 'Striking'.

The dark haired woman required a gentle nature and pale complexion to be considered attractive. The auburn haired woman needed a

quick wit. The blonde woman could be effortlessly beautiful. Of course, all of these beauty standards hung on more than just hair colour – bone structure, skin tone, and other things were part of the equation.

But there is a hair colour that isn't on this list.

The Red Headed Woman. Even just calling someone a 'Red Headed

Woman' was like calling someone a bad name – it was a social call-out that either meant you were a mean-spirited cat or the woman you were speaking out about was your worst enemy. It was a *Mean Girls* ostracizing call-to-arms.

But, you might say after a Google search, Red Headed Women show up in a lot of Victorian art!

This is partially true. Red Heads were featured in a lot of art created during the Victorian era, but they are not, strictly speaking, featured in Victorian art. There was a sub-culture of art that rebelled against the beauty standards of the Victorian and created art that celebrated what the mainstream deemed ugly. In the paintings of these artists you will find sharp chins and elbows, bony bodies, hooked noses, wild hair, and red locks streaming untamed around the thin, long bodies of the women painted. These rebels began with a small group of painters in London who went by a (not so secret) name:

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

During a visit to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1848, the young artist and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti was drawn to a painting entitled *The Eve of Saint Agnes* by William Holman Hunt. As a subject taken from the poetry of John Keats was a rarity at the time, Rossetti sought out Hunt, and the two quickly became friends. Hunt then introduced Rossetti to his friend John Everett

Millais, and the rest, as they say, is history. The trio went on to form the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group determined to reform the artistic establishment of Victorian England.



William Homan Hunt, *The flight of Madeline and Porphyro during the drunkenness attending the revelry (The Eve of St. Agnes)*, oil on panel, 1847 and 1857

The name “Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood” (PRB) hints at the vaguely medieval subject matter for which the group is known. The young artists appreciated the simplicity of line and large flat areas of brilliant color found in the early Italian painters before Raphael, as well as in 15th century Flemish

art. These were not qualities favored by the more academic approach taught at the Royal Academy during the mid 19th century, which stressed the strong light and dark shading of the Old Masters. Another source of inspiration for the young artists was the writing of art critic John Ruskin, particularly the famous passage from *Modern Painters* telling artists “to go to nature in all singleness of heart . . . rejecting nothing, selecting nothing and scorning nothing.” This combination of influences contributed to the group’s extreme attention to detail, and the development of the wet white ground technique that produced the brilliant color for which they are known. The artists even became some of the first to complete sections of their canvases outdoors in

an effort to capture the minute detail of every leaf and blade of grass.

It was decided that seven was the appropriate number for a rebellious group and four others were added to form the initial Brotherhood. The selection of additional members has long mystified art historians. James Collinson, a painter, seems to have been added due to his short-lived engagement to Rossetti's sister Christina rather than his sympathy with the cause. Another member, Thomas Woolner, was a sculptor rather than a painter. The final two members, William Michael Rossetti and Frederic George Stephens, both of whom went on to become art critics, were not practicing artists. However, other young artists such as Walter Howell Deverell and Charles Collins embraced the ideals of the PRB even though they were never formally elected as members.

Audio recording of Pre-Raphaelites segment:



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version of the text. You
can view them online here:



John Everett Millais, *Isabella*, oil on canvas, 1849

[https://openeducationalberta.ca/
19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-6](https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-6)

The Pre-Raphaelites decided to make their debut by sending a group of paintings, all bearing the initials “PRB”, to the Royal Academy in 1849. However, Rossetti, who was nervous about the reception of his painting *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, changed his mind and instead sent his painting to the earlier Free Exhibition (meaning there was no jury as there was at the Royal Academy). At the Royal Academy, Hunt exhibited *Rienzi*, *the Last of the Tribunes*, a scene from an historical novel of the same name by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Millais exhibited *Isabella*, another subject from Keats, created with such attention to detail that one can actually see the beheading scene on the plate nearest the edge of the table, which echoes the ultimate fate of the young lover Lorenzo in the story. In both paintings, the accurately designed medieval costumes, bright colors and attention to detail produced criticism that the paintings mimicked a “mediaeval illumination of the chronicle or the romance” (*Athenaeum*, 2 June 1849, p. 575). Interestingly, no mention was made of the mysterious “PRB” inscription on the bench leg. In 1850, however, the reaction to the PRB was very different. By this time, many people knew about the existence of the supposedly secret society, in part because the group had published many of their ideas in a short-lived

literary magazine entitled *The Germ*. Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini* appeared at the Free Exhibition along with a painting by his friend Devereux entitled *Twelfth Night*. At the Royal Academy, Hunt's *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids* and Millais's *Christ in the House of his Parents*, famously abused by Charles Dickens, received the brunt of the criticism. In the aftermath of the humiliating reception of their work, Collinson resigned from the group and Rossetti decided never again to exhibit publicly. Undeterred, Millais and Hunt again continued to exhibit paintings demonstrating the beautiful colors and detail orientation of the mature style of the PRB. The Royal Academy of 1851 included Hunt's *Valentine Rescuing Sylvia*, and three pictures by Millais, *Mariana*, *The Woodman's Daughter*, and *The Return of the Dove to the Ark* as well as *Convent Thoughts* by Millais's friend Charles Collins. Although many were still dubious about the new style, the critic John Ruskin came to the rescue of the group, publishing two letters in *The Times* newspaper in which he praised the relationship of the PRB to early Italian art. Although Ruskin was suspicious of what he termed the group's "Catholic tendencies," he liked the attention to detail and the color of the PRB paintings. Ruskin's praise helped catapult the young artists to a new level. The Brotherhood, however, was slowly dissolving. Woolner emigrated to Australia in 1852. Hunt decided in January 1854 to visit the Holy Land in order to better paint religious pictures. And, in an event Rossetti described as the formal end of the PRB, Millais was elected as an

Associate of the Royal Academy in 1853, joining the art establishment he had fought hard to change. Despite the fact that the Brotherhood lasted only a few short years, its impact was immense. Millais and Hunt both went on to establish important places for themselves in the Victorian art world. Millais was to go on to become an extremely popular artist, selling his art works for vast sums of money, and ultimately being elected as the President of the Royal Academy. Hunt, who perhaps stayed most true to the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic, became a well-known artist and wrote many articles and books on the formation of the Brotherhood. Rossetti became a mentor to a group of younger artists including Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Rossetti's paintings of beautiful women also helped inaugurate the new Aesthetic Movement, or the taste for Art for Art's Sake, in the later Victorian era. To a contemporary audience, the Pre-Raphaelites may appear less than modern. However, in their own time the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood accomplished something revolutionary. They were one of the first groups to value painting out-of-doors for its "truth to nature," and their concept of banding together to take on the art establishment helped to pave the way for later groups. The distinctive elements of their paintings, such as the extreme attention to detail, the brilliant colors and the beautiful rendition of literary subjects set them apart from other Victorian painters. Excerpted and Adapted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, "A beginner's guide to the Pre-Raphaelites," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/a-beginners-guide-to-the->

[pre-raphaelites/](#).

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John Everett Millais



John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, oil on canvas, 1849-50

When it appeared at the Royal Academy annual exhibition of 1850 *Christ in the House of his Parents* must have seemed a serious departure from standard religious imagery. Painted by the young John Everett Millais, a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB), *Christ in the House of his Parents* focuses on the ideal of truth to nature that was to become the hallmark of the Brotherhood.

The picture centers on the young Christ whose hand has been injured, being cared for by the Virgin, his mother. Christ's wound, a perforation in his palm, foreshadows his ultimate end on the cross. A young St. John the Baptist carefully brings a bowl of water to clean the wound, symbolic of John the Baptist's future role in the baptism of Christ. Joseph, St Anne (the Virgin's mother) and a carpenter's assistant also react to Christ's accident. At a time when most religious paintings of the Holy Family were calm and tranquil groupings, this active event in the young life of the Savior must have seemed extremely radical.

The same can be said for Millais' handling of the figures and the setting in the painting. Mary's wrinkled brow and the less than clean feet of some of the figures are certainly not idealized. According to the principles of the P.R.B., the attention to detail is incredible. Each individual wood shaving on the floor is exquisitely painted, and the rough-hewn table is more functional than beautiful. The tools of the carpenters trade are evident hanging on the wall behind, while stacks of

wood line the walls. The setting is a place of work, not a sacred spot.

William Michael Rossetti recorded in *The P.R.B. Journal* that Millais started to work on the subject in November 1849 and began the actual painting at the end of December. We know from Rossetti and the reminiscences of fellow Brotherhood member William Holman Hunt that Millais worked on location in a carpenter's shop on Oxford Street, catching cold while working there in January. Millais' son tells us that his father purchased sheep heads from a butcher to use as models for the sheep in the upper left of the canvas. He did not show the finished canvas to his friends until April of 1850.

Audio recording of Millais segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-7>

Although Millais' exhibit at the Royal Academy in 1849, *Isabella*, had been well received, the critics blasted *Christ in the House of his Parents*. The most infamous review, however, was the one by Charles Dickens that appeared in his magazine *Household Words* in June 1850. In it he described Christ as:

a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-haired boy in a nightgown, who appears to have received a poke playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a monster in the vilest cabaret in France or in the lowest gin-shop in England.

The commentary in *The Times* was equally unfavorable, stating that Millais' "attempt to associate the Holy Family with the meanest details of a carpenter's shop, with no conceivable omission of misery, of dirt, of even disease, all finished with loathsome minuteness, is disgusting." The painting proved to be so controversial that Queen Victoria asked that it be removed from the exhibition and brought to her so she could examine it.

The attacks on Millais' painting were undoubtedly unsettling for the young artist. Millais had been born in 1829 on the island of Jersey, but his parents eventually moved to London to benefit their son's artistic education. When Millais began at the Royal Academy school in 1840 he had the distinction of being the youngest person ever to have been admitted.

At the Royal Academy, Millais became friendly with the young William Holman Hunt, who in turn introduced Millais to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the idea for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was born. The young artists

exhibited their first set of paintings in 1849, all of which were well received, but the paintings shown in 1850 were universally criticized, although none with as much fervor as *Christ in the House of his Parents*.

Millais' *Christ in the House of his Parents* is a remarkable religious painting for its time. It presents the Holy Family in a realistic manner, emphasizing the small details that bring the tableau to life. It is a scene we can easily imagine happening, but it is still laced with the symbolism expected of a Christian subject. It is Millais' marriage of these two ideas that makes *Christ in the House of his Parents* such a compelling image, and at the same time, made it so reprehensible to Millais' contemporaries.

Excerpted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, "Sir John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015,

<https://smarthistory.org/millais-christ-in-the-house-of-his-parents/>.

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John Everett Millais, *Mariana*, oil on mahogany wood, 1851

Rising up to stretch after a long session of embroidery, Millais' *Mariana* is the epitome of the Victorian idea of a medieval woman. Set in a vaguely Gothic interior with pointed arches and stained glass windows, the painting has an air of mystery and melancholy that is typical in Victorian

depictions of the Middle Ages. The 1830s–50s saw an interest in the Middle Ages which appeared to offer an alternative to the problems of industrial capitalism of the Victorian era.

Also typical of the time, is the emphasis on the isolated female figure. The dark colors and straining posture of the woman lead us to wonder about her story, and the Victorian painter always has a story to tell.

Mariana is an illustration to Tennyson's poem, lines from which were included in the catalog when the painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1851:

She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said:
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

The inspiration for the poem was taken from the character of Mariana in Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*, who was locked in a moated grange (an estate with a moat around it) for years after her dowry was lost at sea in a storm, causing her to be rejected by her lover Angelo. However, the happily ever after ending found in Shakespeare's play is not even hinted at in either Tennyson's poem or the painting by Millais. Instead the young woman is totally enclosed and isolated by her surroundings, with even the garden visible outside the window bordered by a high brick wall. The visual imagery, with the dying leaves that are strewn throughout the composition, does not seem to suggest a happy ending for Millais' heroine.

As is typical with the Pre-Raphaelites, Millais' painting shows his mastery of the minute detail. The viewer can almost reach out and touch the softness of her velvet dress, and the jewels in her belt glitter against the dark blue fabric. The beautiful stained glass windows depicting an Annunciation scene were adapted from the windows in the Chapel of Merton College, Oxford. Even the smallest details such as the small mouse that runs across the floor and the light of the lamp by the prie dieu in the corner are painted with the same attention to truth to nature found in the more prominent elements of the painting.

Mariana was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1851. Although Millais and his fellow Pre-Raphaelite artists were not well received by the critics, the attacks were not as savage as Millais had endured the previous year over his *Christ in the House of his Parents*. In fact, the

young but influential critic John Ruskin was persuaded to send two letters to *The Times* praising the new style for its skill in drawing, intense color and truthfulness to nature. This was a turning point, both for the future of the Pre-Raphaelites and for Millais, whose future association with Ruskin was to be so eventful.

In *Mariana*, Millais has created both an essay in Pre-Raphaelite execution and an evocative literary female portrait. The viewer feels the release of her aching muscles as she leans backward, however we are also palpably aware of her isolation. It is a work that is at once vibrant and colorful, but also cold and forbidding.

Excerpted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, “Sir John Everett Millais, *Mariana*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/millais-mariana/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org
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John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, oil on canvas, 1851-52

Audio recording of Ophelia segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-8>

Ophelia is considered to be one of the great masterpieces of the Pre-Raphaelite style.

Combining his interest in Shakespearean subjects with intense attention to natural detail, Millais created a powerful and memorable image. His selection of the moment in the play Hamlet when Ophelia, driven mad by Hamlet's murder of her father, drowns herself was very unusual for the time. However, it allowed Millais to show off both his technical skill and artistic vision.

The figure of Ophelia floats in the water, her mid section slowly beginning to sink. Clothed in an antique dress that the artist purchased specially for the painting, the viewer can clearly see the weight of the fabric as it floats, but also helps to pull her down. Her hands are in the pose of submission, accepting of her fate.

She is surrounded by a variety of summer flowers and other botanicals, some of which were explicitly described in Shakespeare's text, while others are included for their symbolic meaning. For example, the ring of violets around Ophelia's neck is a symbol of faithfulness, but can also refer to chastity and death.

Painted outdoors near Ewell in Surrey, Millais began the background of the painting in July of 1851. He reported that he got up everyday at 6 am, began work at 8, and did not return to his lodgings until 7 in the evening. He also recounted the problems of working outdoors in letters to his friend Mrs. Combe, later published in the biography of Millais by his son J.G. Millais.

"I sit tailor-fashion under an umbrella
throwing a shadow scarcely larger than a
halfpenny for eleven hours, with a child's mug

within reach to satisfy my thirst from the running stream beside me. I am threatened with a notice to appear before a magistrate for trespassing in a field and destroying the hay.”

His problems did not end when he returned to his studio in mid-October to paint the figure of Ophelia. His model was Elizabeth Siddal who the Pre-Raphaelite artists met through their friend Walter Howell Deverell, who had been impressed by her appearance and asked her to model for him.

When she met the Pre-Raphaelites Siddal was working in a hat shop, but she later became a painter and poet in her own right. She also became the wife and muse of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Millais had Siddal floating in a bath of warm water kept hot with lamps under the tub. However, one day the lamps went out without being noticed by the engrossed Millais. Siddal caught cold, and her father threatened legal action for damages until Millais agreed to pay the doctor’s bills. (And the other PRB artists *may* have threatened to beat him up, or maybe they actually did. There’s a lot of folklore around this.)

Ophelia proved to be a more successful painting for Millais than some of his earlier works, such as *Christ in the House of his Parents*. It had already been purchased when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1852. Critical opinion, under the influence of John Ruskin, was also beginning to swing in the direction of the PRB (the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood). The following year, Millais

was elected to be an Associate of the Royal Academy, an event that Rossetti considered to be the end of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

The execution of *Ophelia* shows the Pre-Raphaelite style at its best. Each reed swaying in the water, every leaf and flower are the product of direct and exacting observation of nature. As we watch the drowning woman slowly sink into the murky water, we experience the tinge of melancholy so common in Victorian art. It is in his ability to combine the ideals of the Pre-Raphaelites with Victorian sensibilities that Millais excels. His depiction of *Ophelia* is as unforgettable as the character herself.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, “Sir John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/millais-ophelia/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org
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William Holman Hunt

From William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Act III, scene 1 (a room in a prison):

ISABELLA What says my brother?

CLAUDIO Death is a fearful thing.

ISABELLA And shamed life a hateful.

CLAUDIO Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;

To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;

This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit

To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;

To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!

The weariest and most loathed worldly life



William Holman Hunt, *Claudio and Isabella*, oil on panel, 1850

That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death.
ISABELLA Alas, alas!

William Holman Hunt's *Claudio and Isabella* illustrates not only the Pre-Raphaelite fascination with William Shakespeare, but also the artist's particular attraction to subjects dealing with issues of morality. Taken from the play *Measure for Measure*, which tells the story of Claudio, who has been sentenced to death by Lord Angelo (the temporary ruler of Vienna) for impregnating his fiancée.

Claudio's sister Isabella, a nun, goes to Angelo to plead for clemency for her brother and is shocked that he suggests that she trade sex for her brother's life. Of course, she refuses, and Claudio initially agrees with her decision, but later changes his mind. Hunt depicts the moment when the imprisoned Claudio suggests that Isabella sacrifice her virginity to gain his freedom.

It was the type of subject that appealed to Hunt, who liked themes to do with questions of guilt and sinful behavior, such as his well known painting *The Awakening Conscience* (1853).

Claudio's face, which is partly in shadow, looks down and away from his sister. His slouching posture, the rich texture of his dark, yet colorful clothes and pointed medieval-looking shoes are a sharp contrast to the stark white of the nun's habit, her upright posture and unwavering gaze. Sunlight from the prison window

lights Isabella's face and permits a glimpse of apple blossoms and a church in the distance.

Audio recording of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (con't) segment:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-9>

The interior of the scene was painted at Lollard Prison at Lambeth Palace, and the crumbling masonry around the windows and the rusty metal of the shackle that bind Claudio's leg detail the less than desirable conditions.

Hunt also painted the lute hanging in the window while at the prison. The lute with its red string is symbolic of lust, but the fact that it is placed in the sunshine rather than the gloom of the cell lessens the negative impact. The petals of apple blossom scattered on Claudio's cloak on the floor, although not added until 1879, are intended to show that Claudio is willing to compromise his sister to save himself.

Claudio and Isabella was begun in 1850 after Hunt received a small advance from the painter Augustus Egg (who although he belonged to the art group The Clique, who were the sworn enemies of the Pre-Raphaelite

Brotherhood, was friends with Hunt). Poor reviews of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings at the Royal Academy of 1850 had created financial difficulties for Hunt. He continued to work on the painting for the next several years, finally exhibiting the picture at the Royal Academy of 1853.

The painting appeared with a quotation from the play carved into the frame, a device Hunt was to explore in many of his paintings, as a way of reinforcing his message. The short notation “Claudio: Death is a fearful thing. Isabella: And shamed life a hateful,” serves not only to point to the exact moment in the play, but also as a reminder of the underlying moral dilemma of the subject. The ability to bring to life these moments of ambiguity was one of Hunt’s greatest achievements.

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, “William Holman Hunt, *Claudio and Isabella*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/hunt-claudio-and-isabella/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org.
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William Homan Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, oil on canvas, 1953

William Holman Hunt's painting, *The Awakening Conscience*, addresses the common Victorian narrative of the fallen woman. Trapped in a newly decorated interior, Hunt's heroine at first appears to be a stereotype of the age, a young unmarried woman engaged in an illicit liaison with her lover. This is made clear by the fact that she is partially undressed in the presence of a clothed man and has rings on every finger except her wedding ring finger.

However, Hunt offers a new twist on this story. The young woman springs up from her lover's lap. She is reminded of her country roots by the music the man plays (the sheet music to Thomas Moore's *Oft in the Stilly Night* sits on the piano), causing her to have an awakening prick of conscience.

The symbolism of the picture makes her situation as a kept woman clear—the enclosed interior, the cat playing with a bird under the chair, and the man's one discarded glove on the floor all speak to the precarious position the woman has found herself in. However, as she stands up, a ray of light illuminates her from behind, almost like a halo, offering the viewer hope that she may yet find the strength to redeem herself.

The theme of the fallen woman was popular in Victorian art, echoing the prevalence of prostitution in Victorian society. Hunt's redemptive message is unusual when compared to other examples of this theme. For example, Richard Redgrave's *The Outcast* (1851), which shows a young unwed mother and her baby being cast out into the snow by her disgraced father, while the rest

of her family pleads for mercy. Countless other paintings of the period emphasize the perils of stepping outside the bounds of acceptable morality with the typical conclusion to the story being that the woman is ostracized, and inevitably, suffers a premature death. By contrast, Hunt offers the viewer the hope that the young woman in his painting is truly repentant and can ultimately reclaim her life.

The Awakening Conscience is one of the few Pre-Raphaelite paintings to deal with a subject from contemporary life, but it still retains the truth to nature and attention to detail common to the style. The texture of the carpet, the reflection in the mirror behind the girl and the carvings of the furniture all speak to Hunt's unwavering belief that the artist should recreate the scene as closely as possible, and paint from direct observation. To do that, he hired a room in the neighborhood of St. John's Wood. The picture was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1854, and unfortunately for Hunt, met with a mixed reception. While Ruskin praised the attention to detail, many critics disliked the subject of the painting and ignored the more positive spiritual message.

For Hunt, the moral of the story was an important element in any of his subjects. He was a deeply religious man and committed to the principles of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and John Ruskin. In fact, shortly after this painting was completed, Hunt embarked on a journey to the Holy Land, convinced that in order to paint religious subjects, he had to go to the actual source for inspiration. The fact that a trip to the Holy

Land was a difficult, expensive and dangerous journey at the time was immaterial to him.

The Awakening Conscience is an unconventional approach to a common subject. Hunt's work reflects the ideal of Christian charity espoused in theory by many Victorians, but not exactly put into practice when dealing with the issue of the fallen woman. While others emphasized the consequences of one's actions as a way of discouraging inappropriate behavior, Hunt maintained that the truly repentant can change their lives.



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#oembed-1>

Excerpted and Adapted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, "William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/hunt-the-awakening-conscience/>.

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Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Audio recording of Rossetti segment:



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Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Proserpine*, oil on canvas, 1875

Just one bite. Surely that can't hurt. Or can it? It took less than one bite to destroy the mythological goddess Proserpine's life. This tragic maiden was gathering flowers when she was abducted by Pluto, carried off to his underground palace in Hades – the land of the dead, and forced to marry him. Distraught, her mother Ceres pleaded for her return. The god Jupiter agreed, on condition that Proserpine had not tasted any of the fruits of Hades. But she had—a single pomegranate seed—and as punishment she was destined to remain

captive for six months of each year for the rest of her life in her bleak underground prison.

The English painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti produced at least eight paintings of Proserpine trapped in her subterranean world, the fatal pomegranate in her hand. He also wrote a sonnet to accompany the

painting, which is inscribed in Italian on the painting itself and in English on the frame, cited below. This is the seventh version of the painting. It was produced for the wealthy ship-owner and art collector Frederick Leyland from Liverpool and is now in the Tate collection, London. The original idea was to paint Eve holding the forbidden apple, a scene from Genesis; and in fact the two stories are almost directly comparable. Eve and Proserpine both represent females banished for their sin of tasting a forbidden fruit. Their yielding to temptation has often been seen as a sign of feminine weakness or lack of restraint.

At first glance the painting appears still, subdued—muted like the colour scheme. Proserpine is motionless, absorbed in thought, and the only sign of movement is the wisp of smoke furling from the incense burner, the attribute of the goddess. But look closely, and the painting appears to bristle with a tortuous, pent-up energy. It is full of peculiar twists and turns. Take Proserpine's neck: it bulges unnaturally at the back, and looks as though it is slowly being screwed or twisted like rubber. Her hands too are set in an awkward grip. Try mimicking this yourself—it is difficult to hold this pose for long. This is a painting of almost tortured stillness: a body under strain.

This underlying unease is also apparent in the lines and creases of Proserpine's dress. Notice how it does not form natural-looking folds. Instead it looks like the fabric is covered in clinging, creeping ridges that seem to slowly wind their way around the goddess, ensnaring and rooting her to the spot. These ridges could be

compared to the tendril of ivy in the background, which appears to sprout directly from her head. Ivy is a plant with dark connotations—an invasive vine, it has a tendency to grip, cover and choke other plant-life. It is often associated with death, and is a common feature in graveyards. Rossetti wrote that the ivy in this painting symbolises ‘clinging memory.’ But what are these memories that cling so tightly?

As many have pointed out, this painting of Proserpine strikes a chord with Rossetti’s personal life. The writer Theodore Watts-Dunton, Rossetti’s close friend, wrote that “the public... Has determined to find in all Rossetti’s work the traces of a morbid melancholy... Because Proserpine’s expression is sad, it is assumed that the artist must have been suffering from a painful degree of mental depression while producing it.” Rossetti had, in fact, suffered a nervous breakdown just two years before he produced this painting. He suffered from acute paranoia, and was becoming increasingly reliant on alcohol and chloral for relief. There are doubtless many reasons for this, one of which was the death—or perhaps suicide—of his wife Lizzie Siddal in 1862, of a laudanum overdose. Rossetti and Lizzie’s relationship had been fraught and unstable. He was haunted by memories of her for the rest of his life.

But the plot thickens. When he painted *Proserpine*, Rossetti was entangled in a complicated love triangle. He was completely infatuated with the model for this painting, Jane Morris, easily recognizable by her thick raven hair, striking features and slender, elongated figure—though here they have been molded into the

typical Rossettian type. Rossetti called her a “stunner.” The problem was that this stunner happened to be the wife of his good friend William Morris. When this was painted, the three were living together at Kelmscott Manor (Oxfordshire). Morris appeared either to tolerate or ignore the intimacy that cleaved Rossetti and his beloved Jane together. Many have noted the similarity between *Proserpine* and Jane’s personal predicaments: both were young women trapped in unhappy marriages, longing for freedom. But perhaps it is also a meditation on Rossetti’s own situation. Unable to contain his feelings for Jane, he had given in to temptation and for this was destined to live part of his life in secrecy and withdrawal. Rossetti himself had tasted the fatal fruit and was living with the consequences.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Bocca Baciata (Lips That Have Been Kissed)*, oil on panel, 1859

In this painting, a clear correspondence is set up between Proserpine’s improbably large lips and the pomegranate in her hand. While the rest of the painting has been completed in cool, sometimes murky colors—Rossetti called it a “study of greys”—the lips and pomegranate are vivid and intense, painted in warm orange and red

tones. It is significant that these features—the mouth and the fruit—have strong associations with the

pleasures of taste. It is as though Rossetti is presenting both as objects ripe for consumption, tempting the viewer to take a taste. This is not as improbable as it first sounds: one of Rossetti's earlier paintings, *Bocca Baciata*, which also shows a single female figure with a fruit (an apple in this case) was considered capable of stirring an erotic, physical response in viewers. The artist Arthur Hughes, a contemporary of Rossetti's, said that the owner of this painting would probably try to 'kiss the dear thing's lips away.' In fact, the title of the painting itself translates as "the mouth that has been kissed."

Audio recording of Rossetti (con't) segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-11>

This sensual, carnal side of Rossetti's work caused controversy during his lifetime—for a Victorian artist, he was venturing into dangerous territory. Even today some find his sexualized vision of feminine beauty difficult to stomach. Rossetti argued however that work was not just a study of the sensual in life. He insisted that his art was an attempt to synthesize the sensual and the spiritual. His friend Theodore Watts-Dunton

defended this in an article “The Truth about Rossetti.” To Rossetti he wrote, “the human body, like everything in nature, was rich in symbol... To him the mouth really represented the sensuous part of the face no less certainly than the eyes represented the spiritualized part.” adding that if the lips of Rossetti’s women appear overly full and sensual, this is always counter-balanced by the spiritual depth invested in their eyes. It is true that in this painting there does appear to be a haunting melancholy in Proserpine’s eyes, but whether Rossetti fully achieves this synthesis of the sensual with the spiritual is still up for debate.

Afar away the light that brings cold cheer
Unto this wall, – one instant and no more
Admitted at my distant palace-door.
Afar the flowers of Enna from this drear
Dire fruit, which, tasted once, must thrall me
here.
Afar those skies from this Tartarean grey
That chills me: and afar, how far away,
The nights that shall be from the days that were.
Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing
Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign:
And still some heart unto some soul doth pine,
(Whose sounds mine inner sense is fain to bring,
Continually together murmuring.) –
“Woe’s me for thee, unhappy Proserpine!”
–Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “Proserpina (For a
Picture)”(1880)

Adapted from:

Stephanie Roberts, “Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Proserpine,” in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, accessed October 14, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/rossetti-proserpine/>.

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Beata Beatrix is one of many portraits of beautiful women painted by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the last two decades of his life. During this time, Rossetti created many pictures of his favorite models luxuriously dressed in Renaissance-looking costumes and jewelry, often without the story or content associated with his earlier paintings, such as *Ecce Ancilla Domini*. *Beata Beatrix* is unique, however, due to the intensely personal symbolism and atmospheric quality of the sitter and her surroundings.

Beata Beatrix is a portrait of Rossetti's wife Elizabeth Siddal, an important model in the early years of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Siddal was working in a hat shop when she met the artist Walter Howell Deverell. Hiring her as a model for a painting he was working on he was taken with her lovely face and beautiful red hair.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix*, oil on canvas, 1864-1870

Deverell invited all his friends to come and see his new “stunner.” Others in the Brotherhood were also enthusiastic, and Siddal became a favorite model in many now famous early Pre-Raphaelite paintings, including Millais's *Ophelia*.

Rossetti and Siddal soon became a couple, spending the next decade in a tempestuous relationship. It was during this period that Siddal developed into an artist in her own right. By the time of their marriage in 1860, however, Siddal was in ill health and had to be carried to church. After a miscarriage, Siddal became depressed and, at some point, addicted to laudanum.

In February 1862 Rossetti returned home from a dinner to find his wife dead. Although her death was declared accidental by the coroner, Rossetti was distraught, and in a grand romantic gesture, placed his only copy of some recently written poems in Siddal's

coffin, nestled in her red hair. Several years later, however, Rossetti had her body exhumed and his poems retrieved by his friend and agent, Charles Howell, who reported that Siddal's hair was still beautiful and red and had continued growing until it filled the coffin. (Would it ruin the tragic romance of this story to interject with the fact that he wanted those poems so he could give them to his new lover – the wife of another man – Janey Morris? Yeah. Okay, we'll move on then.)

Beata Beatrix is filled with symbolism. Rossetti identified with the Italian poet Dante Alighieri and the title is reminiscent of Dante's account of his own love, Beatrice. Behind Siddal are the figures of Dante and Love, with the Florentine landmark the Ponte Vecchio in the distance. The figure of Siddal, which was done from sketches completed before her death, looks towards heaven with her eyes closed. The cardinal, a messenger of death, swoops in and drops a poppy, symbolic of Siddal's laudanum addiction, into her upturned hands. The fuzzy, atmospheric quality of the painting creates a dream-like intensity about the subject, and differs greatly from the crisp details found in many of Rossetti's other famous pictures of beautiful women from this period, such as *Monna Vanna*.

After the death of his wife, Rossetti's own health began to decline. He experienced depression, became addicted to drugs and alcohol, and in 1872 suffered a mental breakdown. He also became increasingly paranoid and even destroyed a section of the manuscript journal kept by his brother William Michael Rossetti during the early days of the Pre-Raphaelite

Brotherhood. The missing section included the period when Elizabeth Siddal was first introduced to the members of the Brotherhood.

In her final appearance as a model for the Pre-Raphaelites, Siddal is immortalized as a tragic and romantic heroine. The soft dream-like setting and tragic beauty of the central figure give *Beata Beatrix* an otherworldly quality, evoking an air of melancholy and loss that everyone can relate to, and making it, justifiably, one of Rossetti's most famous pictures.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix*," in *Smarthistory*, March 31, 2016, accessed October 14, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/rossetti-beata-beatrix/>.

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John William Waterhouse

Audio recording of Waterhouse segment:



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In many ways, Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott*, painted in 1888, transports viewers back forty years—to 1848, when the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was formed. Indeed, one commenter from *Art Journal* noted, “The type he [Waterhouse] chose for the spell-controlled lady, her action, and the garments in which he has arrayed her, bring his work into kinship with that of the “Pre-Raphaelites” of the middle of the century.” The subject of a vulnerable young red-haired woman in white gown, adrift in a riverine setting, is reminiscent of John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* of 1852. Millais, one of the founding members of the PRB, had a much-acclaimed retrospective at London's Grosvenor Gallery in 1886, which Waterhouse attended.

Waterhouse's chosen subject, the Lady of Shalott, comes from Lord Alfred Tennyson's Arthurian poem of the same name (he actually wrote two versions, one in 1833, the other in 1842). Tennyson was a favorite among the Pre-Raphaelites. In the poems, the Lady of Shalott lives isolated in a castle upon a river that flows to Camelot. Because of a curse, she is fated to spend her

days weaving images of the world onto her loom, but on pain of death, she is forbidden from looking out her window. Instead, she has to look at images of the outside world as reflected in a mirror. One day she sees a reflection of the knight Lancelot and is instantly smitten, so she breaks her prohibition and looks directly at him through the window. Desiring to meet him, she leaves her castle and rides a boat down to Camelot. The horrible conditions of the curse set in, and she dies before reaching the shore.



John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott*, oil on canvas, 1888

The Lady of Shalott was a prominent subject in the Pre-Raphaelite repertoire, the most notable example being William Holman Hunt's illustration for an edition

of Tennyson's works published in 1857 by Moxon, which the artist reworked into a painting in the 1880s. Whereas Hunt highlights the moment of transgression, right after the Lady looks at Lancelot through the window, Waterhouse shows her on the boat to Camelot, her death foreshadowed by the lone candle that remains lit on the prow.

Nonetheless, as the *Art Journal* commenter went on to observe, there is a significant difference between Waterhouse's work and that of the original PRB, specifically, in the technique: "[T]he almost impressionary delicacy of the rendering of willows weeds, and water is such as claims harmony with French work rather than what was so intensely English." The early works of the PRB showed an extreme attention to detail, reflecting John Ruskin's principle of "truth to nature," which advocated a faithful transcription of landscapes and objects. But Waterhouse's technique is notably looser, revealing his experimentation with French Impressionism. Impressionism offered a different conception of "truth to nature," one that was based more in optical truth, that is, how an object or scene appears to the eye in a fleeting moment, given the time of day and atmospheric conditions.

We can see the difference if we compare the reeds of Millais's *Ophelia* with that of Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott*, positioned in analogous parts of the composition. Whereas Millais's reeds maintain their physical integrity and rich detail when viewed up close, Waterhouse's reeds lose some of their convincing illusionism and dissolve into obvious brushstrokes (even

more apparent when you see the paintings in person!). The Lady's tapestry, which drapes over the boat, seems to further highlight the difference between Waterhouse and the PRB. Whereas the early PRB were inspired by the bright jewel tones and minute details of medieval illustrated manuscripts and tapestries, Waterhouse took his inspiration from the *en plein air* (open air) methods of the Impressionists, replacing jewel tones for the atmospheric silvers and greens of a cool English day. Like the Lady herself, Waterhouse turns away from an art of the cloistered life and towards an art that engages with optical effects.

Although the original PRB openly declared their allegiance to continental "Old Masters" such as Jan Van Eyck and the early Raphael, by the end of the nineteenth century Pre-Raphaelitism was cast as a specifically English phenomenon. As such, it was regularly pitted against the Impressionist trend, which solidified into a movement in Britain with the founding of the New English Art Club (NEAC) in 1886. Many figures in the art world were worried about the "Frenchification" of British artists. Marion Spielmann, editor of the *Magazine of Art*, noted with consternation at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1888: "that they [younger painters] are most of them imbued with the French spirit . . . is a fact that the Royal Academy cannot afford to overlook." He then addresses the Council: "the future of the English 'School' is in their hands, and upon them devolves the responsibility of moulding it to the proper form."

Spielmann also noted the "French flatness" of Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott*. However, the

painting's debts to early Pre-Raphaelitism and that most "English" of poets, Tennyson, remained undeniable. The setting, moreover, suggested a thoroughly English landscape, evoking not only the Surrey of Millais's *Ophelia*, but also bearing resemblance to the sort of marshy, reedy scenery that could be seen in Peter Henry Emerson's photographs of English landscapes, as in this image, "Ricking the Reed," from his album, *Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads* (1886). Despite initial remarks as to the "Frenchness" of its technique, *The Lady of Shalott* was ultimately accepted by the establishment as an "English" painting, and was acquired by Henry Tate for his museum of national art, where it still enjoys pride of place today as one of their most popular works.

Adapted from: Dr. Chloe Portugeis, "John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/waterhouse-the-lady-of-shalott/>.

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The Aesthetic Movement

Audio recording of The Aesthetic Movement segment:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-13>



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Monna Vanna*, oil on canvas, 1866

The Aesthetic Movement, also known as “art for art’s sake,” permeated British culture during the latter part of the 19th century, as well as spreading to other countries such as the United States. Based on the idea that beauty was the most important element in life, writers, artists and designers sought to create works that were admired simply for their beauty rather than any narrative or moral function. This was, of course, a slap in the face to the tradition of art, which held that art needed to teach a lesson or provide a morally uplifting message. The movement blossomed into a cult devoted to the creation of beauty in all avenues of life from art and literature, to home decorating, to fashion, and embracing a new simplicity of style. In literature, aestheticism was championed by Oscar Wilde and the poet Algernon Swinburne. Skepticism about their ideas can be seen in the vast amount of satirical material related to the two authors that appeared during the time. Gilbert and Sullivan, masters of the comic operetta, unfavorably critiqued aesthetic sensibilities in *Patience* (1881). The magazine *Punch* was filled with cartoons depicting languishing young men and swooning maidens wearing aesthetic clothing. One of the most famous of these, *The Six-Mark Tea-Pot* by George Du Maurier published in 1880, was supposedly based on a comment made by Wilde. In it, a young couple dressed in the height of aesthetic fashion and standing in an interior filled with items popularized by the Aesthetes—an Asian screen, peacock feathers, and oriental blue and white porcelain—comically vow to “live up” to their latest acquisition. In the visual arts, the concept of art for art’s

sake was widely influential. Many of the later paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, such as *Monna Vanna* (above), are simply portraits of beautiful women that are pleasing to the eye, rather than related to some literary story as in earlier Pre-Raphaelite paintings.



Whistler James *Symphony in White no 1 (The White Girl)*, oil on canvas, 1862

A similar approach can be seen in much of the work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, whose [The Golden Stairs](#) (1880) captures the aesthetic mood in its presentation of a long line of beautiful women walking down a staircase, devoid of any specific narrative content. The designer William Morris, another disciple of Rossetti, created beautiful designs for household textiles, wallpaper, and furniture to surround his clients with beauty.

Most famous of the aesthetic artists was the American James Abbott McNeill Whistler. His early painting *Symphony in White #1: The White Girl* caused a sensation when it was exhibited after being rejected from both the Salon in Paris (the official annual exhibition) and the annual exhibition at the Royal Academy in London. The simplistic

representation of a woman in a white dress, standing in front of a white curtain was too unique for Victorian audiences, who tried desperately to connect the painting to some literary source—a connection Whistler himself always denied. The artist went on to create a series of paintings, the titles of which generally have some musical connection, which were simply intended to create a sense of mood and beauty. The most infamous of these, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875), appeared in an exhibition at London's Grosvenor Gallery, a venue for avant garde art, in 1877 and provoked the famous accusation from the critic John Ruskin that the artist was “flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.”

The ensuing libel trial between Whistler and Ruskin in 1878 was really a referendum on the question of whether or not art required more substance than just beauty. Finding in favor of Whistler, the jury upheld the basic principles of the Aesthetic Movement, but ultimately caused the artist's bankruptcy by awarding him only one farthing in damages.

In *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, a collection of essays published in 1890, Whistler himself pointed out



James Abbott McNeill Whistler,
*Nocturne in Black and Gold: The
Falling Rocket*, oil on panel, 1875

the biggest problem for the aesthetic artist was that “the vast majority of English folk cannot and will not consider a picture as a picture, apart from any story which it may be supposed to tell.”

The Aesthetic Movement provided a challenge to the Victorian public when it declared that art was divorced from any moral or narrative content. In an era when art was supposed to tell a story, the idea that a simple expression of mood or something merely beautiful to look at could be considered a work of art was a radical idea. However, in its assertion that a work of art can be divorced from narrative, the ideas of the Aesthetic Movement are an important stepping-stone in the road towards Modern Art.

Excerpted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, “The Aesthetic Movement,” in *Smarthistory*, June 3, 2016, <https://smarthistory.org/the-aesthetic-movement/>.

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James Abbott McNeill Whistler

Audio recording of Whistler segment:



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Whistler was about so much more than just his mother.

The woman in white stands facing us, her long hair loose, framing her face. Her expression is blank, her surroundings indistinct; posed before some sort of pallid curtain, she appears almost as an immobile prop on a stage.

Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl epitomizes James Abbott McNeill Whistler's departure from the established norms of the era, and was perhaps his most reviled work. When he submitted it to the 1863 Paris Salon, the jury rejected the painting and the artist instead showed *The White Girl* at Napoleon III's exhibition of snubbed artwork, the Salon des Refusés. Though it certainly defied many time-honored artistic conventions and earned much derision from critics, *The White Girl* does show some echoes of older standards. After all, its creator had studied under Marc-Charles Gabriel Gleyre in Paris, learning to paint in the academic manner – thus it is unsurprising that in the representation of his mistress, Joanna Hiffernan, Whistler opts for the customary full-scale society

portrait format, and reproduces her features in a seemingly realistic and honest fashion.

The ways in which Whistler follows his own rules, however, far outnumber the few examples of accord, and they include the painting's flattened and abstracted forms, distorted perspective, limited color palette, and penchant for decorative patterning. Though an intimate portrait, *The White Girl* is contrived and reveals no overarching mood or the personality of its sitter. While many of Whistler's stylistic innovations are unique to the artist, he associated himself with other artists – such as Édouard Manet and Gustave Courbet, who also defied the traditions of academicism. The influence of Théophile Gautier is also apparent; in the 1830s, Gautier stated that art need not contain any moral message or describe any narrative, as art making is an end in and of itself – Whistler accepted this credo, “art for art's sake,” wholeheartedly. In this light, *The White Girl* is less a faithful portrait painting and more an experimentation in color, pattern, and texture.

Whistler produced many portraits of similar format in the next decades, and continued to fine-tune his style and technique. In paintings such as *Harmony in Gray and Green: Cecily Alexander (1872-74)* and *Arrangement in Flesh Color and Black: Portrait of Théodore Duret (1883)*, the artist exercised his need to balance the realist components of a picture with its more abstract needs, cherry-picking elements from the real world and reorganizing them in controlled, harmonious ways. Often these images feature a subdued palette, a lack of depth, unresolved backdrops, and irrational props that

serve only as accents. His figures typically stand upon an unthinkable flat floor, appearing almost to hover like specters. As for Whistler's signature, it evolved to take the form of a butterfly, applied to the surface in the manner of a mere decorative element.

Despite the controversy stirred when he entered the scene, Whistler won many wealthy and prestigious patrons over his career, and his portraits stand as testaments to growing interest in the radical new avant-garde approach to painting.

Adapted from: Meg Floryan, "Whistler, *Symphony in White*, No. 1: *The White Girl*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/whistler-symphony-in-white/>.

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One might say that for some artworks, seeing beyond the artist's intention to form a more indefinite, personal interpretation is, ironically, the creator's ultimate objective after all. Much like Alice stepping tentatively through the two-dimensional plane of the looking glass into the possibilities beyond, the viewer is invited to deduce his own meaning, to form his own associations, thus essentially taking part in the creative process itself. While ambiguity is standard in the conceptual

contemporary pieces of today, what mattered most in early American art was what could be read on the surface: narrative clarity, illusionistic detail, realism, and straightforward moral instruction. When did things change? Perhaps, it seems, around the time avant-garde artists began to pursue abstraction, flirt with modernism, and challenge the aesthetic standards of the past.

Consider *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* of 1875. In the mass of shadowy dark hues, vague wandering figures, and splashes of brilliant color, museum-goers might construe myriad meanings from the same scene: perhaps sparks from a blazing campfire, flickering Japanese lanterns, or visions of far-off galaxies mystically appearing on a clear summer night. Indeed, while the Massachusetts-born artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) was inspired by a specific event (a fireworks display over London's Cremorne Gardens) the intangibility, both in appearance and theme, of the oil on panel was deliberate. The questions it conjures, the emotions it evokes, may differ from one viewer to another, and frankly, that's the point.

The Falling Rocket resonates with many 21st-century beholders, yet when it was first exhibited at a London gallery in 1877, detractors deemed the painting too slapdash, incomprehensible, even insulting. Art critic John Ruskin dismissed Whistler's effort as "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face," as in his opinion it contained no social value. In response, Whistler – cheeky man that he was – sued Ruskin for libel, and

though he won the case in court, he was awarded only a farthing in damages. During the highly publicized trial, the artist defended his series of atmospheric “nocturnes” as artistic arrangements whose worth lay not in any imitative aspects but in their basis in transcendent ideals of harmony and beauty.

Whistler saw his paintings as musical compositions illustrated visually, and delineated this idea in his famed “Ten O’Clock” lecture of 1885:

Nature contains the elements, in colour and form, of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of all music. But the artist is born to pick and choose... that the result may be beautiful – as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he brings forth from chaos glorious harmony.

Audio recording of Whistler (con’t) segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-15>

Many of his titles incorporate allusions to music: “nocturnes,” “symphonies,” “arrangements,” and “harmonies.” The immaterial, the spiritual – these

principles are subtly interwoven throughout Whistler's oeuvre, and he preached his ideas on the new religion of art throughout his career. Even Whistler's famous portrait of his mother isn't really about his mother at all but about compositions and combinations. Whistler's *Mother: Arrangement in Black and Grey No. 1* uses his mom like a prop, not unlike the girl in his *Symphony in White*.



James Abbot McNeill Whistler, *Whistler's Mother: Arrangement in Black and Grey No. 1*, oil on canvas, 1871

Adapted from: Meg Floryan, "Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/whistler->

[nocturne-in-black-and-gold-the-falling-rocket/](#).

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John Singer Sargent



John Singer Sargent, El Jaleo, oil on canvas, 1882

El Jaleo is housed within the quirky Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, a Gilded Age art collection that serves as a window into the eponymous collector's life and unique aesthetic taste. In order to view the painting, you must pass by the sunlit faux-Venetian courtyard and into the shadows of the first floor's Spanish Cloister. Here *El Jaleo* hangs at the end of a long hallway, its immense size (over 7 by 11½ feet) almost fully covering the far wall of a dark niche. Its mildly claustrophobic and somewhat out-of-the-way physical location lends the striking oil on canvas one of the most intimate settings for a work of art on display in an American museum.

The scene portrayed is a dynamic one: a group of musicians provides the rhythm for a lone flamenco dancer who performs for an audience of clapping listeners. It is a snapshot of a specific point in time: the apex of the dance, a moment rife with energy and sensual drama. The footlights cast haunting silhouettes on the rear wall; the raw passion of the dance is palpable. The stark contrasts between murky shadow and dazzling illumination allow the painting to visually pop – a phrase that is often used in describing art but rarely so aptly. Due to the loose, frothy brushstrokes, there isn't the sense of a true illusionary space, yet the light (and hence the vitality) of the scene seems to emanate outward from within the work, as though *El Jaleo* commands a life of its own.

El Jaleo's precocious artist, John Singer Sargent, painted the artwork in 1882 at the young age of 26. Both the painting and its creator are evocative of the times,

reflective of the nineteenth-century American fascination with, and inherent dependence upon, foreign cultures for both technical training and artistic inspiration.

Though labeled an American artist, Sargent was actually born in Florence to a Philadelphia family and traveled throughout his youth and career. In the late 1800s this type of background became the rule rather than the exception, with expatriate Americans taking advantage of the more accessible education opportunities abroad. Beyond the official state écoles (schools), private Parisian ateliers (studios) led by renowned artists offered instruction to admitted American students; Sargent studied under one such teacher, Charles Émile Auguste Durand, aka Carolus-Duran. The competitive annual salons (exhibitions) were another draw for foreign-born artists and these venues could win a painting great critical acclaim, as did the Paris Salon of 1882 for *El Jaleo*.

Excerpted from: Meg Floryan, “John Singer Sargent, *El Jaleo*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015,

<https://smarthistory.org/sargent-el-jaleo/>.

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Madame X is perhaps Sargent’s most infamous

painting. When it debuted at the Paris Salon of 1884, critics lashed out at the artist for what they deemed a scandalous, immoral image. While the title omitted the sitter's name, the public immediately recognized her as the notorious Parisian beauty Virginie Gautreau. The gown's plunging neckline was considered too provocative for the times, and its right strap – which originally was shown to have slipped off the shoulder – ultimately led to Sargent repainting it in its proper position to appease outraged viewers and Gautreau's own family.

Madame X mixes the Gilded Age penchant for portraying status and wealth in portraiture with a daring seductive aesthetic. For all that it shocked onlookers, however, much of its details were based in older classical traditions: Madame Gautreau's hairstyle is based on one of ancient Greece, and she wears a diamond crescent that is the symbol of the huntress Diana.

John Singer Sargent intended the portrait to



John Singer Sargent, *Madame X* (Madame Pierre Gautreau), oil on canvas, 1884

establish his reputation, and despite the notoriety it attracted, the work did succeed: *Madame X* advertized his ability to paint his sitters in the most flattering and fashionable manner possible, and led to a healthy career in Britain and great esteem in America from the late 1880s onward. Though he was born overseas, traveled worldwide, and spent much of his life abroad, Sargent's career truly matured in his family's native land, and he always considered himself an American artist. He toiled for nearly three decades on a mural commission for the Boston Public Library, he frequently painted fellow American expatriates, and in 1906 he was appointed full academician of the National Academy of Design in New York.

In 1916 the Metropolitan Museum of Art bought *Madame X*, which Sargent considered “the best thing I have done.” The painting—which debuted to severe disparagement but is today treasured as a masterpiece beloved in the history of Western art—is but one example of an artwork that gradually evolved from epitomizing the condemned to the celebrated. Much of a work's initial reception is based upon society's tastes, standards of etiquette, and values of the era, and as these attitudes shift over the decades, the public may begin to look at older paintings with new eyes. Sargent's *Madame X* is perhaps a more dramatic example of this trend, yet it poses intriguing questions about what really defines an artwork's popularity, legacy, and fame.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Meg Floryan, “John Singer Sargent, *Madame X* (*Madame Pierre Gautreau*),”

in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015,

<https://smarthistory.org/sargent-madame-x-madame-pierre-gautreau/>.

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John Singer Sargent, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, oil on canvas, 1885

Audio recording of *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* segment:



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19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-16](https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=269#audio-269-16)

Shepherds tell me have you seen,
Have you seen my Flora pass this way?
A wreath around her head, around her head she wore,
Carnation, lily, lily, rose,...

The chorus of a popular song by composer Joseph Mazzinghi was the inspiration for the title of John Singer Sargent's painting *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*. In Sargent's hands, however, the pastoral images of the song have been banished, replaced by an evocative twilight scene of children, flowers, and Chinese lanterns. The muted light and colors, unusual angles, and the lack of narrative content combine to create a beautifully rendered moment, capturing the fleeting atmosphere of dusk and the innocence of childhood.

Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose was painted in the English village of Broadway. The artist had moved to London after leaving France due to the scandal caused by his painting *Madame X*, which was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1884. Sargent's striking female portrait was the subject of enormous controversy due to the plunging neckline of her dress and the fact that originally one strap had been hanging off her shoulder (this was later repainted firmly in its correct place). Although the sitter,

Virginie Gautreau, a fellow expatriate American who had married a French banker, was not explicitly identified, audiences recognized the likeness as well as her habit of using lavender dusting powder. Rumors of Gautreau's infidelities were rampant, so the risqué portrait added fuel to the fire, for both artist and sitter.

For several years after his move to England, Sargent spent his summers in Broadway, a picturesque village in the Cotswolds, which was also the site of a thriving artist's colony in the late 19th century. Both English and American artists and writers congregated there, and Sargent joined an expatriate community including such notables as Frank Millet, Edwin Austin Abbey and the writer Henry James. According to James in an article published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1889, "Broadway and much of the land about it are in short the perfection of the old English rural tradition," and here Sargent found both acceptance and inspiration for his work.

Sargent got the idea for the painting in August of 1885 after seeing a group of children among flowers and Chinese lanterns hung among trees in the village of Pangbourne in Berkshire. He spent more than a year trying to bring his vision to fruition. In letters, he pointed out that he was hindered from completing the painting in September because it was the end of the flowering season. Taking no chances, when he returned to Broadway to finish the painting in the summer of 1886, he had a friend grow lilies in pots to extend his available time for working on the painting.

In addition to the problem of maintaining blossoms,

Sargent was plagued by other issues. His original intent for the composition was to use one younger child, but he was eventually forced to select little girls who were a bit older and able to pose as required. White dresses for the girls were specially designed. Most importantly, the painting was completed “en plein air” to get the correct effect of light, but given the fleeting nature of light at dusk, he could only paint for a few minutes each day.

However, the effort that went into *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* proved worthwhile. The painting was well received by both audiences and critics when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1887 and was immediately purchased for the British nation by the Chantrey Bequest, a fund established by sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey to acquire works of art made in England. The subtle effects of light illuminating the faces of the little girls, the subtly sketchy brushwork, the unusual angle looking down at the children (taken from the influence of Japanese prints), and the attention to capturing the momentary changes of twilight all speak to Sargent’s modernity.

Sargent’s painting is a combination of several radical ideas found in the art of the end of the 19th century. Like Impressionism, it captures a distinct moment. In an instant, the children could move, or the light change and the spell would be broken. It is worth pointing out that Sargent was friends with Claude Monet and had in fact been invited to exhibit with the Impressionist group, an honor he declined. The picture is also firmly associated with the Aesthetic Movement, with its insistence on beautiful subjects and a lack of narrative

content. Like the song that inspired its title, the painting reminds the viewer of a simpler time, creating a quietly beautiful snapshot of a bygone era.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey Easby, “John Singer Sargent, Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose,” in Smarthistory, September 15, 2020,

<https://smarthistory.org/john-singer-sargent-carnation-lily-lily-rose/>.

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Consider the following:

- Thinking specifically about Victorian beauty standards for women, do you feel that 21st century society has a similar approach to categorizing what is and is not beautiful? Why or why not?
- Victorian England equated looks with character. Does the 21st century equate body mass with character? Is the 21st century approach more, less, or equally correct as the Victorian approach and why?
- If the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were looking to explore and celebrate the female forms that were not considered beautiful by Victorian society in a beautiful way, what celebrities, musicians, actors, etc.

of the 21st century are doing the same thing and how are they doing it?

8. Chapter 7 - John Singer Sargent

The Impact of Madame X (Virginie Amelie Gautreau)

LAILEY NEWTON

Audio recording of chapter available here:



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=662#audio-662-1>

Sepia photograph, interior, many curtains and draperies over doors and windows. A man in a suit with a small beard and mustache stands in front of a large painting of a woman (the infamous Madame X portrait), while working on a smaller canvas to the side of it

John Singer Sargent in his Paris studio circa 1885

As an outsider, an American born artist living within France, the critics and viewers of the Salon were always going to treat John

Singer Sargent's works a little differently than his native peers.¹ With the pressure of being an outsider, Sargent would have wanted to really make an impact in order to kickstart his professional practice. However, one of his early works, *The Portrait of Madame X* (Virginie Amelie Gautreau), shown at the Paris Salon of 1884 created quite a stir which nearly ended his career; prompting his movement to England where he later became the most prominent portrait painter for his time.² The Salon during the late 19th century was known for rejecting modern artists and restricting the works shown to 'Salon Genres': history, landscape, and portraiture.³ While Sargent's work is by all means a portrait, it completely subverts the Salon's norms in the way it presents its subject matter of a sexual woman with esteem and fearlessness.⁴ There was no othering or sexualization, rather just showing Virginie Amelie Gautreau as she really was. For this, John Singer Sargent revolutionized female portraiture by rejecting the Paris Salon's ideals of historical and modest values, instead embracing modernity, French high fashion, and gave Madame X the respect she deserves while still displaying her as a sexually liberated individual.

1. Ian Chilvers, *Art, The Visual Definitive Guide: 19th Century, End of the Century*, John Singer Sargent. New York: DK Publishing, 2018. 393.
2. H. Barbara Weinberg, "John Singer Sargent (1856–1925)." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. October 2004.http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/sarg/hd_sarg.htm
3. Jonathan Jones, "Madame XXX." *The Guardian*. The Guardian. February 1, 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2006/feb/01/3>.
4. Jonathan Jones, "Madame XXX," *The Guardian*.

Madame X, actually named Virginie Amelie Gautreau (often referred as Madame Pierre Gautreau) was a professional beauty, and was known by many in the higher class social circles of France for her bold unconventional beauty.⁵ Dorothy Moss writes:



Photograph of Virginie Amelie Avegno Gautreau, circa 1878

“She carefully constructed her image and was known for pushing boundaries of the aristocratic social code to the limits. A woman with a theatrical flair, she used excessive rice powder makeup on her delicate blueish skin to dramatize her appearance, amplifying her painted eyebrows, henna-coloured hair, and deep red lips.”⁶

Her status and appearance made her the perfect person for Sargent

5. Metropolitan Museum, “John Singer Sargent | Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau) | American | the Metropolitan Museum of Art.” 2020. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2020. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/12127>.
6. Dorothy Moss, “John Singer Sargent, ‘Madame X’ and ‘Baby Millbank.’” *The Burlington Magazine* 143, no. 1178 (2001): 270. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/889125>.

to approach as a model in an attempt to get his career off the ground.⁷



John Singer Sargent, *Figure study of Mme Gautreau*, c 1884, watercolour and graphite

Someone as bold as her would surely make his portrait stand out among the many others displayed at the Paris Salon. Working tirelessly Sargent placed Gautreau in a great multitude of poses, took many photographs, did preparatory sketches, watercolour studies and oil studies; all in order to best as possible capture her likeness in his final work.⁸ However to Sargent's frustration he found that Gautreau was incredibly difficult to capture due to her ever changing skin tone and complexion. Every day the

application of her lavender rice make-up powdered skin and dyed eyebrows would change ever so slightly but still enough for Sargent to notice.⁹ It took nearly one full year to complete his painting of Virginie Amelie Gautreau. Gautreau found the work stunning, fully believing that Sargent had created the next greatest masterpiece to be shown at the Paris Salon.¹⁰

7. Metropolitan Museum. "John Singer Sargent | Madame X". 2020. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/12127>.

8. Dorothy Moss, "John Singer Sargent, 'Madame X'. 271.

9. Dorothy Moss, "John Singer Sargent, 'Madame X'. 271.

10. Jonathan Jones, "Madame XXX." 2006.

Standing at 7.7 ft (2.35 m) the *Portrait of Madame X* is eye-catching and difficult to miss.¹¹ The contrast of her almost white pale violet powdered skin in her deep black satin and silk dress demands your full attention. The dress and accessories she is wearing are that of modern French high fashion.¹² She stands open towards the viewer, with her shoulders erect and spread wide. Her “left hip [is] provocatively tilted” as she addresses the audience with an air of self-confidence.¹³ Leaning her right hand on a delicate claw foot table that mirrors her curved figure she seems to be pushing her frontal stance forwards even more so.¹⁴ Her face however is in



John Singer Sargent, Study of Mme Gautreau, c. 1884, oil on canvas

11. Metropolitan Museum, “John Singer Sargent | Madame X”.
12. Jonathan Jones, “Madame XXX.” 2006.
13. Susan Sidlauskas, “Painting Skin: John Singer Sargent’s ‘Madame X.’” *American Art* 15, no. 3 (2001): 10.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3109402>.
14. Susan Sidlauskas, “Painting Skin: John Singer Sargent’s ‘Madame X.’” 10.

profile, revealing her sharp angular chin and nose, making her beauty bold yet mysterious. The strap on her right was unfixed to her shoulder and fell downwards, something Sargent would later cover up in an attempt to make the artwork more tame for his audience.¹⁵



John Singer Sargent, *Portrait of Madame X*, 1882-1884, oil on canvas

The reaction from the public at the Paris Salon of 1884 must have come as a shock to both John Singer Sargent and Virginie Amelie Gautreau as the portrait received heavy criticism due to its “provocatively erotic” nature.¹⁶ This reaction in part comes as no surprise to those other than Sargent and Gautreau as the *Portrait of Madame X* was just breaking too many of the unspoken rules of the Paris Salon at the time. This is a French society woman painted ‘provocatively’, there is no othering or Orientalism to ease the guilty conscience of those lusting after her expression of sexuality.¹⁷ On that note, she was deliberately expressing herself through her sexuality

15. Metropolitan Museum, “John Singer Sargent | Madame X”.

16. H. Barbara Weinberg, “John Singer Sargent (1856–1925).”

17. Jonathan Jones, “Madame XXX.” 2006.

and beauty, which was unacceptable in the first place. As well as this she is painted in high fashion, in a tight fitting and bust revealing satin dress during a period that still heavily valued traditionalism and modesty in their art.¹⁸ This portrait was too ahead of its time. Sargent found this criticism disheartening stating: “I suppose it is the best thing I have done”.¹⁹ Even with his attempts to repaint the strap back onto Gautreau’s shoulder he still faced backlash. He decided instead to store the painting in his personal study until it would eventually be sold to the Metropolitan Museum; his only request was that Virginie Amelie Gautreau’s identity be protected, thus renaming the work the *Portrait of Madame X*.²⁰

18. Jonathan Jones, “Madame XXX.” 2006.

19. Metropolitan Museum, “John Singer Sargent | Madame X.”

20. Metropolitan Museum, “John Singer Sargent | Madame X.”

All of this ridicule however was not in vain, as John Singer Sargent's work created a ripple effect that began to revolutionize the depiction of sexually liberated women in portraiture with time. As soon as seven years later Virginie Amelie Gautreau was painted in a similar style of dress by Gustave Courtois displaying far more skin than Sargent's counterpart.²¹ The strap of Gautreau's shoulder even hangs much lower than the *Portrait of Madame X's* originally did. However, surprisingly the portrait by Courtois was received well by the public.²²



Gustave Courtois, *Madame Gautreau*, 1891

Virginie Amelie Gautreau was even painted by Antonio de La Gándara and displayed her upper back uncovered which was very risqué.²³ Slowly the images of women at the Paris Salon, but also the greater art world, began allowing the

21. USEUM.org, “Madame Gautreau - Gustave-Claude-Etienne Courtois.” USEUM. 2021. <https://useum.org/artwork/Madame-Gautreau-Gustave-Claude-Etienne-Courtois-1891>.

22. USEUM.org, “Madame Gautreau - Gustave-Claude-Etienne Courtois.”

23. USEUM.org, “Madame Gautreau - Antonio de La Gandara.” USEUM. 2011. <https://useum.org/artwork/Madame-Pierre-Gautreau-Antonio-de-La-Gandara>.

depiction of women as respected peoples, rather than objects to be hidden modestly away.



Antonio de La Gándara, *Madame Pierre Gautreau*, 1898, oil on canvas

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Museum of Art. October 2004. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/sarg/hd_sarg.htm



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9. Chapter 9 - Japonisme



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Asian Art Museum, “Looking east: how Japan inspired Monet, Van Gogh and other Western artists,” in *Smarthistory*, January 31, 2016, <https://smarthistory.org/looking-east-how-japan-inspired-monet-van-gogh-and-other-western-artists/>.

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Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RBIMfumneDT82Q975sWL8SFa8bG-IwL5/view?usp=sharing>



James McNeill Whistler, *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen*, oil on wood, 1864



Utagawa Hiroshige, *Osumi Sakurajima*, from *Famous Views of Sixty-odd Provinces*, woodblock print, 1856

James McNeill Whistler's *Caprice in Purple and Gold* is an early example of Japonisme, a term coined by the French art critic Philippe Burty in 1872. It refers to the fashion for Japanese art in the West and the Japanese influence on Western art and design following the opening of formerly isolated Japan to world trade in 1853. In Whistler's painting, a

European woman sits on the floor wearing richly embroidered silks like those of a Japanese courtesan while she studies a set of woodblock prints by the Japanese artist Hiroshige. Decorative

objects from both Japan and China surround her, including a large gold Japanese folding screen.

The late-nineteenth century Western fascination with Japanese art directly followed earlier European fashions for Chinese and Middle Eastern decorative arts, known respectively as Chinoiserie and Turquerie. The art dealer Siegfried Bing was one of the earliest importers of Japanese decorative arts in Paris. He sold them in his shop La Porte Chinoise, as well as promoting them in his lavish magazine *Le Japon Artistique*, published from 1888-1891. Bing was also a major supporter of Art Nouveau, a *fin-de-siècle* (end of century) decorative style greatly influenced by Japonisme.



Edouard Manet, *Emile Zola*, oil on canvas, 1868



Claude Monet, *La Japonaise*, oil on canvas, 1876

Works by prominent artists associated with Impressionism and Post-Impressionism bear witness to the late 19th-century fashion for Japanese art and decorative objects. In Manet's portrait of Emile Zola the novelist and art critic sits at his overflowing desk. Immediately noticeable among the artworks surrounding him are a Japanese woodblock print of a wrestler and a

Japanese gold screen. Monet portrayed his wife Camille dressed in a Japanese kimono surrounded by Japanese fans, and his water garden at Giverny was inspired by Japanese gardens depicted in prints and included a Japanese-style wooden bridge. In addition to painting copies of several Japanese woodblock prints, such as *Bridge in the Rain (After Hiroshige)*, Vincent van Gogh depicted them in the background of several portraits.



Claude Monet, *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*, oil on canvas, 1899



Vincent van Gogh, *Bridge in the Rain (After Hiroshige)*, oil on canvas, 1889

Japonisme coincided with modern art's radical upending of the Western artistic tradition and had significant effects on Western painting and printmaking. In this regard, Japanese art affected modern art in much the same way that encounters with African and Oceanic art and artifacts did a few decades later. Many late-19th century modern artists not only admired and collected Japanese prints, they derived and adopted both compositional and stylistic approaches from them.

Japanese woodblock prints called ukiyo-e, or “pictures of the floating world,” were a cheap popular art form in Japan during the Edo Period (1615-1868). They were associated with urban entertainment districts (the so-called floating world) in Japan and typically portrayed famous actors, courtesans, and wrestlers, as well as landscape views of

well-known sites. Ukiyo-e prints first appeared in Europe as packaging material used to protect valuable imported porcelain objects, but they attracted the interest of European artists and art collectors and were soon imported for their own sake.



Left: James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge*, oil on canvas, 1872-5 Right: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Bamboo Yards, Kyobashi Bridge from One Hundred Views of Edo*, woodblock print, 1857,

In addition to depicting Japanese decorative objects, Whistler used both subjects and compositional strategies derived from Hiroshige's prints of notable views in Japan. One of his most innovative and well-known paintings, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Battersea Bridge*, echoes Hiroshige's *Kyobashi Bridge* in both its nighttime subject and the abruptly cropped view of the bridge in the foreground. The large areas of flat colors

typical of Japanese woodblock prints may also have influenced Whistler's simplified forms and reduced color range.



Left: Mary Cassatt, *The Letter*, drypoint and aquatint on paper, 1890-91 Right: Kitagawa Utamaro, *Seyama of the Matsubaya, Kamuro Iroka and Kukari*, from *Six Jewel Rivers*, woodblock print, 1793

The Impressionists were also interested in Japanese prints. After visiting an 1890 exhibition of ukiyo-e prints in Paris, Mary Cassatt employed similar decorative patterns, flattened spaces and simplified figures in a series of color etchings that includes *The Letter*. Cassatt's favored subjects, women in domestic interiors playing with children or grooming themselves, were common in ukiyo-e prints, a fact that undoubtedly contributed to her interest in them.



Left: Edgar Degas, *The Tub*, pastel on card, 1886 Right: Utagawa Kunisada I, *Chrysanthemum from Contest of Modern Flowers*, woodblock print, c. 1820

Cassatt's friend Edgar Degas used Japanese compositional devices to depict women bathing. In *The Tub* a woman sponging her neck is shown from an elevated vantage point that emphasizes the flat shapes and patterns created by her body and the surrounding objects. The curve of the tub is continued in the woman's back, while the vertical of her left arm parallels the edge of the shelf on the right side of the painting. Thus, although Degas uses traditional chiaroscuro shading to define three-dimensional forms, abstract pattern and surface design dominate the image, flattening the space and rendering it ambiguous.

Like Degas' *The Tub*, Kunisada's *Chrysanthemum* shows a bathing woman surrounded by ordinary household objects – note the water heater and scrub brush in the upper right corner. Although the viewing angle is not as high as that in

Degas' work, we see the woman from above, and Kunisada uses the space and objects surrounding her to construct a visual frame for the figure rather than clearly defining an interior space. The repetition of colors and simplified shapes creates a strong surface pattern, as does the lack of chiaroscuro shading.



Vincent van Gogh, *Portrait of Père Tanguy*, oil on canvas, 1887

Among the Post-Impressionists, van Gogh was especially passionate about Japanese art and traditions, although his understanding of Japanese culture was limited and often more personal fantasy than based on real knowledge. He amassed a collection of hundreds of Japanese prints, and they influenced the

development of his style, notably his vivid colors, simplified planar forms, and use of decorative surface patterns. In 1888 he wrote his brother Theo, "All my work is based to some extent on Japanese art . . ."

Audio recording of Japonisme (con't) segment:



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<https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=333#audio-333-2>

Gauguin borrowed directly from Japanese art early in his eclectic and wide-ranging embrace of non-Western cultures and art forms. The bright colors and flat forms of his cloisonnist paintings were greatly indebted to Japanese prints. In *Vision after the*



Paul Gauguin, Vision after the Sermon (or Jacob Wrestling with the Angel), oil on canvas, 1888

Sermon Gauguin used two specific Japanese sources. The figures of Jacob and the angel in the upper right are derived from Hokusai's prints of sumo wrestlers, while the overall composition with its flat red ground and abruptly arcing tree branch echoes Hiroshige's woodblock print of a blossoming plum tree, a print van Gogh also copied.



*Left:
Katsushika
Hokusai,
Manga,
woodblock
print, 1817;
Right:
Utagawa
Hiroshige,
Plum
Garden at
Kameido,
woodblock
print, 1857*

Like many artists associated with Art Nouveau, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was greatly affected by Japanese art and design. His posters, such as the one for a café-concert club called Divan Japonais, show the strong influence of Japanese prints of Kabuki actors in their flat forms, powerful contour design, and dramatic use of black shapes. Unlike the paintings we have looked at thus far in this essay, Toulouse-Lautrec's posters served a similar role to that of the Japanese woodblock prints; they were a cheap, mass-produced form of publicity for the entertainment industry.



Left: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Divan Japonais*, color lithograph, 1892-3; Right: Toshusai Sharaku, *Kabuki Actor Otani Oniji*, woodblock print, 1794

The Nabis, a group of French Post-Impressionist artists affiliated with both Pont-Aven and Symbolism, were great admirers of Japanese art. They were dedicated to the decorative arts and closely associated with Siegfried Bing's gallery *Maison de l'Art Nouveau*. In addition to creating paintings, they designed many decorative objects including folding screens and stained glass windows.



Pierre
Bonnard,
*Women in
the
Garden*,
distemper
on canvas,
1891

Pierre Bonnard, the most Japanese-influenced of the group, painted a set of four narrow vertical panels, initially intended to be part of a Japanese-style folding screen, showing women in stylized garden settings. The subject as well as the detailed patterns and flat decorative forms were directly inspired by Japanese prints and painted screens. His later paper lithograph screen, *Nannies' Promenade*, is even more noticeably influenced by Japanese design in its diagonal composition and its use of a restricted color range and patterned silhouettes on an expanse of white paper.



Pierre
Bonnard,
Nannies'
Promenade,
Frieze of
Carriages,
color
lithograph
, 1899

Japanese art had significant effects on both Western decorative arts and the evolution of new artistic styles associated with Modern art. The distinctive qualities of Japanese art – decorative use of color, surface patterning, and asymmetrical compositions – offered striking new approaches to modern artists developing alternatives to the Western tradition of naturalistic representation.

Excerpted and adapted from: Dr. Charles Cramer and Dr. Kim Grant, “Japonisme,” in *Smarthistory*, June 14, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/japonisme/>.

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10. Chapter 9 - Impressionism

The Communication of a Moment's Impression

ANNIKA BLAIR

Audio recording of chapter opening segment:



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A small group of artists and their approach to art revolutionized the art world. This group of individuals were later named the Impressionists after the divergent art they presented in their own exhibit. In the eyes of the art Academy in France, these artists were unlikely people to start an art movement. The artist's work hadn't had a positive reaction from the Academy or the art critics. Although, would Impressionism be in the history books if it wasn't mocked at first? New, revolutionary, and often controversial ideas are often scorned before they are accepted. Especially if it goes against the "normal" at that time. Impressionism was the outcome of artists who were influenced by the controversial paintings of

the previous art movement, Realism, and focused on capturing and communicating evanescent moments in a still image.

The Impressionists got a lot of their ideas from the Realist painters and especially from the leader of the Realists, Gustave Courbet.¹ Courbet's personal view on art was to paint the seen and not paint anything he couldn't see.² He'd paint what was real and wouldn't advertise a false reality in his paintings.³ Even while doing the same subject as another artist, Courbet would keep his paintings accurate and would compose them in a way to give the viewer the same experience that his subjects would see. He would show the good and the bad in his art while other painters might engineer facts in their paintings and paint things that weren't historically accurate.⁴ Moreover, the Realists painted massive paintings of peasants which was a great controversy in the art world at that time.⁵ Paintings of that scale were to be reserved for historical or biblical themes.⁶ Not only did the Realists paint huge pictures of peasants, they painted working peasants which was even more

1. Ross King, *Art. Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary*. (New York, NY: DK Pub, 2008), 340
2. Dr. Beth Gersh-Nesic, "A Beginner's Guide to Realism," Khan Academy, Accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/realism/a/a-beginner-s-guide-to-realism>
3. Gersh-Nesic, "A Beginner's Guide to Realism,"
4. Gersh-Nesic, "A Beginner's Guide to Realism,"
5. King, *Art. Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary*, 340
6. King, *Art. Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary*, 340

controversial as it touched on the politics of the time.⁷ By doing this, they paved the way for new ideas to be done in the art world. Just as the following art movement Impressionism did.

The start of Impressionism can be dated back to the 1860s.⁸ Two of the future members of the movement, Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro, happened to meet the art dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel while they were in London all avoiding the Fraco-Prussian war.⁹ Durand-Ruel set them



Camille Pissarro, Hoarfrost, oil on canvas, 1873

both up with enough finances to live on so they could keep creating art as both of the artists were not doing well financially.¹⁰ The support of the art dealer provided them a way to be able to set up the exhibit in 1874 with their fellow peers from art school.¹¹

7. King, Art. Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary, 340

8. King, Art. Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary, 340

9. Will Gompertz, What are you looking at?: The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art (New York, NY: Plume books, 2012) 39

10. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 41

11. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 42



Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, oil on canvas, 1872

It was the art critic, Louis Leroy, to first use the word “Impression” in his critical review of the Impressionist’s first gallery showing together.¹² Little did he know the name would stick and become the term millions of people would know as one of the most famous art movements in history.

Similar to a lot of revolutionary art movements, Impressionism was not well received at first. The group of artists, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro and Berthe Morisot, rejected the idea that art of importance could only be shown in the Salon run by the Academy and that the art was chosen by a jury for the Salon.¹³ The Academy stated that only paintings of history or biblical stories were great paintings.¹⁴ Both the Realists and the Impressionists questioned, challenged and tested that statement.¹⁵ Impressionism was, in a way, a revolt against traditional academic art.¹⁶ Fueled by their anger at the Salon for

12. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 34
13. Dr. Beth Gersh-Nesic, “A Beginner’s Guide to Impressionism,” Khan Academy, Accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/a/a-b-eginners-guide-to-impressionism>
14. Gersh-Nesic, “A Beginner’s Guide to Impressionism,”
15. Gersh-Nesic, “A Beginner’s Guide to Impressionism,”
16. King, *Art. Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary*, 340

rejecting their work, their exhibit was a way to stand up to the Academy and have a way for themselves to show their work.¹⁷ This defiance to the Academy risked their artist careers and artist “status” as the Salon had great influence over the success or unsuccessfulness of an artist.¹⁸ They also risked their incomes by doing their own exhibit.¹⁹ By creating their own exhibit, this small group of artists had a huge impact on the art world.²⁰ Critics came to view their exhibit and thought the work was “absurd” because the paintings looked like “impressions” that the artist would capture and then come back to repaint at a later date.²¹ Just like a sketch that an artist would draw in the moment and then revisit later to tonally finish as a drawing or paint in the studio. Monet’s *Impression: Sunrise* was compared to wallpaper and Pissaro’s *Hoarfrost* was compared to “paint scraped off of a dirty palette.”²² In comparison to the realistic rendering of the previous art movements, the Impressionist paintings do look more “unfinished” and “unrefined.”²³ However the aim was to capture the “impression” of the moment and doesn’t mean the paintings are any less important in the message they deliver to their audience.

17. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 33

18. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 32

19. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 31

20. Gersh-Nesic, “A Beginner’s Guide to Impressionism,”

21. Gersh-Nesic, “A Beginner’s Guide to Impressionism,”

22. Gersh-Nesic, “A Beginner’s Guide to Impressionism,”

23. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 35

In the Impressionist's paintings, the paint on the canvas speaks more towards the light and the atmosphere than it does towards the objects in the painting.²⁴ These artists weren't just creating art, they were capturing moments that their viewers could visit by looking at their art. They did this by manipulating the emphasis that light had in the painting.²⁵ "These are paintings to be experienced and not just looked at."²⁶



Berthe Morisot, *La Coiffure*, oil on canvas, 1894

The goal of the Impressionists was to paint the effects of light and because of that, their style was especially painterly.²⁷ They aimed to create paintings that reflected how they saw the world.²⁸ They did this by emphasising the use of light and using colour to show this emphasis.²⁹

24. Gersh-Nesic, "A Beginner's Guide to Impressionism,"

25. History.com Editors, "Impressionism," History.com, A&E Television Networks, August 3, 2017, <https://www.history.com/topics/art-history/impressionism>

26. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 35

27. King, Art. Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary, 340

28. History.com Editors, "Impressionism,"

29. History.com Editors, "Impressionism,"



Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint-Lazare*, oil on canvas, 1877



Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint-Lazare, Arrival of a Train*, oil on canvas, 1877

The subject in the painting is the light making an “impression” on the senses at different moments in time.³⁰

Monet would make paintings in the same spot at different times of day or in different seasons to explore the specific light that is within each season and moment in time.³¹ The most famous of these sets

30. Justin Wolfe, “Impressionism Movement Overview and Analysis,” The Art Story.org, February 1, 2012, <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/impressionism/><https://www.theartstory.org/movement/impressionism/>
31. Wolfe, “Impressionism Movement Overview and Analysis,”

of paintings is his *Haystack* series.³² However, this technique can be noted in many of his other paintings such as his *Gare Saint-Lazare* series.

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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=298#audio-298-2>

Monet also painted his famous, *The Thames Below Westminster* and the aim for that piece was to capture an essence of life in the painting. The viewer's imagination can release as they step into the moment through the hazy atmosphere the painting suggests and the harmonious colour palette.³³



Claude Monet, *The Thames Below Westminster*, oil on canvas, 1871

These paintings, by Monet and the other Impressionists, give a window into the world that the artist saw at that given moment. The brushstrokes suggest enough to give an idea of the subjects but leave enough to the imagination so the viewer is sucked into the story of the painting and the subjects in it. These aren't just paintings, they're snapshots of moments. These are breathing paintings full of life. They hold that life through the

32. Wolfe, "Impressionism Movement Overview and Analysis,"

33. Gompertz, What are you looking at? 45

suggestion of the subject and the imagination of the living breathing viewer.



Edgar Degas, *The Dance Class*, oil on canvas, 1874

Edgar Degas communicated a similar feeling in his painting, *The Dance Class*, which he painted in 1874. He composed the painting in a way that looks like a captured moment, or snapshot, in time. Degas preferred to work in his studio over painting *en plein air*.³⁴ He made hundreds of sketches in preparation for a finished piece and spent hours on planning it.³⁵ He was advertently

focused on giving the viewer what he called, an “Illusion of movement.”³⁶ He studied photographers and their photographs for anatomy practice.³⁷ He declared his ambition was to capture “movement in its exact truth.”³⁸ Even though Degas was associated and showed with the Impressionists, he disliked being called an Impressionist.³⁹ However, he made paintings that too, captured the impression of the moment and were aimed to do so.⁴⁰

Will Gompertz, the author of *What are you looking at? The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 years of*

- 34. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 48
- 35. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 48
- 36. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 49
- 37. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 49
- 38. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 49
- 39. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 50
- 40. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 48

Modern Art, said it best in his chapter on Impressionism:

“Degas’s intention was to communicate to us that what we are seeing is a fleeting moment that he has frozen in time.”⁴¹ I believe the highlight on communication in this quote showcases the emphasis on what is important to remember about in all art. Art is a visual language to make the viewer feel something and it can be a way of expression for the artist. Either expressing ideas or expressing how they see the subjects they paint. Art, communicated clearly, can be an influential and powerful tool. Art is often critiqued, examined, and analysed. However, sometimes the reminder that art can be a way to communicate the artist’s view is important. These artists, while great artists, were people. Any person has the desire to be able to clearly communicate their ideas or views. The Impressionists were able to use light to communicate what the essence of their subjects were. How do you capture the essence of a place or object? Through capturing the impression that a place or moment or person makes on you. Capturing that moment. Because, what is life but moments? And if you capture those moments, you capture the essence of life.

41. Gompertz, *What are you looking at?* 48



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Dance at Le moulin de la Galette*, oil on canvas, 1876

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II. Chapter 9 - Pierre Auguste Renoir & Edgar Degas

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There are two kinds of Impressionism – Landscape Impressionism and Urban Impressionism. Landscape Impressionism is easily showcased in the work of Claude Monet, with his regular and careful studies of light in nature. The Urban Impressionists were interested in similar things as Monet, but they were more closely tied to the ideals put forward by Baudelaire – the idea that modern day heroes exist and deserve examination. The combination of the idea of the value of daily life and the Realist approach to depicting light, the Urban Impressionists captured the life of the city and two major proponents of this approach were Pierre Auguste Renoir and Edgar Degas.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

While Edgar Degas embraced the depiction of urban life to the forsaking of all other depictions of existence (he hated working in natural light and was one of the very few Impressionists who preferred painting indoors under electric or gas light) Pierre Auguste Renoir was not so interested in the impacts of artificial light on subjects as he was on depicting humans. He was first a landscape painter but when a friendship with a wealthy landowner ended Renoir's access to landscapes he wanted to paint also ended, so he moved his focus to subjects closer at hand – people.

Renoir's paintings feature human interaction and human existence through the eyes of an Impressionist who valued light and colour. He straddled the landscape genre and the figurative tradition and in his work the impact of the landscape practices of Impressionism on urban human subjects is clearly seen.



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Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “How to recognize Renoir: *The Swing*,” in *Smarthistory*, April 8, 2018, <https://smarthistory.org/renoir-swing/>.

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Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Portrait of Madame Georges Charpentier and Her Children, oil on canvas, 1878

When artists like Pierre-Auguste Renoir painted portraits of real people, their work became embedded with clues about cultural beliefs at a particular moment in time – including notions of beauty, propriety, status, and gender. In this portrait by Renoir, the artist captured the likeness of Madame Charpentier with her two children in an intimate setting within the family's elegant Parisian townhouse.

This work is one of several commissioned by Georges

Charpentier, an influential publisher and an early collector of Renoir's work. In this portrait, Renoir depicts Margu rite Charpentier seated on a richly patterned settee alongside her two children and the family's large Newfoundland dog in a small room filled with precious objects including Japanese screens, crystal and porcelain. Renoir's palette is lush and his brushwork confident; the careful composition with its strong diagonals invites the viewer into this private space.

This large-scale work received favorable reviews when it was exhibited in a prominent position at the Salon of 1879 in Paris, and Renoir later acknowledged the efforts of Madame Charpentier in helping him gain subsequent portrait commissions. However, in the decades after its initial reception, viewers have often been surprised to learn that one of the children is a boy, since both children are dressed alike. This essay analyzes the garments and accessories worn by Madame Charpentier and her children as markers of status and gender at that time in history. Gender —the cultural construction of identity that distinguishes man from woman and boy from girl —is typically represented through the fashioning of the body, including the clothing and accessories, the styling of the hair and the wearing of makeup or other body modifications.

In this portrait, Madame Charpentier is dressed in a long-sleeved black silk afternoon dress expansively trimmed with lace. Each element of her dress is indicative of her stature as the wife of a wealthy man.

Her close-fitting dress is floor length, with a train that pools on the floor beside her to reveal her white ruffled underskirt. The dress has no bustle, but rather is flat-backed; this style of dress was in fashion for a brief interval of two or three years towards the end of this decade, and this small detail marks the wearer as a close follower of fashion.

Marguerite has added several pieces of jewelry to her ensemble to signal the family's wealth, including pearl earrings, a daisy brooch pinned to her left shoulder, two heavy gold bangles on both wrists, and several rings on her fingers.

The color of the dress signals chic, rather than mourning; black was a fashionable color for an elegant afternoon dress that would be worn to receive visitors or go visiting in one's social circle. Madame Charpentier was known for her sophisticated literary salons in which she entertained writers like Flaubert and Zola, and this formal daywear dress would be suitable for just such a gathering.

In Renoir's portrait, the children — Georgette, age six, and Paul, age three — are dressed in identical sleeveless, open-neckline, dropped-waist short dresses made of pale blue moiré silk trimmed with white silk. Both children have similar hairstyles with shoulder-length wavy hair. The only discernible difference in their attire is their footwear; Georgette wears shoes with a small heel, while Paul wears flat shoes with a mid-foot strap. These children, dressed alike in their expensive and elegantly trimmed silk frocks, are fashionable accessories for their elegant mother.

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The identical dresses worn by the Charpentier children in this painting reveal a little-known aspect of nineteenth-century western dress codes in which infants and young children were dressed alike in dresses or petticoats until about age four or five. At this time in history, when doing laundry was a tedious and lengthy process, having young children wear petticoats or frocks until they were toilet-trained made sense from a practical standpoint. As well, infants and young children were seen as asexual beings and for this reason were dressed alike. For example, in the fashion plate shown here, the child is dressed in a jacket and skirt that could be worn by either boy or girl.



Fashion Plate, *Journal Des Demoiselles*, 1878



Carte de visite photograph of two young boys, c. 1870s (photographer M.E. Robb, author's collection)

Photographs from the time also capture many young boys dressed in petticoats or a tunic and skirt, including this undated photo of two young boys. The younger boy is wearing a checked ensemble consisting of a tunic and a skirt trimmed in velvet while his older brother wears a wool suit consisting of a jacket worn with knickerbockers.

The transition from petticoats and dresses into short pants and then trousers took on symbolic importance as a rite of passage for a boy, but the age at which this occurred was a matter of individual choice,...as every mother is desirous that her little ones should be seen at their best, it will be her pride and pleasure to exercise her taste and judgement in this

direction. AS QUOTED BY CLARE ROSE, "AGE-RELATED CLOTHING CODES FOR BOYS IN BRITAIN, 1850-1900," *CRITICAL STUDIES IN MEN'S FASHION*, VOL. 2 (2015), PP.139.

available for boys. As historians including Jo Paoletti have observed, by about 1920, it was seen as highly inappropriate for boys to wear dresses, lace, ruffles, and other feminine-coded garments details or colors.

Renoir's portrait of the Charpentier family reminds us that the dress codes that signal gender are linked to

Tailoring guides from this time reveal an age-related progression of attire for boys from petticoats indicated before age 3; jackets with skirts suggested for ages 3 to 6; tunic over trousers for boys aged 6-12; short wool jackets and trousers for ages 12-15; and suits for boys over age 15.

With the emergence of department stores and mass-production methods for clothing in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the options for boys expanded, but there was also a significant shift in ideals of masculinity that resulted in a marked restriction in the types of clothing and the colors

culture as well as a specific time and place in history. The idea that boys do not wear dresses dates back only about a century. Gender is a culturally specific notion — something that is learned rather than innate. Interpreting a painting such as this one by Renoir requires careful observation and reflection of the inherent biases of our own standpoint in culture.

Adapted and Excerpted from: Dr. Ingrid E. Mida, “Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Portrait of Madame Charpentier and Her Children*,” in *Smarthistory*, October 18, 2019, <https://smarthistory.org/renoir-charpentier/>. All Smarthistory content is available for free at www.smarthistory.org
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Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “Auguste Renoir, *Luncheon of the Boating Party*,” in *Smarthistory*, November 12, 2015, accessed November 6, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/renoir-luncheon-of-the-boating-party/>.

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Edgar Degas

Degas painted *La Belle Epoch*– the beautiful era – which is the end of the 1800s.

Just by way of personal anecdote:

It's *la belle epoch* and it's generally pronounced "lah bell e pauk" but when said quickly it can sound like "la belly park." As a student I heard the words during lectures, but since there were no text on the slides I never saw the words written and the term was never explained. Hearing "The Belly Park" was the subject of Degas' paintings, I understood this to mean that Degas painted an exciting and new locale in the heart of Parisian society. The Belly Park – an electric and modern place in Paris somewhere.

Much to my eternal chagrin it was years later that I realized that "The Belly Park" was actually *la belle epoch* and it was a time, not a place. It was a way of life, not a location. It was a beautiful era, not an new development site in Paris.

Just as a technical aside: Degas wasn't really an Impressionist at heart but don't tell the Art Historians! Degas exhibited with the Impressionists and valued many of the same things they did, but his philosophy and approach to art was, in some ways, radically different than the other Impressionists. Whereas other Impressionists were interested in light, Degas was in many ways all about line and this becomes more and more clear in his Late Bathers series.

Degas used incredibly innovative compositions. Much of his approach was attributed to Japonisme, Japanese prints, and photography. He studied Japanese prints for their compositional techniques but also looked to photography as he felt it was a way to capture “movement in its exact truth.” Sometimes he would physically cut his canvases to get a better cropped look to relate more to the kind of composition a camera might capture and to look like it was an unplanned and free composition. But that was just artful cropping on Degas’ part. “No art was less spontaneous than mine,” Degas once said. Every aspect was carefully constructed and he rarely worked outside of his studio as he made endless preparatory drawings and studies for his works, sometimes making hundreds for a single final painting. He chose dancers and horses as his most frequent subjects because he wanted to convey the sense of beauty of movement and horses and dancers had perfect musculature and athleticism.

He, like Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse who would come after him, could draw like an old master thanks to the advice given to him by Ingres in his youth – advice that he should draw and draw some more. The harshest critics had to congratulate him on his ability to draw and may have been able to accept, in a small way, the avant-garde because of his ties to the old masters techniques as well. Degas was a bit of a bridge between the old established ways of art and the new styles emerging in the later parts of the 1800s.

As he aged he began constructing perspective in ways that would be influential and important for the avant-garde that came after him.



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=325#oembed-3>

Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris, “Edgar Degas, *At the Races in the Countryside*,” in *Smarthistory*, December 4, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/edgar-degas-at-the-races-in-the-countryside/>.

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One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=325#oembed-4>

Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris, “Edgar Degas, *The Dance Class*,” in *Smarthistory*, November 25, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/edgar-degas-the-dance-class/>.

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12. Chapter 9 - Claude Monet

The Changes in the Art of Claude Monet during the Times of his Mental Challenges

KELSEY ROBINSON

Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RndV6kokslefxNXXDR5WCHc0c0jxUIA6/view?usp=sharing)

[1RndV6kokslefxNXXDR5WCHc0c0jxUIA6/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RndV6kokslefxNXXDR5WCHc0c0jxUIA6/view?usp=sharing)



Claude Monet, *The Cradle - Camille with the Artist's son Jean*, oil on canvas, 1867

Like poets with words, artists exhibit their ideas, feelings and emotions through their work. Claude Monet is no exception to this. Monet's step into what would later be called "Impressionism" was also a step into a more stylization of the world as felt through the artist. Through time, feelings and emotions change and so do an artist's portrayal of the world as a result. Monet went through some difficult times in his life that would ultimately have an effect on his work. Through this paper I am to demonstrate

Claude Monet's changes in his art as a result of the mental struggles he dealt with. In early August of 1867, Monet's first son Jean was born

in Paris.¹ By this point in his career while Monet had already been painting for over twenty years he was not completely financially stable and was struggling with money.² By 1868 he and his family had to move out of Paris and his son and future wife Camille stayed with friends in the country because of his money problems.³ Money and the stress of a new child eventually caused him to break down mentally and attempted to commit suicide by jumping into the River Seine⁴. We can see that his mental health may have been declining since the birth of his son as seen through the subjects in his paintings after the birth. In *The Cradle – Camille with the Artist’s son Jean* (1867) Monet paints his son who was only a few months old in his light blue and flowered bassinet next to Camille. This is one of the first paintings we see of Monet’s son.

1. “Jean Monet (Son of Claude Monet),” Wikipedia. April 24, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Monet_\(son_of_Claude_Monet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Monet_(son_of_Claude_Monet))
2. “Monet, Khalo and Van Gogh, Their Art and Mental Illness.” *Bipolar Disorders* 20 (March 2, 2018): 37–38.
3. “Jean Monet (Son of Claude Monet),” Wikipedia. April 24, 2020.
4. “Monet, Khalo and Van Gogh, Their Art and Mental Illness.” *Bipolar Disorders* 20 (March 2, 2018): 37–38.

Before Jean was born we can see that Monet had been painting areas in Sainte-Adresse such as *The Beach at Sainte-Adresse* (1867) and some portraits such as *Portrait of Ernest Cabade* (1867). However after Jean's arrival and after the *Cradle Portrait* we see that Monet begins to focus on still



Claude Monet, *The Beach at Sainte-Adresse*, oil on canvas, 1867

lives mostly consisting of Pears, Grapes and dead birds. French artist's in the late 19th Century used the term *Nature Mort* to describe still life's as the term translates to "Dead Nature".⁵ Monet focused on these still life's into 1868 and eventually began shifting back into landscapes where he focused on the snow and ice on the Seine in his two works: *Ice Floes on the Seine at Bougival* (1867-1868) and *Snow on the River* (1867-1868).

5. Mary M. Gedo, "Mme Monet on Her Deathbed". *JAMA* 288, no. 8 (2002)



Claude Monet, *Ice Floes on the Seine at Bougival*, oil on canvas, 1867-1868

I believe that these works reflect Monet's feelings at the time that would lead him to the act of attempting suicide and the struggles he was working through afterward. The cold and dreariness of his winter landscapes coupled with the still life's that were most likely painted from his home represent his depression during this time. Monet worked primarily *en plein air* before finishing his pieces later in his studio⁶. Because of this painting technique it made Monet very aware of the colours and shadows that the land could take on, however instead of focusing on the colour that could be

6. Bevil R. Conway "Color Consilience: Color through the Lens of Art Practice, History, Philosophy, and Neuroscience"

created during winter, he chose a more subdued colour pallet with less dramatic lighting. This shift away from brighter tones and dull overcast scenes may have been a reflection of Monet's inner feelings. Eventually Monet began to paint with more bright colours and dramatic lighting, especially seen in works after *Madame Gaudibert* (1868) were his financial circumstances began to look up.⁷ He began to paint with more varied pallets and more intense lighting and shadows. This would signal an increase in his value of life as he would marry the mother of Jean, and love of his life, Camille Doncieux in 1870 and paint *Impression, Sunrise* in 1874 which would begin the era of Impressionism in the art world.⁸

7. Nicolas Pioch, "Monet, Claude" WebMuseum. September 19, 2002. <https://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/monet/early/gaudibert/>
8. Laura Aricchio, "Claude Monet (1840-1926)." The Met Museum. Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, October 2004. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cmon/hd_cmon.htm.



Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, oil on canvas, 1872

In 1878 Monet's second son was born and due to already troubling health problems his wife Camille's health declined drastically and she died in 1879.⁹ Monet over the years with Camille, he had painted numerous portraits of her, usually surrounded by bright or light colours but while on her deathbed Monet painted her portrait once again, *Camille Monet on her Deathbed* (1879). All of his colours are very muted and dull. Later in his life he would explain the emotions that he had felt while painting the work,

9. Mary M. Gedo, "Mme Monet on Her Deathbed". *JAMA* 288, no. 8 (2002)



Claude Monet, *Camille Monet on her Deathbed*, oil on canvas, 1879

“I found myself staring at [my wife’s] tragic countenance, automatically trying to identify the sequence, the proportion of light and shade in the colors that death had imposed on [her] immobile face. Shades of blue, yellow, gray, and I don’t know what. . . . In spite of myself, my reflexes drew me into the unconscious operation that is but the daily order of my life. Pity me, my friend.”¹⁰

Monet describes how his artistic reflexes took him away from the moment and he studied her as if a simple landscape or another one of his casual portraits, and not of his

10. Mary M. Gedo, “Mme Monet on Her Deathbed”. *JAMA* 288, no. 8 (2002)

now deceased wife who he loved dearly. The act of taking himself out of the moment suggest that his sadness was so great that he didn't want to feel it. His artistic mind took control of the situation and made it seem like any other painting.

After this portrait he once again turned to painting still life's or, *Nature Morte* "Dead Nature"¹¹. Monet painted vases, fruits and dead pheasants, subjects that he could do from home, no doubt because of his sadness over the loss of his wife. I believe the still life's were a way to continue painting while also staying in the comforts of one's home. He painted still life's until 1880 when he began to study landscapes again.¹² Much like after his suicide attempt in 1868, he didn't go directly back to still life's of grassy fields or colourful landscapes but instead focused on the harsh landscapes of winter for some time. Another example of Monet giving off a still and dull landscape through a mostly greyscale pallet. After so many years of painting, Monet would have understood the way light and colour effected the mood of a scene and known that no colour is neutral when it comes to the way it feels to the viewer.¹³

11. Mary M. Gedo, "Mme Monet on Her Deathbed". *JAMA* 288, no. 8 (2002)
12. "List of Paintings by Claude Monet," Wikipedia. October 29, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_paintings_by_Claude_Monet
13. Mary Stewart, "Launching the Imagination" (New York; McGraw Hill, 2019) 58



Claude Monet, *Flowering Arches*, Giverny, oil on canvas, 1913

1912 Monet began to develop cataracts, a cloudy area that forms within the lens of the eye that obstructs one's sight.¹⁴ Due to this, his work began to change dramatically. His delicate brushstrokes soon turned more abstract and chunky. We see this change through his multiple paintings of flowers from 1914 to 1917.¹⁵

Monet complained of muddy and weaker colours and even noting that his paintings were becoming darker as well.¹⁶



Claude Monet, *Water Lily Pond and Weeping Willow*, oil on canvas, 1916-1919

14. Rachel Hajar, "Eye Disease and Visual Perspective in Painting." *Heart Views*, 17, no. 1 (2016) 41.
15. "List of Paintings by Claude Monet," Wikipedia. October 29, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_paintings_by_Claude_Monet
16. Anna Gruener, "The Effect of Cataracts and cataract

There is no doubt that the effects of cataracts would also effect the artist's mental health as this disease was taking away his ability to work. His work slowed as a result of this despondency as the work was not up to his standers due to his difficulty in seeing the true colours. Many of his paintings turned to more monochromatic blue tones as seen in *The Japanese Bridge* (1918-1924) and *The Japanese Bridge* (1917-1920) as a result of his cataract surgery, before drastically changing to vibrant red hues, most likely after another eye procedure sometime in 1923 or 1924, as seen in his multiple *Japanese Bridge* pieces from 1918-1924.¹⁷ These red paintings also show more of the abstract style that Monet had taken on due to the poor eyesight. After some time and trying different methods to improve his vision, he was finally able to return to his preferred style with harmonious colours and gentle details, telling the viewers that his drastic shift to the harsh reds and hard brushstrokes were not an artistic decision but one that came out of necessity in order to adapt with his changing vision¹⁸.

surgery on Claude Monet.” *British Journal of General Practice*, 65, no. 634 (2015)

17. Nikolić, Ljubiša, and Vesna Jovanović. “Cataract, Ocular Surgery, Aphakia, and the Chromatic Expression of the Painter Jovan Bijelić.” *Vojnosanitetski Pregled: Military Medical & Pharmaceutical Journal of Serbia* 73, no. 11 (November 2016):
18. Anna Gruener, “The Effects of Cataracts and cataract Surgery on Claude Monet.”



Claude Monet, The Japanese Footbridge, oil on canvas, circa 1922

Claude Monet had struggled with many different emotion heavy events in his lifetime and his art during those times showed his mental progression and coping abilities. During financial struggles and the death of a loved one coupled with depression Monet exhibited more still life's done in a personal space before transitioning back into landscapes through winter scenes that he painted as dull and still. Monet also exhibited his ability to work through disheartening results of cataracts and connected procedures which showed his thirst for painting as a lifestyle that helped him through tough times. The ways that Monet used light, colour and subject matter in his paintings were both a way for his fascination with light and colour to shine through as well as a way

to exhibit his emotions and work through difficult times in his life. Monet, like many artists, view their art as not simply pretty pictures but a way to communicate their feelings about a subject with the world around them through varying means.



Claude Monet, *The Japanese Bridge*, oil on canvas, 1918-1924

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Nikolić, Ljubiša, and Vesna Jovanović. “Cataract, Ocular Surgery, Aphakia, and the Chromatic Expression of the Painter Jovan Bijelić.” *Vojnosanitetski Pregled: Military Medical & Pharmaceutical Journal of Serbia* 73, no. 11 (November 2016): 1003–9. doi:10.2298/VSP150313126N.

Nicolas Pioch, “Monet, Claude” WebMuseum. September 19, 2002. <https://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/monet/early/gaudibert/>

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13. Chapter 9 - Mary Cassatt

HANNAH MARTIN

Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OERGLi2kqFSrUjbxzmo0lkP-M-0lozHX/view?usp=sharing>

Mary Stevenson Cassatt was an American painter living in France for most of her adult life and up until her death in 1926 at age eighty-two. She was very involved in the Impressionist movement and one of only two women who officially showed art in the exhibits in France during the Impressionist era, and the only American in this group at the beginning.¹ She is famous for her uncommon art of the Impressionist era, focusing on portraits – mostly of mothers and their children – rather than the landscape and



Mary Cassatt, *Portrait of the Artist*, oil on canvas, 1878

1. F. “Mary Cassatt.” *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* (1907-1951)20, no. 9 (1926):125-26. Accessed October 16, 2020. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.ardc.talonline.ca/stable/4114190>

street scenes that were so common among Impressionists at the time. As she experimented with many different subjects, she most often depicted women without any of the men that were in their lives, but with their children instead. Many of her artworks only portrayed children or only women; rarely did she paint a portrait of a woman with her husband or a lover. Cassatt was never interested in the lovey-family-oriented kind of life she portrayed through her art but painted it to “not only elucidate but celebrate and pay tribute to the woman’s expected role during Cassatt’s lifetime.”² That being said, she still had love for her family, but she was never interested in having one of her own.

Cassatt had a rough start in her career. She was born to a wealthy family of bankers in Pittsburgh and was expected to become a proper lady, which meant relying on her husband to support her. She was pressured by her family and society to pursue a life in homemaking by becoming a wife and a mother, and her schooling was preparing her to do so by teaching her things like homemaking, embroidery, music, sketching, and painting. Even though at this time women were heavily discouraged from pursuing a career, at the age of 16, she enrolled at Philadelphia’s Academy of the Fine Arts because she had absolutely no interest in becoming a mother or a wife (which was an incredibly absurd idea for this time). She later dropped out because of the blatant misogyny she faced while at the school: the male students and faculty members resented her attendance at the school and constantly patronized her and treated her unfairly compared to the male members. She left the school and moved to Europe where she could study the Old Masters of the Renaissance Era on her own.³

2. Charlotte Davis, “Mary Cassatt: An Iconic American Impressionist,” *The Collector*, April 21, 2020, <https://www.thecollector.com/mary-cassatt/>
3. “Mary Cassatt Biography.” *Biography*, last modified June



Mary Cassatt, *The Sisters*, oil on canvas, circa 1880

Once in France, she studied and copied the great works of art at the Louvre for practice and took private lessons from Ecole des Beaux-Arts because women still weren't allowed to attend the school.⁴ She trained under French artist Jean-Léon Gérôme who greatly influenced her later style of painting. He was known for his “eastern influences in his art and his

hyper-realistic style”⁵ He used bold colours and interesting patterns in his work; many of Cassatt's paintings had similar patterns, though her patterns were looser and more in the stroke of the brush rather than in the intricate patterns Gérôme was painting. That being said, it was too early at this point to call her style “Impressionist” because it was about ten years too early.

19, 2020, <https://www.biography.com/artist/mary-cassatt>

4. “Mary Cassatt Biography.” Biography, last modified June 19, 2020, <https://www.biography.com/artist/mary-cassatt>
5. Charlotte Davis, “Mary Cassatt: An Iconic American Impressionist,” *The Collector*, April 21, 2020, <https://www.thecollector.com/mary-cassatt/>

In 1868, Mary Cassatt finally got a piece of art in the Paris Salon (one of the most influential events in the art of the Western world that ran from about 1748 to 1890). The painting was called *A Mandolin Player* but because of her father's disappointment in her life choices, she signed it under the name Mary Stevenson⁶ instead of Mary Cassatt. This is "one of only two paintings from the first decade of her career that can be documented today" according



Mary Cassatt, *The Mandolin Player*, oil on canvas, c.1872

to the Mary Cassatt Biography on marycassatt.org.⁷ This piece of art got her in with the famous artists of the Salon where she submitted work for many years until she quit working with the Salon. For one thing, she became bored from the strict guidelines for the artwork, but she also refused to flirt and sleep with the art jurors to get positive responses to her art, as this was a common practice for the women artists who weren't related to the men by blood or marriage; unfortunately her lack of a man (or want for a man) in her life made it very difficult for her to move up in the Salon.

6. "A Mandolin Player." The Famous Artists, Accessed October 12, 2020, <http://www.thefamousartists.com/mary-cassatt/a-mandoline-player>
7. "Mary Cassatt Biography." Mary Cassatt, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.marycassatt.org/biography.html>



Mary Cassatt,
Little Girl in a Blue Armchair, oil on canvas, 1878

By the time the 1870s came around, Mary Cassatt had become successful with the Salon but wanted to do something with her art that was more colourful and interesting. One day, she walked past a window and saw the bright pastel works of Edgar Degas, and once wrote to her friend: “I used to go and flatten my nose against that window and absorb all I could of his art. It changed my life. I saw art then as I wanted to see it.” The work inspired her, and in 1877, Degas stopped by her studio to invite her to an exhibit with a group called the Impressionists. Shortly before this, she began to experiment with colour and accuracy that wasn’t quite flattering, which ultimately brought critique and the rejection of a few pieces in the Salon. This new way of art, later called Impressionism, fascinated Cassatt and the success of the group’s fourth exhibit pushed her status through the roof (as much as a woman’s status could elevate at this time). One of her most famous pieces at this time was called *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* and was thought to have been worked on by Edgar Degas as well as Mary Cassatt.⁸ In

8. Abigail Yoder, “The Artistic Friendship of Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas,” Saint Louis Art Museum, last modified

1879, the Impressionists held an exhibit that ended up being their most successful one to date. She displayed eleven works but was criticized for “her colours being too bright” and her portraits were “too accurate to be flattering to the subjects”.⁹ She continued to work on Impressionism until 1886 when she moved to a simpler approach and ultimately no longer associated with any art movement in particular.



Mary Cassatt, *Woman Bathing*,
Drypoint and Aquatint print, 1890-91

In 1891 after a few years of experimentation, she came across a form of art called *Ukiyo-e*, a popular form of Japanese printmaking from the Edo period of Japan, often portraying traditional Kabuki actors and other aspects of traditional Japanese culture.¹⁰

April 20, 2017, <https://www.slam.org/blog/the-artistic-friendship-of-mary-cassatt-and-edgar-degas>

9. “A Mandolin Player.” The Famous Artists, Accessed October 12, 2020, <http://www.thefamousartists.com/mary-cassatt/a-mandoline-player>

10. “Art of the Pleasure Quarters and the Ukiyo-e Style,” Department of Asian Art, The Met, accessed October 13,

It was relatively simple in its way of creation and its style; it is created by carving the design into a woodblock and then pressing it onto paper. Her two most famous Ukiyo-e works were *Woman Bathing* and *The Coiffure*. Mary's most successful and productive time was during the 1890s. She kept in contact with a few of the old Impressionists she worked with in the past and supported them the best she could by buying their artwork and was an advisor to many major art collectors. Her fame rose very slowly in the United States, but she was always overshadowed by her older brother, the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

She took a trip to Egypt and was blown away by the beauty of the art. This overwhelmed her and put her in a creative slump. She is quoted saying: "I fought against it but it conquered, it is surely the greatest Art the past has left us ... how are my feeble hands to ever paint the effect on me."¹¹

In 1911, she was diagnosed with diabetes, rheumatism, neuralgia (pain caused by broken or damaged nerves), and cataracts. This didn't slow down her work but when 1914 rolled around, she was almost



Mary Cassatt, *The Coiffure*, color drypoint and aquatint, 1890-91

2020, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/plea/hd_plea.htm

11. "A Mandolin Player." *The Famous Artists*, Accessed October 12, 2020, <http://www.thefamousartists.com/mary-cassatt/a-mandoline-player>

completely blind so she was forced to retire. She never painted again but used her status and accumulated wealth to support the women's suffrage movement; she showed eighteen of her works in an exhibition to raise money for the movement.

Even though she was pressured by many different parts of her society – like her unsupportive father and the pressure from male colleagues – she brought so many new ideas to the table and pushed back against the societal norms of the time period she grew up in. Her art reflected the life she was most interested in: one with no man present to control or take the spotlight from her. She inspired other artists to not stay stuck to the confines of one particular movement or style and has helped push the women's suffrage movement forwards by donating her art funds to these organizations. Mary Cassatt was one of the most incredible artists in her time period but is still forgotten because of the lack of study of female artists; great art needs to be recognized and we should start with the incredible art of the women who were left out of history books.



Mary Cassatt, *Child in Straw Hat*, oil on canvas, 1886

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14. Chapter 9 - Alfred Sisley

“Purest of All the Impressionists”

LINDSEY BEAMISH

Audio recording of chapter is available here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N3jfOsutJFymJUNxUbgFUdZsFZ1sf7Y1/view?usp=sharing>



Alfred Sisley, *Le Pont de Moret, effet d'orage*, 1887, oil on canvas

Alfred Sisley was an Impressionist painter in the nineteenth-century. He started his artistic journey when he joined Gleyre's

studio in Paris. During his time at the studio he met what would eventually be fellow Impressionist artists, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Claude Monet.¹ They worked alongside each other and created a revolutionary change in the world of art that would later be described as Impressionism. This did not come easy, there were many harsh critics at the beginning stages of Sisley's career. Life as an artist has many challenges and unpredictability, and this was the case for Sisley. He faced many obstacles, in regards to his artwork which led to financial struggles throughout his life. For the most part, Sisley was labeled with the "status as a "minor" Impressionist" due to the lack of documentation and criticism of his work compared to his fellow Impressionist artists.² Sadly, Sisley died in 1899, at the age of fifty-nine. It was in the last decade of his life while living in Moret-sur-Loing, that Sisley "fully capitalized on its picturesque potential."³ He had previously painted landscapes at Moret but it was at this time he found his niche and painted what he is so well known for today. It was years after his death that he got the recognition that he deserved. Today, it is evident that Sisley is recognized as one of the greatest Impressionist artists of all time. When looking at his work we can clearly see his unique abilities in capturing the essence of his artistic visions.

1. MaryAnne Stevens, Isabelle Cahn, Caroline Durand-Ruel Godfroy, William R. Johnston, and Christopher Llyod., Alfred Sisley. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1992), 259.
2. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg. 30
3. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg. 162



Alfred Sisley, *Fog - Voisins*, 1874, oil on canvas

In order to fully appreciate and respect Sisley's impact in the art world, it is important to understand Impressionism. "Initially, it was not the artists themselves who described themselves as Impressionists..." It was a journalist, Louis Leroy that dubbed a group of independent artists as an "Exhibition of the

Impressionists."⁴ "It was Claude Monet's painting, *Impression, Sunrise*" that initiated the name.⁵ After this, the artists themselves used this term to describe their art.⁶ It is important to note that, "Impressionist artists were not trying to paint a reflection of real life, but an 'impression' of what the person, light, atmosphere, object or landscape looked like to them.

They tried to capture the movement and life of what they saw and show it to us as if it were happening before our eyes. ... Impressionists painted outdoors...they looked at how light and colour changed the



Alfred Sisley, *The Seine at Grenelle*, 1878, oil on canvas

4. Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint- George, and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The Hidden Techniques of the Impressionists*. (Italy: Skira, 2008). pg .19
5. Schaefer, *Painting Light*, 19
6. Albert Chatelet, *Impressionist Painting*. (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company. 1962). Pg.4.

scenes.⁷ To achieve the artist's perspectives, specific painting techniques were used widely in the Impressionist genre, they are as follows:

They used short, thick strokes of paint to capture the essence of the object rather than the subject's details. Quickly applied brush strokes give the painterly illusion of movement and spontaneity. A thick impasto application of paint means that even reflections on the water's surface appear as substantial as any object in a scene. The Impressionists lightened their palettes to include pure, intense colours. Complementary colours were used for their vibrant contrasts and mutual enhancement when juxtaposed. Impressionists often painted at a time of day when there were long shadows. This technique of painting outdoors helped impressionists better depict the effects of light and emphasize the vibrancy of colours. They used Optical Mixing rather than mixing on the palette.⁸

7. "Impressionism ." Tate Kids. <https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/what-is/impressionism>.

8. Julie Caves "Impressionist Painting Techniques." Jackson's. Last modified April 24, 2015. Accessed October 21, 2021. <https://www.jacksonsart.com/blog/2015/04/24/impressionist-painting-techniques/>.



Alfred Sisley, *A February Morning at Moret-sur-Loing*, 1881, oil on canvas

“From around 1872 to 1876, Sisley...provides us with an A to Z of Impressionist effects within a comprehensive range of landscape motifs.” At this time his work captivated effects such as, “hoarfrost, mist, autumn fog, morning dew, high July clouds, threatening winter sky, and dark summer rain.”⁹

“His longest and best known series is the Church of Moret, seen in all weathers.”¹⁰ The series was broken into two “sub-groups” that were categorised by the side of the church he would focus on. The first group was the west facade of the church, he would primarily focus on the silhouettes that would change during the day according to the level of the sun, as well as working during a range of weather to showcase the church in all conditions.

The second group was the southern facade and transept, and the market hall, where he would focus on different angles and change his positioning. Similar to the first sub group he would also work in different weather conditions, specifically rainy or sunny midsummer days. Sisley himself claims this

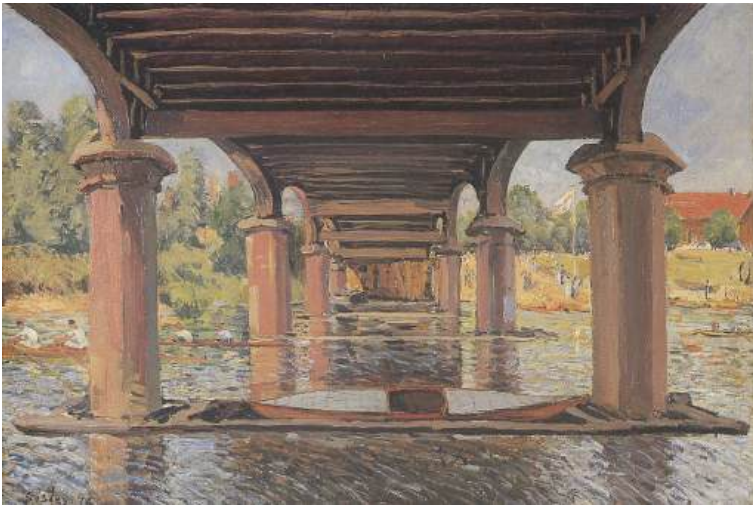


Alfred Sisley, *Church at Moret*, 1889, oil on canvas

9. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*.Pg.26

10. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*.Pg.28

series to be his best work. Taken from a letter he wrote to Adolphe Tavernier, Sisley said, “It is in Moret, amid the dense nature, with its tall poplars and the beautiful, transparent, changing waters of the Loing...that my art has undoubtedly developed most; especially in the last three years...I will never really leave this little place that is so picturesque.”¹¹ Not only did Sisley capture the Church in Moret, he also had beautiful paintings of river banks, bridges, ports, and other buildings. He truly was able to produce breathtaking art throughout the commune of Moret-sur-Loing. Some of Sisley's most memorable pieces come from the beauty he found in Moret.



Alfred Sisley, *Under the Bridge at Hampton Court*, 1874, oil on canvas

Sisley's main inspiration and interests were, “unusual views of bridges, he depicted this imposing structure from water level, looking at it from underneath, as well as everyday detail of local

11. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg,162

streets, often painting views from his own home or from close by.”¹² He was also fascinated by engineering structures, the variety of road and rail bridges...and the impact of extreme weather conditions.¹³ Sisley liked “remote or quiet, unvisited locations.”¹⁴ This is also a reflection of his personality. Sisley was a very private man; he was “reluctant to speak about his work”.¹⁵ The beauty in this is “the paintings must speak for themselves... due to the “lack of commentary on his work.”¹⁶



Alfred Sisley, *The Loing's Canal*, 1892, oil on canvas

One document that was retrieved was a letter Sisley wrote to Adolphe Tavernier on January 24, 1892, he stated, “The sky must be the medium, the sky cannot be a mere backdrop. Not only does it give the picture depth through its successive planes, but through its form... it gives it movement.

Is there anything more beautiful and more moving than the sky...What movement, what

12. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg 65
13. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg 65
14. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg. 22
15. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg. 28
16. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg. 28

allure, don't you agree?...I always begin by painting the sky."¹⁷ Reading these words really captures Sisley's true passion for his work and is spine tingling to hear words that came directly from his mind. Since there is very little written work or even oral sources directly from Sisley, his letter to Tavernier has to fill in those gaps that researchers and historians try to dig up.

Art critic Octave Mirbeau describes Sisley: "His very delicate, lively sensibility was at ease before all the glories of nature... M.Sisley understood lovely light, the transparency of the envelope of air, the mobility and changeability of reflection, and the speed of movement."¹⁸ All these aspects define what it takes to be an artist in the Impressionist movement. Even though Sisley may not have had the recognition, and the success he deserved in his lifetime, he is now identified as one of the artists who created this genre.¹⁹ "Alfred Sisley was perhaps one of the purest of all the Impressionists. He adhered throughout his career to the style of divided light and colour, momentary effects of illumination, and an acute responsiveness to atmosphere that are signature aspects of Impressionism."²⁰

17. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg. 154.

18. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master. Pg. 112.

19. Albert Chatelet, Impressionist Painting. Pg.3.

20. Stevens, Alder, and Shone, Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master.



Alfred Sisley, *An Evening in Moret – End of October*, 1888, oil on canvas

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[1] MaryAnne Stevens, Isabelle Cahn, Caroline Durand-Ruel Godfroy, William R. Johnston, and Christopher Llyod., *Alfred Sisley*. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1992), 259.

[2] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg. 30

[3] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg 162

[4] Iris Schaefer, Caroline von Saint- George, and Katja Lewerentz, *Painting Light: The Hidden Techniques of the Impressionists*. (Italy: Skira, 2008). pg .19

[5] Albert Chatelet, *Impressionist Painting*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962). Pg.4.

[6] “Impressionism .” Tate Kids. <https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/what-is/impressionism>.

[7] Julie Caves “Impressionist Painting Techniques.” Jackson’s. Last

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<https://www.jacksonsart.com/blog/2015/04/24/impressionist-painting-techniques/>.

[8] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*.Pg.26

[9] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg.28

[10] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg,162

[11] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg 65.

[12] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg. 22

[13] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg. 28.

[14] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg. 154.

[15] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*. Pg. 112.

[16] Albert Chatelet, *Impressionist Painting*. Pg.3.

[17] Stevens, Alder, and Shone, *Alfred Sisley Impressionist Master*.



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15. Chapter 9 - Cecilia Beaux

Defining Beaux's Art

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG

Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here:



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Anyone can find themselves defined by certain labels. Humans seem to have a natural tendency to categorize people, perhaps as a way of understanding. People can be defined by a whole host of characteristics, from race to gender, sexuality to wealth. Sometimes these labels can help people find a sense of common identity. Other times, these labels ultimately restrict people, leading to unfair judgement. Cecilia Beaux was an artist who undoubtedly showed immense talent and skill in her work. She was also a woman, one whose career started in the late 19th century, at a time when women were not even allowed to vote.¹ Beaux's career was often defined by this label over which she had no control, and it impacted her career

1. "Cecilia Beaux." Smithsonian American Art Museum. <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/cecilia-beaux-300>

in varying ways, all as she frequently tried to remove herself from its power.

In the late 1800s, there were certain forms of art that were considered female, and others that were not. The male-dominated society in the United States believed that women were not suited for the academic side of art, instead believing that women should focus on “commercial and decorative work”.² When a teenage Cecilia Beaux began to work in art, that was exactly the kind of work she started with. Notably, she did fossil illustrations as part of work for



Cecilia Beaux, Self Portrait, oil on canvas, 1894

the United States Geological Survey.³ She also learned to paint portraits of children onto ceramic plates. It was another form of commercial, decorative work, and one that she hated.⁴ Ironically, it was this kind of ‘feminine’ work that Beaux developed skills in drawing and painting, and discovered an interest in portraiture, an

2. Tara L. Tappert. “Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist.” *Women’s Studies* 14, no. 4 (1988): 391.
3. “Cecilia Beaux.” Smithsonian American Art Museum. <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/cecilia-beaux-300>
4. Tara L. Tappert. “Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist.” *Women’s Studies* 14, no. 4 (1988): 395-397.

interest that would define her career as a professional artist.⁵ As a person who aspired to make good art, Beaux understandably felt that the commercial works she created were beneath her. As a woman, however, she had had no alternative. Yet even if she could not see it, she made use of the limitations prescribed to her, learning and developing where she was allowed until she gained enough skills to truly enter the world of art.



Cecilia Beaux, *Man with the Cat*
(Henry Sturgis Drinker) oil on canvas,
1898

Part of the reason Beaux hated her decorative work so much is because it was work that could be defined as female.⁶ Beaux knew that she could either be a professional artist or she could be a woman artist – there was little room for both titles to coexist. Her early ‘feminine’ commercial work gave her a good sense of business and of art, both of which she used to develop herself as a skilled and successful portraitist. Due to her skill, she was able to get help from her family and admirers of her work and she

succeeded in traveling to study in Paris to further develop her skills.⁷ She came to be well admired and recognized for her

5. Tara L. Tappert. “Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist.” *Women’s Studies* 14, no. 4 (1988): 395-397.
6. Tara L. Tappert. “Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist.” *Women’s Studies* 14, no. 4 (1988): 397.
7. Toohey, Jeanette M. “Intricacies and

paintings. The Impressionist influence and subtle tonalities showed a painter with a great deal of skill, even if the paintings themselves conformed to many artistic conventions at the time. The skill was evident, but Beaux's success was attributed by the art community to a diverse range of factors, all of which still seemed to highlight her gender, despite her best efforts to conform. She was celebrated for being special and unique, her work viewed as masculine.⁸ Unfortunately for Beaux, it was as though she was being celebrated for her success *in spite* of being a woman.

Beaux's desire to be seen for her work and not for her gender caused herself to become isolated. She began to believe that she indeed was special, and that she was not like other women. Beaux's admirers compared her to other female American painters and positioned her as far above all the rest. Though Beaux had expressed the belief that "success is sexless," she was continuously seen as a uniquely



Cecilia Beaux, *Sita and Sarita*, oil on canvas, 1893-94

Interdependencies": Cecilia Beaux and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 124, no. 3 (2000): 359.

8. Tara L. Tappert. "Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist." *Women's Studies* 14, no. 4 (1988): 405.

exceptional woman painter.⁹ It was the primary way she was recognized, and it was as close as she could get to being removed from her gender. She isolated herself from all other female painters, buying into the belief that she was a rare type of woman who had managed to rise above her gender. She did not believe that a woman could be a successful artist unless she “sacrificed” what made her a ‘woman’, and avoided the life of marriage and children as Beaux had.¹⁰ This view further isolated her from many female artists including her own niece.¹¹ Beaux was trapped; she did not want to be seen as a ‘female’ painter, but she would never be considered to be on the same playing field as her male contemporaries. She was applauded for conforming to ‘male’ forms of art even though it was her practice in ‘female’ avenues that had helped lead her to becoming who she was. Beaux would go on to win numerous awards, including one presented by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt for “the American woman who had made the greatest contribution to the culture of the world.”¹² An incredible honour, though even it singled out her identity as a woman. She was a master of her craft, regardless of gender, but ultimately neither she nor the world could shake her categorization.

Identity can be an important force in a person’s life, but it should not be used to impose limits on their potential. In a time when women were treated as lesser, Cecilia Beaux worked and honed

9. Tappert. “Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist.” *Women’s Studies* 14: 407.
10. Tappert. “Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist.” *Women’s Studies* 14: 408.
11. Tara L. Tappert. “Cecilia Beaux: A Career as a Portraitist.” *Women’s Studies* 14, no. 4 (1988): 408.
12. “Cecilia Beaux: Artist Profile.” NMWA. May 28, 2020. <https://nmwa.org/art/artists/cecilia-beaux/>

her craft, becoming one of the best painters of her generation. She entered male- dominated institutions and created works of the highest quality. Though she sought to be recognized purely for her work, the fact that she was a woman always managed to become a factor as to how she was judged, even by herself. She was seen as special, and special she indeed was, but not because she was a good woman painter. She was special because she was a phenomenal painter, one who rivalled any great painter of her time regardless of gender. Cecilia Beaux's identity cannot be ignored. Her experiences as a woman played a great role in her development as an artist. But those experiences do not define the nature of her work. She was as skilled a portraitist as any, one who does deserve to be recognized for her work as a woman, but who even more so deserves to be recognized and defined for her work as an artist.



Cecilia Beaux, *Portrait of Mrs. Albert J. Beveridge*, oil on canvas, 1916

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16. Chapter 9 - Marie Bracquemond

Impressionism

PAIGE EKDAHL

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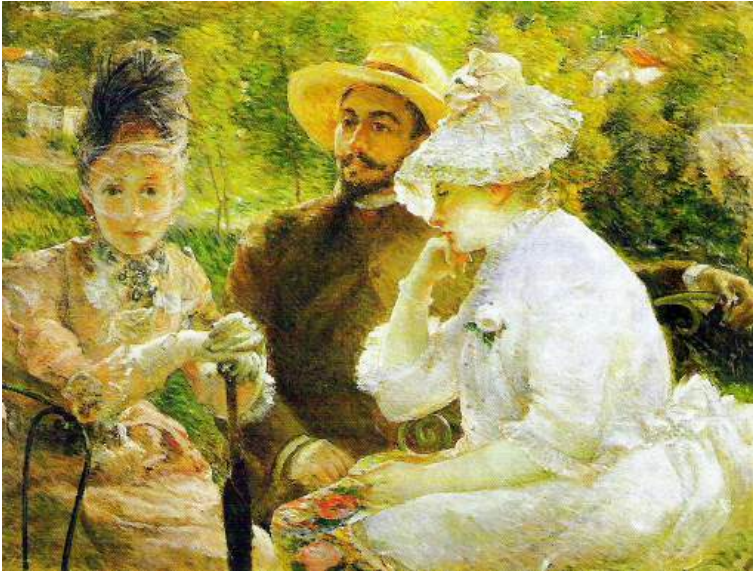
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If you were to do some digging into the inspirational and inspiring Impressionist art of the late 1800's you would see names like Mary Cassatt, or Claude Monet, to name a few, but you would have to dig deep to find the name and history of a female Impressionist named Marie Bracquemond. Marie Bracquemond was awarded the title as one of *les trois grande dames* of Impressionism by art critic Gustave Geffroy in 1894.¹ Though she held this title and was acknowledged as being one of the main female Impressionists to break the trail for others to follow, Bracquemond is almost always missing from the

1. Bouillon, Jean-Paul, and Elizabeth Kane. "Marie Bracquemond." *Woman's Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (1984): 21.

history books. If she was a trailblazer for future female artists, then what are the factors contributing to this? Marie Bracquemond was an adept artist whose art was undervalued and criticized by many, including those that should have been supporting her ingenuity by allowing her to flourish as a female, Impressionist artist.



Marie Bracquemond, *On the Terrace at Sèvres*, oil on canvas, 1880

The arts were mainly male dominated during the late 1800's which made it hard for women like Marie Bracquemond and the other "grande dames" of Impressionism, Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot, to become successful artists.² Art was renowned for its sophistication and the respect that an individual gained from its

2. Avarvarei, Simona C. "Medusa as the story of Victorian feminine identity." *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 4, no. 3 (2015): 65.

spectacle, especially after having a piece of one's personal art admitted into the Salon by The Academy. Fortunately, in 1857, Marie Bracquemond's hard work paid off as she submitted a piece of her art to the Salon and it was accepted.³ Following this achievement, in 1860, she was taken under the wing of a talented and well respected artist, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.⁴ This is where Bracquemond began her endeavor upstream, against the current of the male dominated profession. As quoted by Bracquemond during her time under the instruction of Ingres,

The severity of M. Ingres frightened me, I tell you, because he doubted the courage and perseverance of a woman in the field of painting. He wished to impose limits. He would assign to them only the painting of flowers, of fruits, of still lifes, portraits and genre scenes.⁵

Female artists, like Marie Bracquemond, had to persevere through the misogyny that is ingrained in the artistic profession to prove their competence as professional, competent artists.

3. Bouillon and Kane, "Marie Bracquemond," 22.
4. Myers, Nicole. "Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France." metmuseum.org, 2008.
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/19wa/hd_19wa.htm
5. Myers, Nicole. "Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France." metmuseum.org, 2008.
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/19wa/hd_19wa.htm

Marie Bracquemond had to conquer many obstacles throughout her artistic journey. One significant mountain Marie had to climb was her husband, Felix Bracquemond's disapproval and jealousy of her success as an artist. Marie Bracquemond, formerly Marie Quivoron, was married to Felix Bracquemond in 1869 and they had one child, Pierre, in 1870.⁶



Marie Bracquemond, *Three Graces or Three Women with Parasols*, oil on canvas, 1880

In 1877, Marie admired the work of Monet and Renoir, which altered her view of the aesthetic that her art portrayed; she then chose to pursue down the path towards Impressionism.⁷ Bracquemond said that “Impressionism had produced... not only a new, but a very useful way of looking at things” as though “all at once a window opens and the sun and air enter your house in torrents.”⁸ Alternatively, Felix, an admired painter, ceramist and printmaker, hated his wife’s move away from medieval motifs and towards Impressionism; he deemed the Impressionist aesthetic as distasteful and actively sought to obliterate it.⁹ Despite being continually degraded as an Impressionist artist by Felix, in 1880, Marie painted *The Woman in*

6. Bouillon and Kane, “Marie Bracquemond,” 22
7. Bouillon and Kane, “Marie Bracquemond,” 22.
8. Hutton, John. “Picking Fruit: Mary Cassatt's "Modern Woman" and the Woman's Building of 1893.”*Journal of Feminist Studies* 20, no. 2 (1994): 337.
9. Bouillon and Kane, “Marie Bracquemond,” 22.

White, which was an innovative Impressionist painting that utilized the sinuous aspect of a woman's white dress with the delicate, flowing detail of colour surrounding her. This painting ignited Marie's creations of other pieces in 1880 like, *On the Terrace at Sevres*, and *Tea Time*, and *The Three Graces*; all of these paintings exemplify the same assemblage of similarly aesthetically pleasing pieces.¹⁰ Succeeding these exquisite paintings that Marie Bracquemond created in 1880, there is a gap of approximately five years, 1881-1886, where she did not produce any pieces of art at all.¹¹ Why was this? I believe the reason that there is a gap of five years is because Marie began to realize she was fighting a losing battle against Felix that she needed to take a step away from to gain some clarity about the direction she wished her life to go. Though he never outwardly admitted it, Felix's antipathy regarding Marie's Impressionist pieces influenced her success as an artist by hindering her public recognition and impeding on her complexion of artful style.¹²

10. College Art Association. "Some Things New Under the Sun." *Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (1980): 205; Bouillon, Jean-Paul, and Elizabeth Kane. "Marie Bracquemond." *Woman's Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (1984): 24-5
11. Bouillon and Kane, "Marie Bracquemond," 24.
12. Bouillon and Kane, "Marie Bracquemond," 27



Marie Bracquemond, *Afternoon Tea*, oil on canvas, 1880

Eventually everything must come to an end and unfortunately, sometimes that end comes sooner than anticipated.

Marie Bracquemond continued pursuing her artistic career by making more Impressionist paintings up until 1890 when she inevitably succumbed to Felix's constant enmity towards her and the Impressionist path that she so eagerly wanted to see through.¹³

Following 1890, Bracquemond only created small, private pieces including *The Artist's Son and Sister in the*

Garden of Sevres.¹⁴ This painting shows the relationship between the colours by including the blues and reds, while having a detailed, yet contrasting background that plays on the darks and lights. Much like the painting *The Woman in White*, Bracquemond demonstrates her proficiency in portraying the beautiful details on the white dress on one of the figures; she adds flowing, yet subtly sharp details that accent the definition of the woman's dress. Both figures are not facing forward, showing Bracquemond's confidence in her ability to delineate the serenity felt by the man and woman outside savouring a beautiful day. Marie Bracquemond made a bold decision moving towards Impressionism when she did, especially with all of the factors that were urging her against it but, she had a true aptitude to express all that Impressionism is and she did so for as long as she could.

13. Bouillon and Kane, "Marie Bracquemond," 27

14. Bouillon and Kane, "Marie Bracquemond," 27

Marie Bracquemond had many factors that influenced her artistic success that ultimately ended her career: societal misogyny, a jealous husband and her role as a mother. All of these components slowly buried Bracquemond deeper and deeper into the art history books, typically only to be mentioned in the occurrence of her husband's name. Should you dig deep enough to find information on her, you will learn how intuitive, inventive and incredible she was. Marie Bracquemond helped pave the way for many other female artists regardless of having been the least known out of the *les trois grande dames* of Impressionism.¹⁵ Though she capitulated her art career to the pressures of her unrelenting husband and her constant effort of climbing the social ladder as a female artist, she did not end up where she had planned, but she did manage to make an impression as an Impressionist.



Marie Bracquemond, *Under the Lamp*, oil on canvas, 1877

15. Dwyer, Britta C. "Women Impressionists: Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzales, Marie Bracquemond." Art Book 16, no. 2 (May 2009): 47.

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17. Chapter 10 - Post-Impressionism

Post-Impressionism



Georges Seurat, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, oil on canvas, 1884-86

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Just a dozen years after the debut of Impressionism, the art critic Félix Fénéon christened Georges Seurat as the leader of a new group of “Neo-Impressionists.” He did not mean to suggest the revival of a defunct style — Impressionism was still going strong in the mid-1880s — but rather a significant modification of Impressionist techniques that demanded a new label.

Fénéon identified greater scientific rigor as the key difference between Neo-Impressionism and its predecessor. Where the Impressionists were “arbitrary” in their techniques, the Neo-Impressionists had developed a “conscious and scientific” method through a careful study of contemporary color theorists such as Michel Chevreul and Ogden Rood.¹



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Bal du Moulin de la Galette, oil on canvas, 1876

This greater scientific rigor is immediately visible if we compare Seurat’s Neo-Impressionist *Grande Jatte* with Renoir’s Impressionist *Moulin de la Galette*. The subject matter is similar: an

1. Félix Fénéon, “Les Impressionnistes en 1886,” as translated in Linda Nochlin, ed., *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 108.

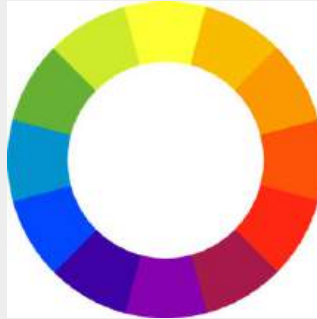
outdoor scene of people at leisure, lounging in a park by a river or dancing and drinking on a café terrace. The overall goal is similar as well. Both artists are trying to capture the effect of dappled light on a sunny afternoon. However, Renoir's scene appears to have been composed and painted spontaneously, with the figures captured in mid-gesture. Renoir's loose, painterly technique reinforces this effect, giving the impression that the scene was painted quickly, before the light changed.

By contrast, the figures in *La Grande Jatte* are preternaturally still, and the brushwork has also been systematized into a painstaking mosaic of tiny dots and dashes, unlike Renoir's haphazard strokes and smears. Neo-Impressionist painters employed rules and a method, unlike the Impressionists, who tended to rely on "instinct and the inspiration of the moment."²

2. Paul Signac, *From Eugène Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism* (1899), as translated in Nochlin, ed., p. 122.

Pointillism and optical mixture

One of these rules was to use only the “pure” colors of the spectrum: violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. These colors could be mixed only with white or with a color adjacent on the color wheel (called “analogous colors”), for example to make lighter, yellower greens or darker, redder violets. Above all, the Neo-Impressionists would not mix colors opposite on the color wheel (“complementary colors”), because doing so results in muddy browns and dull grays.



The color wheel

More subtle color variations were produced by “optical mixture” rather than mixing paint on the palette. For example, examine the grass in the sun. Seurat intersperses the overall field of yellow greens with flecks of warm cream, olive greens, and yellow ochre (actually discolored chrome yellow). Viewed from a distance these flecks blend together to help lighten and warm the green, as we would expect when grass is struck by the yellow-orange light of the afternoon sun. It was this technique of painting in tiny dots (“points” in

French) that gave Neo-Impressionism the popular nickname "Pointillism" although the artists generally avoided that term since it suggested a stylistic gimmick.

For the grass in the shadows, Seurat uses darker greens intermixed with flecks of pure blue and even some orange and maroon. These are very unexpected colors for grass, but when we stand back the colors blend optically, resulting in a cooler, darker, and duller green in the shadows. This green is, however, more vibrant than if Seurat had mixed those colors on the palette and applied them in a uniform swath.

Similarly, look at the number of colors that make up the little girl's legs! They include not only the expected pinks and oranges of Caucasian flesh, but also creams, blues, maroons, and even greens. Stand back again, though, and "optical mixture" blends them into a convincing and luminous flesh color, modeled in warm light and shaded by her white dress. (For more technical information on this topic, see Neo-Impressionist color theory).

The Neo-Impressionists also applied scientific rigor to composition and design. Seurat's friend and fellow painter Paul Signac asserted,

Numerous studies for *La Grande Jatte* testify to how carefully Seurat decided on each figure's pose and arranged them to create a rhythmic recession into the background. This practice is very different from the Impressionists, who emphasized momentary views (impressions) by creating intentionally haphazard-

The Neo-Impressionist
... will not begin a
canvas before he has
determined the layout
... Guided by tradition
and science, he will ...
adopt the lines
(directions and angles),
the chiaroscuro (tones),
[and] the colors (tints)
to the expression he
wishes to make
dominant.³

seeming compositions,
such as Renoir's *Moulin
de la Galette*.

Seurat's *Parade de
cirque* is even more
rigorously geometrical. It
is dominated by
horizontal and vertical
lines, and the just slightly
off-rhythmic spacing of
the figures and
architectural structure
creates a syncopated
grid. Scholars have

debated whether the composition is based on the
Golden Section, a geometric ratio that was identified by
ancient Greek mathematicians as being inherently
harmonious.

3. Paul Signac, *Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism*, in Nochlin,
ed., p. 121.

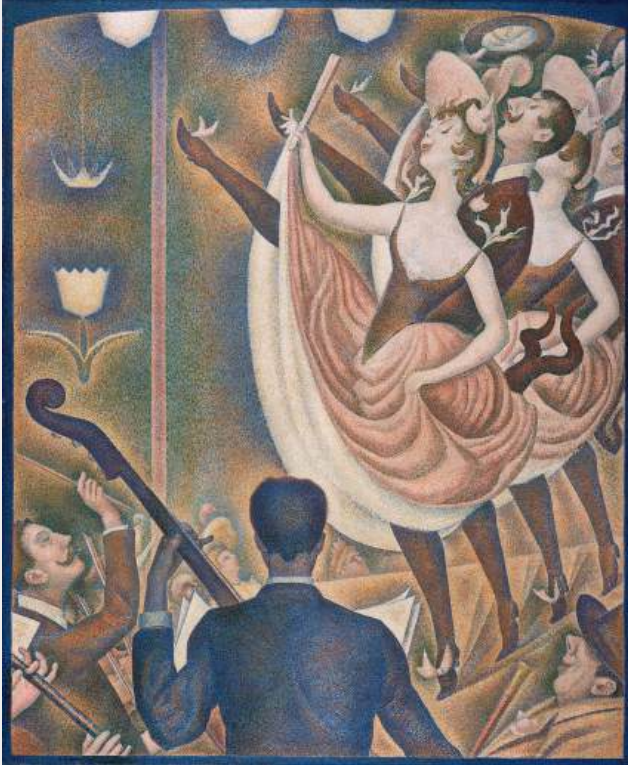


Georges Seurat, *Parade de cirque*, oil on canvas, 1887–88

The Neo-Impressionists also attempted to systematize the emotional qualities conveyed by their paintings. Seurat defined three main expressive tools at the painter's disposal: color (the hues of the spectrum, from warm to cool), tone (the value of those colors, from light to dark), and line (horizontal, vertical, ascending, or descending). Each has a specific emotional effect:

Gaiety of tone is given by the dominance of light; of color, by the dominance of warmth; of line, by lines above the horizontal. Calmness of tone is given by an equivalence of light and dark; of color by an equivalence of warm and cold; and of line, by horizontals. Sadness of tone is given by the dominance of dark; of color, by the dominance of cold colors; and of line, by downward directions.⁴

4. Georges Seurat, Letter to Maurice Beaubourg, August 28, 1890, in Nochlin, ed., p. 114 (translation modified for clarity).



Georges Seurat, *Parade de cirque*, oil on canvas, 1887-88

Seurat's *Chahut* (Can-Can) seems designed to exemplify these rules, employing mostly warm, light colors and ascending lines to convey a mood of gaiety appropriate to the dance.

The Neo-Impressionist style had a relatively brief heyday; very few artists carried on the project into the 20th century. However, a great many artists experimented with it and took portions of its method into their own practice, from van Gogh to Henri Matisse. More broadly, the Neo-Impressionist desire to conform art-making to universal laws of perception, color, and expression echoes throughout Modernism, in movements as diverse as Symbolism, Purism, De Stijl, and the Bauhaus.

Excerpted from: Dr. Charles Cramer and Dr. Kim Grant, "Introduction to Neo-Impressionism, Part I," in *Smarthistory*, April 15, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/introduction-to-neo-impressionism-part-i/>.

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Paul Signac, *Golfe Juan*, oil on canvas, 1896

For the most part, the Neo-Impressionists continued to depict the kinds of subjects preferred by the Impressionists: landscapes and leisure scenes. In addition to his famous painting of people lounging in the park on the island of La Grande Jatte, many of Georges Seurat's paintings portrayed entertainments such as the circuses and music halls that contributed to Paris's reputation for mass spectacles in the late nineteenth century.

Paul Signac's landscape paintings similarly reveal a concentration on leisure scenes. A sailor himself, Signac painted dozens of harbor scenes dominated by the sails and masts of small pleasure craft. The Mediterranean coast of France, where Signac spent his summers, had a

reputation both for the quality of its light – a key interest of the Neo-Impressionists generally – and for a laid-back, sun-filled lifestyle. In Signac’s canvases, the bright colors favored by the Neo-Impressionists perfectly complement this reputation.

Although these subjects suggest carefree pleasure, there are undertones of social criticism in some Neo-Impressionist paintings. Seurat’s *Circus* shows the strict class distinctions in Paris both by location, with the wealthier patrons seated in the lower tiers, and by dress and posture, which gets markedly more casual the further the spectators are from ringside.

One contemporary critic also remarked that the rigidity of the poses in Seurat’s *La Grande Jatte* reminded him of “the stiffness of Parisian leisure, prim and exhausted, where even recreation is a matter of striking poses.”⁵ As we examine the characters in *La Grande Jatte* in detail, there are some surprising inclusions and juxtapositions. In the left foreground, a working-class man in shirtsleeves overlaps a much more formally-dressed middle-class gentleman in a top hat holding a cane. A trumpet player in the middle-ground plays directly into the ears of two soldiers standing at attention in the background. A woman with an ostentatiously eccentric pet monkey on the right and

5. Henri Fèvre, “L’Exposition des Impressionnistes,” in *Étude sur le Salon de 1886 et sur l’exposition des impressionnistes* (Paris, 1886), p. 43 (our translation).

another fishing on the left have been interpreted as prostitutes, one of whom is casting out lures for clients. Between them, a toy lap-dog with a pink ribbon leaps toward a rangy hound whose coat is as black as that of the bourgeois gentleman with the cane.

Despite these provocative juxtapositions and overlaps, very few of the figures actually seem to be interacting with each other; each is lost in their own world. Unlike the mood of convivial good-fellowship between the classes and sexes in Auguste Renoir's *Moulin de la Galette*, Seurat's *Grande Jatte* sets up a dynamic of alienation and tension.



Georges Seurat, *Bathers at Asnières*, oil on canvas, 1884

La Grande Jatte forms an implicit pair with an earlier painting of the same size by Seurat, *Bathers at Asnières*. *Asnières* was an industrial suburb of Paris, just across the river Seine from *La Grande Jatte*. Unlike that island's

largely middle-class patrons in their top hats and bustle skirts, here we see more working-class and lower-middle-class figures in shirtsleeves and straw hats or bowlers. In the background the smokestacks of the factories at Clichy serve as a reminder of labor, even during the men's leisure time.

As in the painting of *La Grande Jatte*, all of the figures are isolated in their own world, but a sense of implicit tension is raised by their insistent gaze across the river at their wealthier compatriots. A middle-class couple being rowed by a hired oarsman in a boat with a prominent French flag further adds to the class tensions raised by the work.

Perhaps it was this odd sense of unresolved class tensions that caused Signac to suggest that even Seurat's paintings of "the pleasures of decadence" are about exposing "the degradation of our era"

and bearing witness to "the great social struggle that is now taking place between workers and capital."⁶

Seurat's own politics were unclear, but Signac was a



Paul Signac, In the Time of Harmony, oil on canvas, 1893-95

6. Paul Signac, "Impressionists and Revolutionaries," *La Révolte*, June 13-19, 1891, as translated in Nochlin, ed., p. 124.

social anarchist, as were several other Neo-Impressionists, including Camille Pissarro and his son Lucien, as well as Maximilian Luce, Theodore van Rysselberghe, Henri Cross, and the critic Felix Fénéon. Social anarchists reject a strong centralized government in which the state owns the means of production and guides the economy; they believe that social ownership and cooperation will emerge naturally in a stateless society.

Signac's *In the Time of Harmony* was originally titled *In the Time of Anarchy*, but political controversy forced a change. Between 1892 and 1894 there were eleven bombings in France by anarchists, and a very public trial of suspected anarchists that included Fénéon and Luce.



Paul Signac, *The Demolition Worker*, oil on canvas, 1887-89

Signac's painting was intended to show that, despite its current revolutionary tactics, the aim of anarchism was a peaceful utopia. In the foreground, workers lay down their tools for a picnic of figs and champagne while others play at boules. A couple in the center contemplates a posy, while behind them a man sows and women hang laundry. Although the mood is timeless — with different clothing, this painting could be a

Classical pastoral scene — in the distance modern mechanical farm equipment reinforces the painting's subtitle, "The Golden Age is Not in the Past, it is in the Future."

Relatively few Neo-Impressionist paintings are so overtly allegorical and political. Signac argued that it was the Neo-Impressionists' technique, not any directly socialist or anarchist subject matter, that was most in tune with the political revolutionaries. The Neo-Impressionists' rigorous appeal to hard science, rather than dead conventions, along with their uncompromising will to "paint what they see, as they feel it," will help "give a hard blow of the pick-axe to the

old social structure” and promote a corresponding social revolution.⁷

Excerpted from: Dr. Charles Cramer and Dr. Kim Grant, “Introduction to Neo-Impressionism, Part II,” in *Smarthistory*, accessed November 13, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/introduction-to-neo-impressionism-part-ii/>.

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7. Paul Signac, “Impressionists and Revolutionaries,” *La Révolte*, June 13-19, 1891, as translated in Nochlin, ed., p. 124.

18. Chapter 10 - Suzanne Valadon

Post-Impressionism

MORGAN HUNTER

Audio recording of the full chapter can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K3azfXC6RNV8u1gYyaweLNQaJk4Gdo5F/view?usp=sharing>

Beneath the beautiful colours of paint, there is a blank canvas that comes in all shapes and sizes. This blank canvas turns into one of many layers of beauty with extravagant colours and textures, yet there still lay imperfections within it, because no matter how hard one might try, imperfections are what makes us human. No female body goes without a flaw, that is what makes all women beautiful and unique in their own way. Yet, what is the flaw? Throughout history, women were portrayed as having this perfect figure that would catch any man's eye, with no "perceived" imperfection in sight. This created the ideology of a perfect body, something that is intangible as it is only in the eye of the beholder. A woman's shape is endlessly unique and therefore subject to debate over one definition of beauty. Suzanne Valadon changed history with her artistic mind, she contradicted the ongoing ideology of beauty by portraying a realistic view of women and their bodies. Suzanne Valadon climbed the ladder into the art community and created unique artwork that was unlike any other. Her portrayal of art was unlike any other and had deeper meaning that even feminists today reflect on. Valadon, a woman who knew a change needed to happen.

To fully grasp the concept of who Suzanne Valadon was and what her art work meant, readers need to know her past. Marie Clementine, who later became the well-known Suzanne Valadon, was born in the middle working class, a far cry from the distinct art community. Her journey into the art world was unlike most artists but by no means not well deserved. Due to being born in that middle working class, Marie did not have a comfortable income that could



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Braid* (Portrait of Suzanne Valadon), oil on canvas, circa 1886-1887

pay for artistic training, her dreams would have to be put aside. But with that being said, she became invaluable to an artist, the model, “*She needed to approach the business from the other side of the canvas: she would have to become a model.*”¹ Her modelling career began because her beauty could not go unnoticed. Famous artists even sought her out, “*A petite and luminous beauty, she soon found work as an artist’s model, posing for (and in many cases having affairs with) the painters whose names came to define that moment in art history.*”² Marie was now in the art world, just in an alternative way.

This arose a new phase in her life; but not the one she hoped for in terms of her self image and respectability, “*The model offered her*

1. Catherine Hewitt, *Renoir’s Dancer: The Secret Life of Suzanne Valadon* (New York: St. Martin’s Press (2018): 149.
2. Moira Egon, “Ekphrasis: Seven after Suzanne Valadon,” *New Criterion* 35, no. 8 (2017): 38.

body for sale.”³ Her beauty was used for male satisfaction, and she was seen as no more than just a woman with a beautiful figure on a piece of canvas. Marie Clementine now became Suzanne Valadon, “Toulouse-Lautrec suggested that the name “Suzanne” might be better suited to her career as an artist’s model.”⁴ But, what they did not realize then, was Suzanne Valadon would not only be the name of a famous model but the name of a woman who changed the art world with her own paintings.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *The Hangover (Portrait of Suzanne Valadon)*, oil on canvas, circa 1888

While painters were objectifying and critiquing her female form on canvas, she analyzed them, eventually teaching herself how to become an artist, “She had no formal artistic education, but taught herself to draw by watching artists, and particularly by modelling them.”⁵ It was actually the man who suggested she change her name

for modelling, who pushed her to become more than just a beautiful figure on canvas, “It was Toulouse-Lautrec who first encouraged her intellectual and artistic development.”⁶ This was something unheard

3. Janet Burns, “Looking as Women: The Paintings of Suzanne Valadon, Paula Modersohn-Becker and Frida Kahlo.” *Atlantis* 18, no. 1 & 2 (1991-1992): 31.
4. Egon, “Ekphrasis,” 38.
5. Patricia Mathew, “Returning The Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon.” *The Art Bulletin* 73, no. 3 (1993): 415.
6. Burns, “Looking as Women,” 31.

of. "Rare was the model who progressed beyond the passive object of the male artist's gaze to become an artist herself (Burns 1991-1992)."

⁷ Her artistic focus is what really created her spot in the art community though. Instead of playing it safe, she chose a category that was male dominated, the female nude, "Women were not only excluded from formal study of the nude but also from the power to determine the definition of high art."⁸ Being a woman did not stop Suzanne Valadon, it only made her want to depict how a female body should be portrayed and how the concept of beauty comes in many forms. Her idea of the female body created a whole new meaning to the word "nude" in the art community.

To understand Suzanne Valadon, we must first see her past. As a model, she experienced first hand how women and their own unique bodies were objectified on canvas until deemed perfection. She used that experience to create a whole new ideology, which is truly amazing.

7. Burns, "Looking as Women," 31.

8. Burns, "Looking as Women," 28.



Suzanne Valadon, *Nudes*, oil on cardboard, 1919

In order to see how Suzanne Valadon's artwork had a completely unique take on the female nude, an analysis of the previous male dominated nude is required. Before Suzanne Valadon started her artistic journey, the depiction of the female nude was totally male dominated and made for the male population, "Female images are produced for consumption by male spectators."⁹ Women's bodies were objectified on a piece of canvas until they were absolutely perfect, with no flaw in sight. They depicted women

as these sexual figures who only lived for male attention,"...the glimpse of her breast and the expanse of her buttocks and thighs emphasize her sexual availability."¹⁰ "It suggests that the woman in the image is literally possessed by the man who looks at her."¹¹ Ultimately, the female nude was usually depicted by a perfect female figure in a luring, sexual position and setting, almost like she was awaiting or calling a male figure. This kind of nude created its own ideology about what "beauty" had to be or look like, a standard almost no woman could or should have to reach. The typical nudist

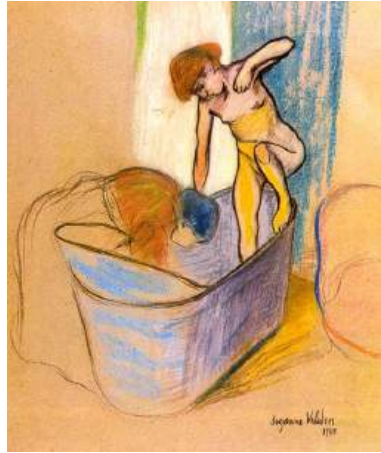
9. Burns, "Looking as Women," 26.

10. Rosemary Betterton, "How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon." *Feminist Review* 3, no. 19 (1985): 5.

11. Betterton, "How Do Women Look?" 5.

structure followed the same format, a woman laying seductively across the painting, inviting male attention.

Suzanne Valadon's artwork did not follow that typical structure at all. She had a totally different idea in mind. Her art work contradicted that ideology of the female nude, "Often her paintings of nudes are stripped of any erotic overtones and thus resist the sexually charged male gaze."¹² She changed the whole concept, which included how a woman's body was shown, the position she was in as well as the setting and details in the



Suzanne Valadon, *The Bath*, pastel on paper, circa 1908

background. In her paintings with primarily the use of oil paint, oil pencils, pastels, she highlighted a woman's natural curve, she painted women doing everyday things and lastly she put objects in the painting that were far from anything sexual or luring. A perfect example of this is her painting, *Nude Grandmother and Young Girl Stepping into the Bath* (1908). Like the name states, this nude features a young girl completely naked stepping into the bathtub with her grandmother by her side. The young girl is not in an inviting, sexual pose, she was just simply doing an everyday task with her elderly grandmother sitting by her side. Suzanne Valadon's artistic mind differed so much from artists before her because of her decision to portray a natural woman in her habitat.

12. Wioleta Polinska. "Dangerous Bodies: Women's Nakedness and Theology." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 16, no. 1 (2000): 57.

Valadon's artwork was so much more than just a picture on canvas. It challenged the that time's ideology of what "beauty" was or had to be, something that was honestly impossible. No women's body is the same, nor is any considered to be less beautiful. Every flaw, curve, and sag a woman has just makes her that much more unique. This was what Valadon highlighted, and this is how she changed history. Her artwork proved beauty comes at any age, any body type and that a woman's body doesn't always have to be objectified for the male population, it can be depicted as women just doing ordinary things, without calling for sexual intention, "*This suggests a conscious and deliberate attempt to change existing codes of representation which, in the case of the female nude, emphasized beauty of form, harmony and time.*"¹³ Ultimately, she normalized women's sexuality and painted the female nude for females, not for male satisfaction, "*But what she did do was to open up different possibilities within the painting of the nude to allow for the expression of women's experience of their own bodies.*"¹⁴ This meant a new beginning.

The nude now had a new purpose; to depict a woman in her, not a man's, natural habitat, "*Unlike their male contemporaries, they expressed the conflicts of their feminine self-image. Their work tells us something of what it is like to be a modern woman rather than what modern men wish women were like.*"¹⁵ Looking at Valadon's artwork and not seeing the meaning behind the nude paintings, is like seeing only the tip of the iceberg.

Suzanne Valadon, a model turned into an artist, forever changed the female nude with her artistic, female centered mind. She found a way into the art community with no artistic training, created artwork with a completely different structure and used that art to

13. Burns, "Looking as Women," 15.

14. Burns, "Looking as Women," 22.

15. Burns, "Looking as Women," 33.

create a whole new ideology. There can be no beauty without flaw. Women's bodies were not meant to be objectified, nor made solely for the male population. A woman's body is her own, which is exactly what Suzanne Valadon proved.



Suzanne Valadon, *The Blue Room*, oil on canvas, 1923

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19. Chapter 10 - Vincent Van Gogh

Post-Impressionism

MEGAN BYLSMA

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One of the most famous painters in the 20th century, Vincent Van Gogh was not a famous artist during his lifetime. His story so perfectly fits the narrative that is told and re-told about artists that after his death his fame grew. During his lifetime he was known by friends and artists, but it is unlikely that he ever sold a painting in his life. (And if he did sell a painting, the story goes that he managed to sell *one* – to an art school who used it as an example for their students...of how *not* to paint.)

Much of Van Gogh's life and art are tied up in the legendary stories of his (mis)behaviours. In Van Gogh it is easy to find more of a portrait of mental illness than a portrait of a human man. When society says that mental illness carries stigma in Western culture, Van Gogh serves as a prime example. When looking at the art of Vincent Van Gogh, do viewers recognize what he was trying to communicate, and feel what he was trying to get them to feel, and see what he was working to portray? Or do they simply see nothing beyond the stench of illness – fascinating as a circus freak and as opposite to them as the moon is to the sun?

Out of all the artists that have ever been in the world, Vincent Van Gogh's name shows up the most in medical journals. So many

researchers have poured over every brush stroke of his paintings and every line of his letters to diagnose his illness and to bring into the realm of the easily labelled his strange perspective on life. Paper after paper proclaims his mental and physical maladies and deficiencies, in an attempt to explain the unique and unprecedented art he created. From migraines to psychopathy, from epilepsy to HSP, each reduces the artist to list of symptoms and creates the image of a robot at the mercy of the juices in his brain and the disorder of his construction. But barely any pause to ask a question: How would Van Gogh feel about this?

Van Gogh, was at his core, a man of feeling. He felt things deeply. Some see this as a symptom of his obvious mental malfunction and the key to his perceived weakness. Feeling deeply certainly presents challenges that are unique to the person who feels. However, these are not, of themselves, weakness or illness. They simply mean the person who feels has a difference of perception than those who do not feel quite so much. Van Gogh wanted more than anything, to be understood. Understood and accepted. But how can a man who struggles to understand himself, be understood by others? And how can one who is rarely understood be truly accepted? And so Van Gogh struggled his entire life with a fish-out-of-water feeling. He was the triangular peg in a very round hole. Even amongst his fellow artists he had a reputation as being a very agreeable, friendly, and pleasant man; a man who as as agreeable as he was intense and awkward. His fellow artists rather liked him, but none really wanted to be alone with him and his intensity. And so he attracted only the truly kind and the truly horrible as his friends. Some of his artist friends, in their amiable kindness, spent time with him. But for a personality like Van Gogh it was the bullies and manipulators who really found a plaything in their relationship with him and who had the deepest impact on him (as is the case with traumatic experiences).



Vincent Van Gogh, *The Potato Eaters*, oil on canvas, 1885

Van Gogh had gone to Paris and had spent time with many of the avant-garde artists who were there. His stay in Paris had introduced him to the art of the Impressionists, to Japanese woodblock prints, to experimentation, and all of this had an irrevocable impact on his art. For almost twenty years he had been trying to paint like an old master, but in one trip to Paris his years of stagnant practicing finally gained ground in leaps and bounds. Colours gathered in his palette like tropical birds at a feeder, where before only brown sparrows had pecked. His own innate awkward style became his friend, instead of his enemy, and the Van Gogh we know now was forged.

But Paris is a busy city. It bustles and bumps and jars. Van Gogh had gone to Paris at the suggestion of his brother Theo – his best friend and biggest supporter – to shake of the dark funk he had found himself in after failing to connect with the parishioners he had been sent to win at his first placement. Van Gogh had trained to be a minister; he wanted nothing more than to win the poorest and most wretched of people. And so he had been placed with the potato farmers in poverty.



Vincent Van Gogh, *Portrait of Père Tanguy*, oil on canvas, 1887

He loved his (practice) flock, but he told Theo in his letters that he knew he wasn't connecting with them. They avoided him and didn't trust him and he realized if he couldn't win the hearts of these people he would never be an effective preacher. He gave up the ministry.

Very sad and in a deep sense of gloom that he couldn't shake, Theo suggested that he visit Paris for an art trip. He had been working hard at seminary school and at his ministry placement, so why not go to Paris to embrace some art? The trip was a success. The gloom lifted and an energized and inspired Van Gogh emerged.

But as time went on the energy levels of Van Gogh just kept accelerating. With the intense stimulus of the city, Theo recognized that his brother was starting to 'wobble' a little again. Not so much that he was on a downward trajectory, but more that he was just experiencing some failing mental health. Theo suggested that his brother should take a break and head to the south of France for some slow life in the sun and surf. Vincent Van Gogh enthusiastically agreed. He had big plans – wouldn't it be perfect if all the artists in Paris could live in one place, without the distractions of the city,

and work on art together? He decided his trip to the south of France would be to scout a location for a new artists commune. The other artists seemed to agree, at least he felt they did, that it was a good idea. So he went to Arles in the south of France and waited for his friends to follow.

He painted and painted and painted as he worked through his anticipation of his future companions enjoying the quiet peasant life in Arles. Paul Signac eventually came down for a few weeks before sailing off into the sunset for warmer and sunnier locales. Signac was kind and encouraging and didn't seem terribly put-off by Van Gogh's intense moods. But Signac was never one to stay in one place long, so the commune life wasn't for him.



Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin's Armchair, oil on canvas, 1888

Then Paul Gauguin arrived. Gauguin's arrival had been impatiently anticipated by Van Gogh. He had painted two portraits in the form of two chairs – one a painting of his own chair and another a painting of an armchair he had reserved for Gauguin. In Gauguin's chair painting a lit candle sits on the seat as a sign of the anticipation of the other artist's visit. Van Gogh couldn't have known that Gauguin was using his trip to Arles as a trial separation from his wife and

children (who he would bundle back to his in-laws saying he was denouncing modern life in all its forms) before splitting for Tahiti and a yet unknown thirteen year old bride. To be fair, perhaps Gauguin didn't really know that yet himself. Gauguin, a manipulator at heart, saw Van Gogh (and most other people) as lesser than himself. His belief in his superiority to others would become a catalysing wedge in his friendship with Van Gogh. Gauguin, who

would one day have art cults built entirely on his reputation and persona, was the kind of man who liked to create drama for people and Van Gogh was the kind of man who would alternate between trying to eliminate the repercussions of the drama or be swept completely up in it. Gauguin created chaos nearly everywhere he went – whether it was chaos of the variety caused by visiting a friend's house and then drinking all the liquor, taking off his pants, playing the piano (pants-less), and staying until the visit lasted days and the homeowners despaired that he was going to be there, stirring up trouble, forever. Or it was chaos of the variety caused by whipping up the mental state of someone who had mental illness struggles and creating stories that would forever haunt the mentally ill man (while never seeming to impact his own reputation), Gauguin had dramatic chaos as his constant and well-honed companion.

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, at one point, the collection of Van Gogh paintings they had on display were hung in the same room, on the opposite wall of their collection of Gauguin paintings. This arrangement would have thrilled Van Gogh. Gauguin would have probably preferred having his own museum.



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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=360#oembed-1>

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “Gauguin, *Self-Portrait with Portrait of Émile Bernard (Les misérables)*,” in *Smarthistory*, February 8, 2017, <https://smarthistory.org/gauguin-self-portrait/>.

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Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin*, oil on canvas, 1888

This self portrait was painted for Paul Gauguin as part of swap between the artists. Van Gogh chose to represent himself with monastic severity. The other painting is Paul Gauguin's *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Vincent van Gogh (Les Misérables)*.

Gauguin's title is a reference to the heroic fugitive, Jean Valjean, in Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*. Gauguin's painting also contains a portrait of Emile Bernard that was painted not by Gauguin but by Bernard within Gauguin's painting.

The following is a letter by Van Gogh to his brother Theo about the painting exchange with Gauguin dated October 7, 1888:

My dear Theo,

Many thanks for your letter. How glad I am for Gauguin; I shall not try to find words to tell you – let's be of good heart.



Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Vincent van Gogh (Les Misérables)*, oil on canvas, 1888

I have just received the portrait of Gauguin by himself and the portrait of Bernard by Bernard and in the background of the portrait of Gauguin there is Bernard's on the wall, and vice versa.

The Gauguin is of course remarkable, but I very much like Bernard's picture. It is just the inner vision of a painter, a few abrupt tones, a few dark lines, but it has the distinction of a real, real Manet.

The Gauguin is more studied, carried further. That, along with what he says in his letter, gave me absolutely the impression of its representing a prisoner. Not a shadow of gaiety. Absolutely nothing of the flesh, but one can confidently put that down to his determination to make a melancholy effect, the flesh in the shadows has gone a dismal blue.

So now at last I have a chance to compare my painting with what the comrades are doing. My portrait, which I am sending to Gauguin in exchange, holds its own, I am sure of that. I have written to Gauguin in reply to his letter that if I might be allowed to stress my own personality in a portrait, I had done so in trying to convey in my portrait not only myself but an impressionist in general, had conceived it as the portrait of a bonze, a simple worshiper of the eternal Buddha.

And when I put Gauguin's conception and my own side by side, mine is as grave, but less

despairing. What Gauguin's portrait says to me before all things is that he must not go on like this, he must become again the richer Gauguin of the "Negresses."

I am very glad to have these two portraits, for they finally represent the comrades at this stage; they will not remain like that, they will come back to a more serene life.

And I see clearly that the duty laid upon me is to do everything I can to lessen our poverty.

No good comes the way in this painter's job. I feel that he is more Millet than I, but I am more Diaz than he, and like Diaz I am going to try to please the public, so that a few pennies may come into our community. I have spent more than they, but I do not care a bit now that I see their painting—they have worked in too much poverty to succeed.

Mind you, I have better and more saleable stuff than what I have sent you, and I feel that I can go on doing it. I have confidence in it at last. I know that it will do some people's hearts good to find poetic subjects again, "The Starry Sky," "The Vines in Leaf," "The Furrows," the "Poet's Garden."

So then I believe that it is your duty and mine to demand comparative wealth just because we have very great artists to keep alive. But at the moment you are as fortunate, or at least fortunate in the same way, as Sensier if you have Gauguin and I

hope he will be with us heart and soul. There is no hurry, but in any case I think that he will like the house so much as a studio that he will agree to being its head. Give us half a year and see what that will mean.

Bernard has again sent me a collection of ten drawings with a daring poem – the whole is called At the Brothel.

You will soon see these things, but I shall send you the portraits when I have had them to look at for some time.

I hope you will write soon, I am very hard up because of the stretchers and frames that I ordered.

What you told me of Freret gave me pleasure, but I venture to think that I shall do things which will please him better, and you too.

Yesterday I painted a sunset.

Gauguin looks ill and tormented in his portrait!! You wait, that will not last, and it will be very interesting to compare this portrait with the one he will do of himself in six months' time.

Someday you will also see my self-portrait, which I am sending to Gauguin, because he will keep it, I hope.

It is all ashen gray against pale veronese (no yellow). The clothes are this brown coat with a

blue border, but I have exaggerated the brown into purple, and the width of the blue borders.

The head is modeled in light colours painted in a thick impasto against the light background with hardly any shadows. Only I have made the eyes slightly slanting like the Japanese.

Write me soon and the best of luck. How happy old Gauguin will be.

A good handshake, and thank Freret for the pleasure he has given me. Good-by for now.

Ever yours,

Vincent.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, “Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/van-gogh-self-portrait-dedicated-to-paul-gauguin/>.

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Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*, oil on canvas, 1889

The following report appeared in the Arles journal *Le Forum Republicain* on December 30, 1888:

Last Sunday, at 11:30 in the evening, Vincent Vaugogh [sic], a painter of Dutch origin, called at the Brothel No. 1,

asked for a woman called Rachel and handed her ... his ear,

saying: 'Guard this object with your life'. Then he disappeared. When informed of the action, which could only be that of a pitiful madman, the police went the next day to his house and discovered him lying on his bed apparently at the point of death. The unfortunate man has been rushed to hospital.

Accounts of what took place that night vary. Whatever the exact circumstances, though, whatever underlying motivations could have compelled van Gogh to do it, the episode effectively put an end to one of the most famous working relationships in the history of art, as Paul Gauguin boarded the train to Paris the next day.

For nine weeks they had lived together sharing lodgings in the Yellow House, just outside the old town walls of Arles in the South of France, spurring each other on as collaborators and as rivals too. The dream had been to set up “a studio in the South,” as van Gogh

put it, a community of artists, with himself and Gauguin, the founding fathers, all working in harmony with nature and, as he hoped, with each other.

There are some issues with the stories that emerged about Van Gogh's ear. So many, especially at the time, said that Van Gogh and Gauguin had gotten into yet another intense argument. Gauguin's dismissive and cruel humours created such anxious unrest for Van Gogh that Van Gogh would act oddly (to say the least). And Gauguin was known to spin stories to make Van Gogh look dangerously unbalanced. Stories of Van Gogh attacking Gauguin from behind, completely unprovoked, with a machete were popular. The idea that Gauguin might be taking something out of context for chaotic narrative's sake was rarely considered, because as everyone knew – that Van Gogh was intense and weird.

For context: Van Gogh and Gauguin used to engage in machete sword fights (at Gauguin's urging) frequently during their time at Arles. (But that story is less dramatic than the one-sided story of being attacked with a machete for no reason whatsoever.)

In the story that emerged immediately after Van Gogh's ear incident is that he and Gauguin had an argument and in a rage Van Gogh cut his own earlobe off with a straight razor to make Gauguin suffer. Van Gogh then boxed up the detached lobe and gifted it to his favorite prostitute at the local brothel. At least, that's the story Gauguin told. But maybe Gauguin had some covering up to do in regards to his own marriage because...

A different story has since emerged about that evening. Some say that Gauguin cut the lobe off Van Gogh's ear during one of their machete duels. In a situation wracked with chaotic drama, it seemed that perhaps Gauguin could get into trouble with the law for this, so Van Gogh told everyone that he had done it to himself to save Gauguin from the trouble. Van Gogh then packaged the earlobe and did indeed gift it to a woman at the local brothel, but the woman was not a sex worker that Van Gogh frequented. The woman was *Gauguin's favorite prostitute*. That last detail changes the flavour of the story just a little bit, adding a little intrigue to things.

Regardless of Van Gogh's intentions (which he seems to have never fully shared in a form that anyone has paid attention to), Gauguin left Arles never to return. The two artists did stay in contact – through letters, but they would never see each other face to face again. Gauguin did suggest to Van Gogh in 1890 that they should found an artists' studio in Antwerp, but by a few months later Van Gogh would be dead by gunshot and Gauguin would be moving to Tahiti.

The painting, completed two weeks after the event, is often read as a farewell to that dream. For Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, the most recent biographers of the artist, however, the portrait was first and foremost a plea to van Gogh's doctors.

It shows the artist in three-quarter profile standing in a room in the Yellow House wearing a closed coat and a fur cap. His right ear is bandaged. It was in fact his left ear that was bandaged, the painting being a mirror

image. To his right is an easel with a canvas on it. Barely visible, a faint outline underneath reveals what looks to be a still-life which appears to have been painted over. The top of the easel has been cropped by the edge of the canvas and the sitter's hat so as to form a fork-like shape. To his left is a blue framed window, and partly obscured by the gaunt ridge of his cheek, a Japanese woodblock print shows two geishas in a landscape with Mount Fuji in the background.

Naifeh and White Smith argue that van Gogh, following his release from hospital, was anxious to persuade his doctors that he was indeed perfectly fit and able to take care of himself and that, despite his momentary lapse, it would not be necessary for them to have him committed, as had been suggested, to one of the local insane asylums; hence the winter coat and hat, to keep warm as they had advised, and with the window ajar still getting that much-needed fresh air into his system. The bandage too, which would have been soaked in camphor, suggests that he both accepts what has happened and is happy, literally, to take his medicine. The same note of stoic optimism, if one wishes to read the painting this way, is also found in the letters to his brother Theo, in which van Gogh, far from abandoning his dream of a "studio in the South," talks of continuing the project, expressing the desire for more artists to come to Arles, even proposing that Gauguin and he could "start afresh."

Yet, of course, whether or not van Gogh was willing to admit to it, the project had most definitely reached its end. And though for a short time he did get to carry on

living in the Yellow House, within a few weeks, acting on a petition handed in to the local authorities and signed by 30 of his neighbors, he was forcefully removed and taken to Arles Hospital where he was locked in an isolation cell. In May van Gogh committed himself to the private asylum in Saint-Remy a small town north of Arles and in a little over a year he was dead.

Excerpted and Adapted from: Ben Pollitt, “Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/van-gogh-self-portrait-with-bandaged-ear/>.

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20. Chapter 10 - Paul Cezanne

Post-Impressionism

BETHANY MILLER



Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine*, oil on canvas, c. 1887

Chapter audio recording here:



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Paul Cezanne, born in the year of 1839 and passed away in 1906, is considered to be one of the greatest influences in the world of modern art. Cezanne was always interested in the arts from a young age, especially painting. When he was contemplating the option of getting an education in the arts, his father strongly objected, thinking that it was a waste of time and that he would not find the success his father hoped for him by being an artist.¹ His father, who was a successful banker, was also worried that there would be no monetary gain for his son in the arts.² Therefore, his father wanted him to pursue a more academically charged career path that would be more likely to bring him wealth and a promising future, and so he strongly suggested that Cezanne go to school to gain a law degree.³ Cezanne went along with his fathers' wishes but found he had no passion for law, and so, after two years, Cezanne finally convinced his father (with some help from his mother) to pursue an artistic career.⁴ In that event, Cezanne set out to study painting in Paris and began his journey in becoming one of the most well known Impressionist artists.⁵

1. Paul Cezanne, "Paul Cezanne and his Paintings". Accessed September 16, 2020. <https://www.paulcezanne.org/>
2. Paul Cezanne, Paul Cezanne and his Paintings.
3. Paul Cezanne, Paul Cezanne and his Paintings.
4. Trachtman, Paul. "Cezanne". Smithsonian Magazine, January, 2006, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/cezanne-107584544/>
5. Trachtman, Paul, Cezanne.



Paul Cezanne, *The Artist's Father, Reading "L'Événement"*, oil on canvas, 1866

The beginning of Cezanne's studies in painting while in Paris did not start out so well for the young artist. Burdened by the thoughts that he was not as artistically inclined as his peers and grappling with critics of his work, Cezanne became depressed.⁶ He began to feel lost and inadequate when he saw the work of the artists around him and he felt inferior with his skills as he faced the all too common demon of comparison. After taking a break from the art world and spending some time working at his father's bank, Cezanne decided to once again pursue his dream as an artist and returned to Paris to continue his studies with a newfound determination.⁷

Cezanne used his art as a form of expression and his early paintings were wrought with emotion that was tangible on the canvas.⁸ Using techniques such as applying paint onto the canvas with a palette knife in a thick, crusted fashion and embracing dark and moody colour schemes, Cezanne broke away from the norm

6. Trachtman, Paul, Cezanne.

7. Richman-Abdou, Kelly. "Father Of Modern Art". My Modern Met, Accessed September 11, 2020, <https://mymodernmet.com/paul-cezanne-paintings/>

8. Trachtman, Paul, Cezanne

and became more emotional with his art as he began to experiment with never before seen tactics of painting.

At the beginning of the Franco-German war in 1870, Cezanne left Paris for Provence, partly due to the fact that he was avoiding the chances of being drafted into the war.⁹ During his time in Provence, he started to become inspired by the vast scenes of nature around him, and developed a love of the natural which



Paul Cezanne, *L'Estaque*, oil on canvas, 1883-85

influenced his future paintings. Cezanne, with his new inspirations, began to become proficient in painting landscapes. Unlike other landscape artists at the time, he aimed to not only replicate the nature he observed around him in a truthful fashion, but to also include elements of his own feelings and emotions and he successfully combined the two together into beautiful pieces of art. During this time of his nature inspired works, he moved from a more dark and dramatic approach of painting, to focusing more on the qualities of light and atmosphere.

9. Trachtman, Paul, Cezanne



Paul Cezanne, *The Basket of Apples*, oil on canvas, 1890–94

Like most artists, Cezanne's work was always evolving and maturing. As seen in his still life painting, Cezanne began to be more technical in his approach; solving problems of perspective, dimension, and tonal variations.¹⁰ As his work as an artist continued to thrive, his art became increasingly dynamic, with rich colours and

skillful compositions.¹¹

As an artist who was constantly seeking ways to break free from the “rules” of painting, Cezanne was always working to discover new ways to deal with form, colour, and space and how he could stimulate the viewer. One such way he accomplished this was by approaching perspective in a previously unseen method. Viewing some of Cezanne's



Paul Cezanne, *Still Life with Carafe, Bottle, and Fruit*, watercolour on paper, 1906

paintings, the viewer is left wondering from what vantage point the artist was settled in when he created the work, as he would shift the traditional perspective to allow for more information to be seen, this is especially evidenced in his still life paintings.

10. Richman–Abdou, Kelly. “Father Of Modern Art”. Accessed September 11, 2020.

11. Richman–Abdou, Kelly. “Father Of Modern Art”. Accessed September 11, 2020.

All together, throughout Cezanne's life and work as an artist, he inspired future generations of painters in countless ways. First of all, Cezanne never gave up on his aspirations and dreams to become a successful artist and to share his work with the world around him. He was determined to make art his life's focus and he continues to be an inspiration for others to break free from societal norms and the pressures that we have placed on us by other people or by ourselves. Cezanne is a major key influencer in modern art in the way he created new techniques of paint application, colour schemes, perspective, creating a new sense of space, and combining your imagination with the real world. In his career, that lasted four decades, Cezanne created more than nine hundred oil paintings and four hundred watercolour paintings. His work influenced modern art in a way that he never imagined, he went from almost giving up on his dream, to becoming one of the most influential artists of today.¹²

12. Huyghe, René. 2020. "Paul Cezanne." Encyclopedia Britannica, inc, Accessed September 11, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paul-Cezanne>.



Paul Cezanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire and Château Noir*, oil on canvas, 1904-05

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http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/pcez/hd_pcez.htm.

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2I. Chapter 10 - Paul Cezanne (part 2)

Post-Impressionism

Audio recording of chapter (part 1) here:



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Paul
Cézanne, *Still
Life with
Apples*, oil on
canvas, 1895-98

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.

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.



Paul Cézanne, Paul Alexis reading to Émile Zola, oil on canvas, 1869-1870



Paul Cézanne, Madame Cézanne (Hortense Fiquet, 1850-1922) in a Red Dress, oil on canvas, 1888-90

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 is often considered to be one of the most influential painter 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.

From: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, "An introduction to the painting of Paul Cézanne," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015,

<https://smarthistory.org/an-introduction-to-the-painting-of-paul-cezanne/>.

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Paul
Cézanne, *Mont
Sainte-Victoire*,
oil on canvas, c.
1887

It can be difficult to estimate, by eye, just how far away a mountain lies. A peak can dominate a landscape and command our attention, filling our eyes and mind. Yet it can come as something of a shock to discover that such a prominent natural feature can still be a long distance from us.

At 3317 feet (1011 meters) high, the limestone peak of Mont Sainte-Victoire is a pigmy compared to the giants of, say, Mount Fuji and Mount Rainier. But, like them, it still exercises a commanding presence over the country around it and, in particular, over Aix-en-Provence, the hometown of Paul Cézanne. Thanks to his many oil paintings and watercolors of the mountain, the painter has become indelibly associated with it. Think of Cézanne and his still-lives and landscapes come to mind, his apples and his depictions of Mont Sainte-Victoire.



Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, oil on canvas, 1902-04



Paul Cézanne, *Bathers at Rest*, oil on canvas, 1876-77

Steeped in centuries of history and folklore, both classical and Christian, the mountain—or, more accurately, mountain range—only gradually emerged as a major theme in Cézanne’s work.

In the 1870s, he included it in a landscape called *The Railway Cutting*, 1870 and a few years later it appeared behind the monumental figures of his *Bathers at Rest*, 1876-77 which was included in the Third Impressionist Exhibition of 1877. But it wasn’t until the

beginning of the next decade, well after his adoption of Impressionism, that he began consistently featuring the mountain in his landscapes. Writing in 1885, Paul Gauguin was probably thinking of Mont Sainte-Victoire when he imagined Cézanne spending “entire days in the mountains reading Virgil and looking at the sky.” “Therefore,” Gauguin continued, “his horizons are high, his blues very intense, and the red in his work has an astounding vibrancy.” Cézanne’s legend was beginning to emerge and a mountain ran through it.

Cézanne would return to the motif of Mont Sainte-Victoire throughout the rest of his career, resulting in an incredibly varied series of works. They show the mountain from many different points of view and often in relationship to a constantly changing cast of other elements (foreground trees and bushes, buildings and bridges, fields and quarries). From this series we can extract a subgroup of over two-dozen paintings and watercolors. Dating from the very last years of the artist’s life, these landscapes feature a heightened lyricism and, more prosaically, a consistent viewpoint. They show the mountain as it can be seen from the hill of Les Lauves, located just to the north of Aix.

Cézanne bought an acre of land on this hill in 1901 and by the end of the following year he had built a studio on it. From here, he would walk further uphill to a spot that offered a sweeping



Mont
Sainte-Victoire
(photo: Bob
Leckridge, CC
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view of Mont Sainte-Victoire and the land before it. The painter Emile Bernard recalled accompanying Cézanne on this very walk:

Cézanne picked up a box in the hall [of his studio] and took me to his motif. It was two kilometers away with a view over a valley at the foot of Sainte-Victoire, the craggy mountain which he never ceased to paint[...]. He was filled with admiration for this mountain.

Cézanne consciously cultivated his association with the mountain and perhaps even wanted to be documented painting it. When they visited Aix in 1906, the artists Maurice Denis and Ker-Xavier Roussel found themselves being led to the same location. In an oil painting by Denis and in some of Roussel's photographs, we see Cézanne standing before his easel and painting the mountain. Again! It was the view we can see in most of Cézanne's late views of Mont Sainte-Victoire, including the painting that concerns us here, which is now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In this work, Cézanne divides his composition into three roughly equal horizontal sections, which extend across the three-foot wide canvas. Our viewpoint is elevated. Closest to us lies a band of foliage and houses; next, rough patches of yellow ochre, emerald, and viridian green suggest the patchwork of an expansive plain and extend the foreground's color scheme into the middleground; and above, in contrasting blues, violets and greys, we see the "craggy mountain" surrounded by sky. The blues seen in this section also accent the rest of

the work while, conversely, touches of green enliven the sky and mountain.



Detail, Paul Cézanne, Mont Sainte-Victoire, oil on canvas, 1902-04

In other words, Cézanne introduced subtle adjustments in order to avoid too simple a scheme. So the peak of the mountain is pushed just to the right of center, and the horizon line inclines gently upwards from left to right. In fact, a complicated counterpoint of diagonals can be found in each of the work's bands, in the roofs of the houses, in the lines of the mountain, and in the arrangement of the patches in the plain, which connect foreground to background and lead the eye back.

Cézanne evokes a deep, panoramic scene and the atmosphere that fills and unifies this space. But it is absolutely characteristic of his art that we also remain acutely aware of the painting as a fairly rough, if deftly,

worked surface. Flatness coexists with depth and we find ourselves caught between these two poles—now more aware of one, now the other. The mountainous landscape is both within our reach, yet far away.

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Paul
Cézanne, *Mont
Sainte-Victoire
with Large
Pine*, oil on
canvas, c. 1887

Comparing the Philadelphia canvas with some of Cézanne's other views of Mont Sainte-Victoire and with photos of the area can help us to grasp some of the perceptual subtleties and challenges of the work.

Take the left side of the mountain. Though the outermost contour is immediately apparent, inside of it one can also discern a

second line (or, more accurately, a series of lines and edges). The two converge just shy of the mountaintop. The area between this outer contour and the interior line or ridge demarcates a distinctive spatial plane; this slope recedes away from us and connects to the larger mountain range lying behind the sheer face. Attend to this area, and the mountain seems to gain volume. It becomes less of an irregular triangle and more of a complicated pyramid.



Detail, Paul Cézanne, Mont Sainte-Victoire, oil on canvas, 1902-04

Or look again at the painting's most obvious focus of interest, the top of the mountain. Cézanne's other works show that the mountain has a kind of double peak, with a slightly higher point to the left side and a lower one to the right. At first glance, the Philadelphia canvas seems to contradict this: the mountain's truncated apex appears to rise slightly from left to right. But a closer

look reveals that Cézanne does respect topography. The small triangular patch of light gray—actually the priming of the canvas—can be read as belonging to the space immediately above the mountain or perhaps as a cloud behind it. Thus it is the gray and light blue brushstrokes immediately below this patch that describe the downward slant of the mountain top.

Curiously, in one respect, our point-of-view is actually a little misleading. At an elevation of 3104 feet (946 meters), the left peak is not the highest point, but merely appears to so from Les Lauves. A huge iron cross—la croix de Provence—was erected on this spot in the early 1870s, the fourth to be placed there. Though visible from afar, the cross appears in none of Cézanne's depictions of the mountain.

Cézanne had presumably stood on this summit, or these summits, several times. He had thoroughly explored the countryside around Aix, first during youthful rambles with his friends and later as a plein-air artist in search of motifs. And we know for certain that he had climbed to the top of the mountain as recently as 1895. Armed with these experiences, he could have estimated the distance from Les Lauves to the top of Mont Sainte-Victoire with some accuracy—it's about ten miles (16 kilometers) as the crow flies.

When he stood on the mountain in 1895 Cézanne had, so to speak, entered into one of his own landscapes. As he stood there, perhaps he paused to recall some of the paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire he had

already made. But, to return to Gauguin’s language, could he possibly have dreamt of the works he would go on to paint in the following decade—works like the Philadelphia landscape, with its high horizon, intense blues, and astounding vibrancy?



Detail, Paul Cézanne, Mont Sainte-Victoire, oil on canvas, 1902-04

From: Dr. Ben Harvey, “Paul Cézanne, Mont Sainte-Victoire,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/cezanne-mont-sainte-victoire/>.

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Paul Cézanne, The Card Players, oil on canvas, 1890-92

Writing near the end of his life, Paul Cézanne told an art critic that “one does not put oneself in place of the past, one only adds a new link.”¹ In other words, through his art he wanted to engage with art history but also to modify it and take it in a new direction. It is a sentiment beautifully exemplified in the artist’s five paintings of card players, which he had worked on about a decade earlier, in the early-to-mid 1890s.

1. Letter to Roger Marx, January 23, 1905, as quoted in John Reward (editor), *Paul Cézanne, Letters* (Da Capo Press, 1995), p. 313.



Caravaggio, *The Cardsharps*, oil on canvas, c. 1594

In terms of its subject matter, the series owes a clear debt to earlier depictions of card and game players by Baroque and Rococo artists such as Caravaggio (above), de

la Tour, the Le Nain brothers, and Chardin; within Cézanne's own lifetime, the theme had been taken up anew by Daumier, Meissonier, Degas, and Caillebotte.

Cézanne's "new link" lies in the way he steers the subject away from its obvious symbolic and dramatic potential: clubs and hearts, winners and losers, the cheaters and the cheated. All of this had been thoroughly explored already. Instead, Cézanne attends to other aspects of the activity. He stresses the shared social space of the card game, intimate and familiar, and the attention and concentration the game demands. Not coincidentally, these are the same psychological states demanded by the acts of making and looking at art.

The version of the card players at Metropolitan Museum of Art by Cezanne (above) is now generally thought to be the earliest of the five paintings in the series. It depicts somewhat eccentrically-proportioned figures surrounding a table: three play cards and a fourth merely observes the game, his pipe indicative of his contemplative attitude. These are rural laborers quietly and sociably passing the time in a tavern or room. Like the other works in the series, the setting in

the Met's canvas is sparse. We see a table and three chairs (two of them more implied than fully described); a full pipe rack and a swag of yellow fabric hang from the room's rear wall. The tabletop creates a clear focus of attention within the larger work. It supports the players' arms and hands, which, in turn, provide a frame for some objects: a pipe, cards, and a prominent grey rectangle—perhaps a tobacco pouch or another card.

Although this would have been a familiar scene to Cézanne, we should not imagine him setting up his easel in front of an actual card game. Instead, the artist's surviving preparatory works indicate that he studied his figures independently, one by one, and then incorporated these studies into his multi-figure compositions. Cézanne made oil studies for two of the figures in the Met's painting and both models have been identified as farm hands who worked at the Cézanne family's estate near Aix-en-Provence, the Jas de Bouffan. Even while they share the same space, Cézanne's figures retain a sense of independence and self-containment. They are engaged, as one art historian aptly put it, in a game of "collective solitaire."

And yet one detail in the Met's painting points, albeit subtly, to a sequence of events and thus to the logic of an actual game. The figure on the left of the work (modelled by one Paulin



Gustave Caillebotte, Game of Bezique, 1881

Paulet) appears to be on the verge of extending his index finger, as though about to pick up a card from the table. It's a gesture that connects thought to action, the contemplation of a hand of cards to the movement of a hand. Similar actions, although more emphatically rendered, can be found in an earlier depiction of card players by Gustave Caillebotte (right), who was both Cézanne's colleague in the Impressionist group and a collector of his work.

The particular logic of any card game determines the value of any given card within it, and so Caillebotte provides us an important clue in his title (*The Bezique Game*) and even allows his viewer to discern the colors and ranks of a few cards in his painting (a red ace, a black seven). In contrast, Cézanne's instinct is to withhold all such information—to keep his cards close to his chest. On his table, there is an upturned card holding three roughly rectangular patches of red pigment (see detail). But these patches do not closely resemble diamonds and, as though to lessen any resemblance, the card also contains similar patches of white and bluish paint.



Table and hands with cards (detail), Paul Cézanne, The Card Players, oil on canvas, 1890-92

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The tricolor of colors is picked up elsewhere in the

composition, in the blue of the workers' clothes, the white of their pipes and shirts, and in the red of the standing man's cravat. With their vivid color combinations and flat forms, playing cards may even have had aesthetic significance to Cézanne, suggesting a model for his own practice. As early as 1876, he told Camille Pissarro about a landscape motif he was working on: "It's like a playing-card," he wrote. "Red roofs over the blue sea."²

For Cézanne, the formal elements (color, shape, texture, composition) ultimately trumped narrative considerations. The marks we see on the card create a grid of compositional elements, and this places the card in relationship to two analogous grids. The first consists of the larger collection of objects on the table, where the objects and the spaces between them form a kind of tic-tac-toe pattern. The second is made up of the four figures themselves, each of whom occupies one of three distinct spatial zones (foreground, middle-ground, background) as well as one of three different lateral positions (left, center, right).

This connection between objects and figures is even more evident in the largest work in the series of card players now at the Barnes Collection in Philadelphia (see below), which Cézanne probably made soon after the

2. Letter to Camille Pissarro, July 2, 1876, as quoted in John Reward (editor), *Paul Cézanne, Letters*(Da Capo Press, 1995), p.146.

Met's painting. By adding a fifth figure at the back right, the figures now repeat the X schema formed by the objects on the table.



Paul Cézanne, *The Card Players (Les Joueurs de cartes)*, oil on canvas, 1890-92

The three remaining works in the series (Courtauld Gallery—see below, Musée d'Orsay, and a private collection) contain just two card players confronting each other in strict profile, a compositional idea that first appeared in the two foreground figures in the Met's work. In these later paintings, the table is narrower and cleared of all objects, with the exception of a centrally placed wine bottle. The two men study their cards

intently, but no movement or move appears imminent. The details of the game have receded still further and life has been stilled. Cézanne's card players, like many of his figures, occupy a space somewhere between the painting of figures and the painting of objects. They drift between different genres.



Paul Cézanne, The Card Players, oil on canvas, c. 1892-95

A New Yorker cartoon exploits this drift to humorous effect. In it, Robert Mankoff lets still-life elements and game-playing details flood back into one of the artist's two-figure works. He fills up the card players' arms and table with piles of apples, reminding us of Cézanne's close association with the fruit. "I see your Granny Smith," runs the caption, "and I raise you a Golden

Delicious” Cézanne’s famous apples are now a specific type, as though straight from a supermarket. His figures are now not merely poker-faced: they are poker players.

Though no money seems to be at stake in Cézanne’s card games, commerce was certainly involved in the creation of the piece. By the 1890s, Cézanne was independently wealthy; he could comfortably afford to pay his models to pose and the resulting works were made out of industrially produced pigments usually applied to commercially manufactured, standard-size canvases (a “no. 25” in the case of the Met’s work). Around the same time he finished the series, the artist struck up a relationship with a Parisian picture dealer, Ambroise Vollard, who then became the first owner of the Met’s canvas. Vollard’s business ledgers record that he made a tidy profit from the work, buying it for 250 francs and, in early 1900, selling it for 4,500. The enduring appeal of Cézanne’s card players, though, may owe something to the way the five paintings provide a distinct contrast to the modern capitalism that surrounded their creation. If life can seem increasingly fast, superficial, and mercenary, then perhaps some consolation can be found here—in our prolonged engagement with handmade canvases showing a timeless, rooted, and sociable pastime.

Adapted from: Dr. Ben Harvey, “Paul Cézanne, *The Card Players*,” in *Smarthistory*, November 20, 2015, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/paul-cezanne-the-card-players/>.
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22. Chapter 10 - Georges Seurat

Post-Impressionism

KYLEE SEMENOFF

Chapter audio recording available here:



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Georges Seurat, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of la Grande Jatte*, oil on canvas, 1884

When creating something like a piece of art, an original concept or a creative piece, the artist can often be left behind or even shadowed by their work. Being recognized for your effort and the trouble that goes into creating something is amazing, but it is often that what an artist has created it what ends up being well known to the public. Sometimes a creation is so popular that the artist is a secondary thought, or they are compared to someone who has created something similar. This is where Georges Seurat can be an interesting topic. It could be argued that while his style of pointillism is well known, he is not necessarily the first image that comes to someone's mind. Seurat is often compared to his contemporaries however, Andre Salmon says, "his name should be pronounced alone. Between him and his contemporaries, Signac

and Cross, there is only a chronological relationship”¹ Even though Seurat was one of the first Post-Impressionists, Van Gogh and Cezanne can take up slightly more of the spotlight or Seurat and his works are compared but Salmon is right in saying there is only really a comparison in when they lived. Seurat is a master and creator of this style and should be recognized more for it. While Seurat is often compared to his contemporaries, it is important that we as reader and viewers take steps to acknowledge where he is different and unique through looking at his attitude towards art, use of science and colour theory as well as his contributions to the Neo-impressionists movement despite now engaging much with the art community.



Georges Seurat, *Bathers at Asnières*, oil on canvas, 1884

1. Andre Salmon, "Georges Seurat," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* Vol. 37, No. 210. (1920): 115, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/861087>

Looking back at the French Art community of the 19th century, it was dominated by a veil of judgement towards artists and their creations. One's stance and opinions on an artist's work could elevate or decrease an artist's exposure. While critics were looking at many different aspects of a painting while making their reports and articles, creating a new style would attract a lot of attention in a gallery show and opportunities to look down on the artist. The irony though is this is arguably why some artists are more well known because they tried something different and received judgement. Seurat is a prime example how this works. With his new use of the pointillism techniques, he painted his first Neo-Impressionist painting *Bathers* which was rejected by the Salon due to the style but caught the eye of Paul Signac at the Salon des Independents where Seurat continued to display his work.² Seurat helped lead the Neo-impressionist movement which should already set him apart from his contemporaries. However he was relatively lesser known compared to them. Seurat was proud in his position of the leader of the new movement but was protective of his role.³ He was a recluse and often was secretive due to his beliefs that his technique was being corrupted by other artists.⁴ This led to him being relatively unknown until long after his death. However, once his work was more known outside of France, his paintings started to become collectors' pieces. One reason he became popular

2. Russell T. Clement and Annick Houzé, *Neo-impressionist Painters: A Sourcebook on Georges Seurat, Camille Pissarro, Paul Signac, Théo Van Rysselberghe, Henri Edmond Cross, Charles Angrand, Maximilien Luce, and Albert Dubois-Pillet* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), 63.
3. Clement and Houzé, *Neo-Impressionist Painters*, 64.
4. Clement and Houzé, *Neo-Impressionist Painters*, 64.

in death was probably due to his views of the artists around him and his reclusion, since this likely is how he was able to paint over two hundred and forty oil paintings a little over nine years. With this large collection, his work spread in the years after his death.

While his contemporaries, such as Van Gogh and Cezanne, have their own unique styles, Seurat use of a logical science and optical manipulation was a mastery of its own. With his techniques of pointillism, Seurat helped to pioneer a movement but kept his use of colour ground in logic. Seurat used the works and writings of Eugene Delacroix along with other theorists and aesthetics of the time. He read Ogden Rood's book *Modern Chromatics* and adapted his colour wheel and system of color harmonies in his new style of painting, the first work with this being *Bathers*.⁵ It was this new style that started his short journey with the Neo-Impressionist painters. John Gage described Seurat by saying "there can be little doubt that the painter himself nailed his flag firmly to the mast of technical innovation."⁶

5. Clement and Houz , *Neo-Impressionist Painters*, 64.

6. John Gage, "The Technique of Seurat: A Reappraisal," *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987): xx, accessed October 13, 2020, doi:10.2307/3051065.



Georges Seurat, *L'Écho* (study for *Bathers at Asnières*), charcoal on paper, 1883-84

Seurat first started playing around with this style with drawings as he experimented with light and shadow.⁷ This allowed him to perfect his techniques while using light and shadow while painting his future works. His drawings were also a way to learn more about him as at the time, friends and colleagues described his love for drawing, saying he would “craze about the art and turn to it when he was down”.⁸ These drawing were key to developing his style. Seurat work with his style

of is also what one could describe as very manipulating to the eye and this becomes what his paintings are well known for.

7. Norma Broude, *Seurat in Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1978), 59.

8. Jodi Hauptman, *Georges Seurat: The Drawings* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 10

The fact that the images are made from thousands of dots of paint that came together to form an image from a distance. Every time he went to a new canvas, he continued to improve his technique and improve his use of coloured dots. Gage describes “viewing distance, the relationship of contrasts to mixtures in the structure of the surface, and the perceived relationship of hues and values” as being the keys to Seurat pointillism technique and a way to consider his paintings.⁹ Seurat’s style and how he put so much work into developing it



Georges Seurat, *The Eiffel Tower*, oil on canvas, 1889

was the start of many style and movements and deserves to be recognized.

Georges Seurat was a revolutionary artist whose style was new and whose technique left marks on the art community. Seurat was one of the leaders of the Neo-Impressionist movement and to look into the future, gave influence to Cubism with his used of colour and style.¹⁰ With his relatively short amount of life, Seurat had managed

9. John Gage, "The Technique of Seurat: A Reappraisal," *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987): xx, accessed October 13, 2020, doi:10.2307/3051065.

10. Andre Salmon, "Georges Seurat," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* Vol. 37, No. 210. (1920): 115, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/861087>

to accomplish so much while at the same time kept many things hidden. He was met with some walls put up by art critics and still managed to make himself known, even if some of that recognition came a while after his death. With two hundred and forty paintings under his belt and his role as a Neo-Impressionist leader that he coveted dearly; Georges Seurat will forever remain a staple of the art community. As people learn about him, they should try to think about and understand his methods and life accomplishments.



Georges Seurat, *Circus Sideshow (Parade de Cirque)*, oil on canvas, 1887-88

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23. Chapter 10 - Paul Signac

Post-Impressionism

MAKAYLA BERNIER

Audio recording of chapter available here:

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Paul Signac, *In the Time of Harmony: the Golden Age is not in the Past, it is in the Future*, oil on canvas, 1893–95

Paul Signac (1863–1935) was a French painter who was one of the

leading figures of Neo-Impressionism.¹ Alongside other artists of the century, including Georges Seurat, Signac helped create the art ideals of the Neo-Impressionist era. Neo-Impressionism was an art movement of the 19th century, which focused on French paintings and the improvement of Impressionism through a systematic approach of form and color, which led to the development of the pointillist technique.² Signac used this technique, and many others within his art. Throughout his career, Signac was publicly open about his political views. His art often reflected his political opinions, which was anarchism, and this was included within his art to spread his message and opinions to the art population. Signac's art expressed his anarchist views, and followed a certain aesthetic, all with its own reasoning.

Signac's art was based on aesthetic harmony. It revolved around mingling aspects of Neo-Impressionism, science, and anarchism. When he was working on his art pieces, all three of these aspects played a role in the development of his pieces, which made them unique, and his own piece of work. His process was a "technical and stylistic" one in order to ensure it revolved around his ideals.³

1. "Signac, Paul," *Gale Biographies: Popular People*, edited by Gale Cengage Learning, Gale, 2018, http://ezproxy.ardc.talonline.ca/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/galegbpp/signac_paul/0?institutionId=2645.
2. "Neo-impressionism," Oxford Languages, accessed October 14, 2020, Google dictionary.
3. Robyn S Roslak, "The politics of aesthetic harmony: Neo-Impressionism, science, and anarchism," *Art Bulletin* 73, no. 3 (1991): 381. <https://ezproxy.ardc.talonline.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/>

His goal in revolving his art around his ideals was to “create visual harmony through the application of paint according to certain scientific principles.”⁴ By creating art around scientific principles, Signac was able to make art pieces that turned out more vivid and real. His paintings created pictures that involved “fields of color that, while always appearing finely divided to the eye, nevertheless emerge[d] as unified and harmonious in the final analysis.”⁵ All while making his art pieces aesthetically pleasing, he ensured it was socially significant to his political ideals of anarchism. The Neo-Impressionist artists, Signac included, did not want to resort to aggressive behaviour to exploit their beliefs, and so they used their art to express themselves and their ideals instead. The way in which Signac used his art to express himself was by using “strongly accentuated brush strokes” in order to form harmony in the picture as a whole.⁶ By including this technique in his art, Signac “paralleled the individualistic yet communal spirit of communist-anarchism,” which is what he was fighting against.⁷ He was able to provide his political beliefs in his art to fight for change, rather than become aggressive for change. Through looking at the science aspect of the art, it was believed by Signac, and other anarchist artists, that by “[creating] paintings infused with a scientific aesthetic that they imagined possessed the power to promote in a viewer the condition of moral harmony, and presumably through it the possibility of social harmony as well,” and exemplifies exactly what Signac was fighting for in his art.⁸ The aesthetic harmony of the art was also

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4. Roslak, 381.

5. Roslak, 382.

6. Roslak, 383.

7. Roslak, 383.

8. Roslak, “The politics of aesthetic harmony,” 385.

seen in the explicit deployment of two systems that worked together. The deployment of “divisionism and decorative pattern” of the art allowed Signac to hope he could “initiate contemporary viewers into the aesthetic and social harmony of an anarcho communist future”.⁹ Signac’s approach to his art allowed him to get his political message across to the population who viewed his art, and gave him the chance to fight for his beliefs in a peaceful way. His work, as said by Signac himself, “includes a general harmony and a moral harmony” due to its “constant observation of contrast, its rational composition, and its aesthetic language of colors.”¹⁰

9. Katherine Brion, “Paul Signac’s Decorative Propaganda of the 1890s,” *RIHA Journal* 0044, (2012): 1, <https://doaj.org/article/c85f3bbff394430cba5a1b22006fd18e>.

10. Roslak, 382.



Paul Signac, *Le Démolisseur*, oil on canvas, 1897-1899

One of the important pieces painted by Signac was *Le Démolisseur*. By looking at this piece in depth, we can come to understand how Signac represented his political thoughts into his art. This piece was painted between 1897 and 1899. The analysis of this piece allows the viewers to understand “Signac’s creative and intellectual development” and “gives a sense of the complexities and ragged conceptual edges of the interaction between Neo-Impressionism and anarchism.”¹¹ *Le Démolisseur* is “undoubtedly to be interpreted as the worker demolishing the capitalist state”.¹² Neo-

Impressionism is not a one way street, different artists of the time saw it and interpreted it in their own ways. But for Signac, it “involved an interlocking network of values” which were demonstrated by the techniques that were “innovative, scientific

11. Richard Thomson, “Ruins, Rhetoric, and Revolution: Paul Signac’s *Le Démolisseur* and Anarchism in the 1890s,” *Art History* 36, no. 2 (2013): 367, doi: 10.1111/1467-8365.12005.
12. Robert L Herbert, and Herbet, "Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished Letters of Pissarro, Signac and Others - I," *The Burlington Magazine* 102, no. 692 (1960): 479, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/873246>.

and rational.”¹³ Even with the terrorism that unfolded in the early 1890s, Signac’s position was almost certainly against terror, and this left him to advocate his political ideals through his art.¹⁴ Through his development as an artist, Signac created the painting *Le Démolisseur*. This piece of art exemplifies Signac’s rhetorical turn of phrase that was said in an article for *La Révolte* about giving a “solid blow of the pick to the old social edifice.”¹⁵ The piece itself was a painting of a “muscular worker, stripped to the waist, hewing at the fabric of a building with a pick axe.”¹⁶ *Le Démolisseur* provides a dynamic and moral momentum, regarding the main worker’s form as a left handed posture and this opposed the “rubble of bourgeois capitalism to the sheer force of anarchism.”¹⁷ The painting itself was large in size, allowing for clear detail within the image and the colours used. The light pink colours used to represent dawn gave the image a cold feel, and cast a shadowy look on the bottom.¹⁸ The section of the painting that stands out the most is the foreground. The foreground is equipped with the manly figure. He is “wielding his pick” and “fills half the picture space with his energetic, determined action.”¹⁹ The character is exuding energy through his muscular body, demonstrating that he is in heroic mode.²⁰ These pictorial elements provide understanding towards Signac’s meaning of the painting. The meaning being destruction is done in order to

13. Thomson, 375.

14. Thomson, 375.

15. Thomson, 378.

16. Thomson, 378.

17. Thomson, 380.

18. Thomson, 381.

19. Thomson, “Ruins, Rhetoric, and Revolution,” 381.

20. Thomson, 381.

construct an anarchist future.²¹ It represents the process of how destruction (of a certain ideal) can lead to the construction of a new ideal. The construction is referenced to by the crane in the background of the image. By breaking down an old building (or ideal), new ideals can start to show light, and take the place of the old. This is what Signac believed in, and he used this painting to encapsulate this idea of his anarchists beliefs. In order for anarchism to take place, the old ways must be destroyed and buried.

Signac also used geography as a means to portray his anarchist beliefs. In general, when he created paintings regarding geographical locations, he would receive his inspiration from the southern shore of France. By creating his paintings around the southern shore of France, it allowed for him to appropriate “the conventions of pastoral landscape painting to his anarchists goals to envision a paradisaical future.”²² Signac moved to St. Tropez in order to continue making paintings of the southern shore. He would paint the north and south shore as juxtaposing pastorals which promoted a left-wing vision of the Mediterranean shore.²³ This art created surrounds the shore, bringing to light his anarchists beliefs. They also “assimilated [his] hopes for a utopian society,” where anarchism would thrive.²⁴ By using geography as a way to explore and share his political opinions, Signac was able to compare the north and south shores and relate them in a way that influences anarchism.

21. Thomson, 381.

22. Anne Dymond, “A Politicized Pastoral: Signac and the Cultural Geography of Mediterranean France.” *The Art Bulletin* 85, no. 2 (2003): 353, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177348>.

23. Dymond, 353.

24. Robert L Herbert, and Herbet, “Artists and Anarchism, 480.

His comparisons would bring light to the new ideals he wished to be implemented and eliminate the old ways of life.

From Neo-Impressionism, science and anarchism, to looking at a specific painting (*Le Démolisseur*), to the cultural geography used in his art, Signac used his art to promote anarchism. His art was produced by the use of “contrasting principles”, and the “manner of divided tones for optical mixture”.²⁵ He also created his art around the “honest portrayal of the life of the humble [and how it] could serve the cause by exposing the injustices and inequalities of the existing social order” and at the same time “their artistic merits could educate the workers and prepare them for the richer existence promised by an anarchist future”.²⁶ In reference to his cultural geography paintings, he “[articulates] his individuality as a painter and an anarchist ideal in the depiction of individuals working for the collective good.”²⁷ Signac was an artist who portrayed his ideals in many different ways, but always through his art. He often used similar techniques in order to help keep his ideas consistent, and truly be able to portray anarchism in his paintings. Signac was an important artist in the Neo-Impressionist era due to his ability to portray his anarchists beliefs in his artwork.

25. José Argüelles, "Paul Signac's "Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones and Colors, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890, Opus 217," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28, no. 1 (1969): 51-52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/428908>.
26. Robert L Herbert, and Herbet, 478.
27. Thomson, “Ruins, Rhetoric and Revolution,” 376.



Paul Signac, *The Port of Saint-Tropez*, oil on canvas, 1901

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24. Chapter 10 - Odilon Redon

Odilon Redon: Influence on Art History and Symbolic Artwork

HAILEE SHARYK

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Well known for his symbolism and mysticism within his artwork, Odilon Redon, was born in 1840 in Bordeaux, France.[1] At just a mere 10 years old, Redon won a prize for one of his drawings, helping kickstart his creative mind and passion for art.[2] Redon began his career as an abstract and symbolist artist prior to the Franco-Prussian War; sculpting, drawing, and beginning to learn the process of etching and lithography.[3]



Redon, Odilon. "The Crying Spider." 1881. Drawing in Charcoal. One of many drawings to become a part of his Noir lithograph series. A lone human-spider is depicted in front of a blank space, with a sad gaze, and a singular tear. Large emotions. Sad. Melancholy. One of many of Redon's mythical like creatures he referred to as his "monsters".

Then, in 1878, Redon joined the army to help fight in the Franco-Prussian War, putting a pause to his artistic endeavors.^[4] It was not until many years after the war when Redon no longer served the army, did he begin to become recognized for his artwork, especially for his lithographic prints he referred to as the "Noirs".^[5] Redon greatly influenced art history through the use of his lithographs, and his unique perspective on life and art can also be viewed symbolically through his work.

Odilon Redon was not a traditional artist for his time. For his most famous work, Redon used etching and lithography techniques to publish his drawings known as "Noirs", which was not a popular medium for artists to use in the 1880's.^[6] However, Redon's use of this technique and his rise to popularity did influence the French art community to begin using lithography as a more common art medium. This method of copying his drawings allowed for the increased distribution of his artwork, allowing for an increased income and exposure to his artwork.^[7] Not only did Redon use an uncommon technique for artists to recreate and redistribute his visions on paper, but the way he drew and constructed his Noir drawings were also unique as well. He only used the colour black, and he worked almost exclusively in charcoal.^[8] By using only black, Redon was able to create images that held strong and intense emotions. Yet, by using the charcoal in

soft and bold lines, he was able to tell a story through the contrast of the various lines and strokes.

Why did Redon choose on black for his lithographs?

Redon stated: “One must respect black. Nothing prostitutes it. It does not please the eye and it awakens no sensuality. It is the agent of the mind far more than the integral part of the artist’s fantasy.”^[9]

In addition to using unusual techniques and colours, Redon created images that were symbolic by incorporating his own personal interests and inquiries into his creative imagery. With the advances of empirical enquiry within the sciences, and new concepts like



Odilon Redon, Il y eut peut-etre une vision premiere essayee dans la fleur (There was perhaps a first vision attempted in the flower), 1883, lithograph

astrophysics replacing old ideals in 1860, things within society were ever-changing and unpredictable.^[10] Redon was attracted to the invisible and unknown forces of the world, man’s lack of understanding or control over these forces, and the implications it could have on himself and humanity.^[11] His curiosity brings acknowledgement to the metaphysical world, the cosmos, mythological stories, nodes to Buddhism, consciousness, and even Christianity.^[12] When presenting these ideas and themes within in his work, he does so in an almost simplistic, but unassuming way. The time and attention spent to detail did not lie in his brushstrokes, but in the meanings behind the strokes. Although his artwork is not simple in its construction, Redon does not find the need to draw extremely realistic drawings with many details. He uses the basic building blocks to get an idea or story across. The image itself seems

simple in comparison to the grandiose feelings he can communicate in fewer brushstrokes than most artists of his time.



Odilon Redon, *La Mort – Mon ironie depasse toutes les autres!* (Death – My iron surpasses all others!), 1889, lithograph

Around the 1870's, Redon began to explore the cosmological and spiritual side of life throughout his artwork when the mystery and mysticism of Symbolist's work was at its height.^[13] When discussing his own artwork, Redon describes it as “putting the logic of the visible to the service of the invisible” and uses his minds eye to create imaginary beings with material reason.^[14] His artwork is not intended for the viewer to have a pleasant, enjoyable, visual experience, but for them to ignite a different framework of thought, contemplation,

mystery, and curiosity instead. Redon often spoke about how his artwork did not obey the laws of life and nature, and he put his full self in his works and the creation of his monsters.

In Redon's work, *Dans le Reve: Germination* (translates to: Germination from in The Dream), using only black and the contrast of the white paper, disembodied heads are pictured floating within a black abyss. Starting from a large portrait at the top of the print, then scaling down in size as they disperse throughout the dark space. This gives the lithograph a cosmological and atmospheric feeling, as well as a sense of melancholy. Yet, despite the melancholic energy the white and black contrast around the largest head and portrait gives it an illuminated, light feeling. When investigating the image closer, the eyes of the largest head look down upon the smaller, more skull-like faces. The skull-like faces

have their eyes looking all about, leaving the viewer with a sense of confusion and chaos – they are unsure where to look. The floating heads may represent life, or one’s soul as they float around the unknown. Amongst the floating heads are smaller, white circles. These may be more floating heads or souls, or even stars. As a symbolist artist, this image could be a cosmological rendition of birth, life, and germination itself. Redon prided himself in “exploit[ing] mental imagery rather than [the] visual experience” and mentions that his drawings are meant to inspire others, not to define things.[15]

After 1900, Redon abandoned lithography for more abstract art with distinct colour palettes.[16] Although Redon almost exclusively drew in charcoal using only black, later in his life he began to take up painting and pastels.[17] At a first glance, the colours chosen seem almost out of place in comparison to traditional



Odilon Redon, Portrait of Violette Heymann, 1910, pastel,

works of its time. However, with Redon’s symbolistic background, these colours are chosen and placed very articulately. He drew portraits of his wife and son, using splashes of colour that appear to be out of place in comparison to the rest of the image to show abstract emotions. Random spots of blue or orange in various corners can be seen in renditions of his family members.



Odilon Redon, *Flowers*, 1909, oil on canvas

Redon also had a collection of oil paintings just before he passed in 1916 of realistic vases of flowers.^[18] These pieces really show how talented of an artist Redon was, that he was an artist who could “art” like no other artists from his lifetime. The symbolism Redon used embodied mystery; evoking intense emotions but leaving

the “why” up to the viewer to figure out as the symbolism was never explicit. His diverse talents and spiritual outlook on life not only greatly influenced Redon’s work, but art history itself with his unique creatures and the use of lithographs as a mean of reproduction and distribution of his art.

To see Odilon Redon’s *Dans le Reve: Germination* from 1879 check out this webpage from the Museum of Modern Art:

Odilon Redon, *Dans le Reve: Germination*, 1879, lithograph with chine appliqué <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/6/316>

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25. Chapter 10 - Henri Matisse

Henri Matisse and Modern Art

TAYLOR DENNIS

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Henri Matisse, *The Joy of Live*, oil on canvas, 1905-06

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. At least that's what they always told us, right? When Henri Matisse began as an artist, artwork was predominately celebrated for realism and the historical scenes they depicted. There were much more objective, rigid ideas of what made art "good". Matisse however, started off with classical art knowledge and worked backward to elicit a modern take of the subject. Henri Matisse went on to influence the concept and definition of modernism in his art and in his life. This is demonstrated in his letters with Walter Pach, his transition to cut-out art, and the careful planning he put into his work.



Henri Matisse, *Goldfish*, oil on canvas, 1911

Modernism is all about breaking away from classical ideals and paradigms. Which was exactly what Matisse did. He devolved his work, changing proportions, focal points, colours, and mediums to elicit emotion in the audience. Some of his collections demonstrated this progression, like *Interior with Goldfish* and *Goldfish and Palette* where Matisse started off with a room scene where the goldfish merely was, and then made the goldfish the focal point and the room around it abstract. He demonstrates this again with

Young Sailor I and *Young Sailor*

II, where she starts off in *Young Sailor I* with a more tradition and realistic portrait and decomposes it to be flatter, less dimensional, and far more modern. *Young Sailor II*, while far less realistic is a soulful and expressive capturing of the young fisherman which was become far more famous than the former.

In addition to the work he created that influenced other artists he founded the Matisse Academy and coached other artists in modern techniques, as seen in his letters to Walter Pach.¹ In one of his later letters Matisse writes “a modern painting has no need for a frame”, after Pach wrote Matisse asking what frame he should use for one of his works.² From these letters we can clearly see that Matisse had well developed ideas of what



Henri Matisse, *Young Sailor II*, oil on canvas, 1906

modernism could be and was eager to influence other artists as they helped develop the style. He also had his own academy for young artists in France where he taught them and influenced their art for many years.

Part of Matisse's modern work was the use of different mediums, Matisse created an extensive cut out art collection. Sometimes described as “drawing (or painting) with scissors” because of his

1. Henri Matisse, Gail Levin, and John Cauman. Researching at the Archives of American Art: HENRI MATISSE'S LETTERS TO WALTER PACH. Archives of American Art Journal: 2010, 49, no. ½: 28-41.
2. Henri Matisse, Gail Levin, and John Cauman. Researching at the Archives of American Art: HENRI MATISSE'S LETTERS TO WALTER PACH. Archives of American Art Journal: 2010, 49, no. ½: 28-41.

artistry and ability to capture form and evoke emotion.³ His work in cut-out art began when he was bed-ridden with cancer.⁴ Like, the style of modernism, Matisse adapted and took on this new form of expressing his artistic vision rather than allowing himself to be held back by the cultural ideals around what art should be. This act alone gives me so much respect for Matisse, and his courageous creative vision. He made more than 200 cut outs during his time and as he went, they grew in size and grandeur, many of which were installed on walls. He felt this time was ‘his second life’ and this work reflects the joy he had for the world around him.⁵

While modern art was often seen as a less developed or sophisticated form than traditional styles, Matisse put great care and attention into his work. He created works that appeared spontaneous but were actually carefully crafted and designed. Matisse studied the female form and particularly, the movement of the body dancing, so much so that his work has even been compared to a dancer on display. Sue Karen Smith in her article: *Masterworks in Progress: Exploring the Mind, and Work, of Henri Matisse* wrote, “Like a toned dancer, Matisse could produce his work only after submitting to an arduous process.”⁶ As we can see from his extensive sketches and drawing, Matisse put great care and attention into every element of his work to capture more than just the realistic scene a like many of the painters before him. And in

3. Weston Neville. “Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs.” *Craft Arts International*: 2014, no. 92: 69.
4. Weston Neville. “Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs.” *Craft Arts International*: 2014, no. 92: 69.
5. Weston Neville. “Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs.” *Craft Arts International*: 2014, no. 92: 69.
6. Weston Neville. “Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs.” *Craft Arts International*: 2014, no. 92: 69.

his later cut-out work, the many pinholes reveal the same thing, that Matisse adjusted and adapted his pieces many times before they were glued down.⁷ Although his work looked spontaneous and sometimes abstract, Matisse was had a precise vision and often restarted projects if they weren't quite right.

In the end, Henri Matisse not only created influential and modern works, but he embodied the ideals himself. He was a living example of resilience when he transitioned too cut-out work in his illness, and he brought life and happiness into his art. Since his time, art has progressed a long way and is respected as subjective and challenging, Matisse helped fuel that change. Matisse was adaptive, creative, and passionate about capturing the essence of everyday life and displaying it for us to enjoy.

My Favourite Henri Matisse

While I love all the cut outs, my favourite is the blue nude collection: standing, sitting, and hair in the wind. They're so carefree and raw without being obscene. I feel the emotion: distress, exhaustion, and joy when I look at them. They feel carefree, seen and beloved but not exposed, at least not shamefully. They are presented honestly but not at expense of themselves.

I can only imagine that this is exactly how Henri wanted me to see them. He must have seen so much beauty and grace around him to capture the world with the colours and bold lines of his cut-outs. I am glad that we get to enjoy his perspective and outlook on life in his work to this day. Thanks Henri.

To see Matisse's Blue Nude II from 1952 check out this webpage from the Museum of Modern Art:

7. Weston Neville. "Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs." Craft Arts International: 2014, no. 92: 69.

MoMA, “Henri Matisse – Blue Nude II, 1952,” from *Henri Matisse – The Cut-Outs Exhibition*, Oct 12, 2014–Feb 10, 2015, <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/6/316>

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26. Chapter 10 - Edward Mitchell Bannister

Post-Impressionism

EMILY BECKER

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https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_p1DcVasGVkaR0ecpWKnMEiA6AS_r1bD/view?usp=sharing



Edward Mitchell Bannister, *Untitled*, charcoal and chalk on paper, ca. 1885.

When I had started researching Edward M. Bannister I had originally thought that finding information about a man born around the same time as photographic documentation would be easy to find. If we are able to keep knowledge and information from thousands of years ago, a man who lived only one-hundred-and-fifty years ago would be even easier to find out about. However, it would seem that due to his African American heritage his fame was buried in history.

Bannister was born in 1828 in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada, his mother Hannah Alexander Bannister was a free Canadian black, and his father was a Barbados native.¹ Both passed when he was young, first his father when Bannister was only a toddler then his mother in 1844 his teen years.² Before his mother passed Bannister recalls that she had coddled his growing affection for art, encouraging him to draw and color in his spare time.³ He did have an older brother who was of age to live on his own, so with the passing of their parents his brother moved away to Boston, USA, leaving Bannister in the care of a white foster family.⁴ He was under the care of Mr. Harris Hatch, who was a wealthy lawyer in St. Andrews which ended up an opportunity for Bannister that he did not look down.⁵ He was able to enjoy the luxuries of his

1. "Edward Mitchell Bannister," *Smithsonian American Art Museum*, accessed September 17, 2020, <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/edward-mitchell-bannister-226>.
2. Smithsonian.
3. Anthony Joyette, "Three Great Black Canadian Artists," *Gale OneFile*: CPI.Q, 2014, <https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.ardc.talonline.ca/apps/doc/A393211753/CPI?u=red68720&sid-CPI&xid-430a07d4>.
4. Joyette, "Three Great Black Canadian Artists".
5. Joyette.

new home and used his time and available resources that was Mr. Hatch's house and library to study and copy images from the books and paintings all around him.⁶



Edward Mitchell Bannister, Palmer River, oil on canvas, 1885

As Bannister grew into adulthood, he did the customary thing for young men in the Maritimes and took a job at sea though he had never given up his desire to become an artist, and every time the ship would port in Boston and New York Bannister would take it upon himself to use his little

bit of free time visiting galleries and museums.⁷ In 1848 Bannister took the plunge and moved to Boston where he dipped his toes in different artistic jobs like barbering and photograph tinting.⁸ Bannister ended up obtaining a job as a hairstylist in one of Christiana Cartreaux's salons for Boston's elite, she took an interest in Bannister's passion for creating and the two fell in love and wed in 1857.⁹ After the wedding, with his new wife's support he left working at the salon and started as a full-time artist.

In 1871 the two moved to Providence, Rhode Island where Cartreaux was originally from, to live out the rest of their days, though they never had children they stayed busy by creating and being activists in their community. They held benefits for the soldiers who had opted to serve in the Civil War without pay instead of accepting the lower pay for black men. The Bannisters' efforts

6. Joyette.

7. Joyette.

8. Joyette.

9. Joyette.

along with the efforts of those of the Boston Colored Ladies' Sanitary Commission helped to support soldiers of color and their families as they boycott the pay discrimination for more than a year.¹⁰ According to *African American Lives*, a collection of biographies of noteworthy Black Americans, Edward Bannister reportedly said of his wife in his later years:

“I would have made out very poorly had it not been for her, and my greatest successes have come through her, either through the criticism of my pictures, or the advice she would give me in the matter of placing them in public”.¹¹

Bannister enrolled in evening classes at the local Lowell Institute and started creating at



Edward Mitchell Bannister,
Newspaper Boy, oil on canvas, 1869

10. Tatiana Walk-Morris, "You've Probably Never Heard Of This Black Beauty Hero – But Here's Why You Need To," *Bustle*, February 9, 2020, <https://www.bustle.com/p/madame-christiana-carteaux-bannister-is-the-black-beauty-hero-you-havent-heard-of-7984997>.
11. Tatiana Walk-Morris.

the Boston Studio Building.¹² Although he did not receive extensive academic training, Bannister was able to study under William Rimmer; sculptor and painter, who was an instructor at Lowell at the time.¹³ Not many of Bannister's works from the 1850's and 1860's have survived leaving scholars with little to speculate at when it comes to Bannister's early style.¹⁴ However, it is clear through his many pieces that he was a persistent experimenter and though primarily is known for his landscapes, he created many other paintings of black portraits, biblical scenes, still life's, and other genres.¹⁵ He also wrote the manuscript, *The Artist and His Critics* (1886) which indicated that he developed his own artistic theory in Transcendentalism.¹⁶ This ideology centered around Ralph Waldo Emerson, which was flourishing by the 1850's, operated with a sense that the new era was at hand and urged that each person in society finds, in the words of Emerson "an original relation to the universe", sought through solitude in nature and in writing, or in Bannister's case, in his paintings.¹⁷ Bannister found inspiration from other landscape artists, notably William Morris Hunt and the Barbizon School which Hunt had learned his skills from.¹⁸

12. "Edward Mitchell Bannister," Smithsonian.

13. Smithsonian.

14. Smithsonian.

15. Smithsonian.

16. Traci Lee Costa, "Edward Mitchell Bannister and the Aesthetics of Idealism," *Roger Williams University* (2017), 8. http://docs.rwu.edu/aah_theses/1.

17. Russell Goodman, "Transcendentalism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last modified August 30, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/transcendentalism/>.

18. Anthony Joyette, "Three Great Black Canadian Artists".



Edward Mitchell Bannister, *Driving the Cows Home*, oil on canvas, 1881

The style of Bannister's works are true to the characteristics of Transcendentalist ideology and Barbizon School imagery, showing a desire for equality by containing no social or racial overtones within his work, as well as showing self-reliance and optimism through beautiful

bucolic scenes. He worked mostly with oil and watercolor paints, he found solitude in the nature around his home, and created literally hundreds of land and seascapes. Bannister's mid-period landscapes of the 1870's were executed with heavy impasto and few details while later landscapes of the 1880's-90's use a gentler impasto and loosely applied broken color, similar to impressionist techniques.¹⁹ Attracted to picturesque motifs, he was able to evoke tranquil moods with his paintings, which became a hallmark of his style, as he portrayed nature as a calm and submissive force.²⁰

Bannister's name rose to fame in 1876 when he entered his oil landscape "Under the Oaks", which has since been lost, into the first National Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, and it won the first-prize bronze medal.²¹ The judges 'reconsidered' the award when they found that Bannister was black, but the other white competitors upheld the decision, making Bannister the first African American to receive a national award.²² At first, I did not think that white men of the 19th century would stand behind a black man as they had, since the world today is still very racist, however, Bannister was a respected man of high social standing in his society,

19. "Edward Mitchell Bannister," Smithsonian.

20. Smithsonian.

21. Smithsonian.

22. Smithsonian.

skin color aside. Fellow artist and friend John Nelson Arnold wrote about Bannister saying:

“He went to nature with a poet’s feeling, skies, rocks, trees and distances were all absorbed and distilled through the alembic of his soul and projected upon the canvas with virile force and a poetic beauty that will in time place him in the front rank of American artists.”²³

In 1880 Bannister and three other Providence painters founded the Providence Art Club which inducted twelve other members, and the group went on to lay the foundation for the educational institute now known as Rhode Island School of Design.²⁴ Bannister’s wife Christiana went on to lead the efforts to establish a home for aging women of color in Providence, known today as Bannister Nursing Care Center where she herself spent her last years before passing in 1903.²⁵ In 1901 Bannister passed suddenly during a church prayer meeting, and shortly after his death the Providence Art Club exhibited one hundred and one of Bannister’s paintings owned by Providence collectors.²⁶ Bannister’s grave plot is rather extensive marked by a granite boulder ten feet high, relieved with a carving of an artist palette, Bannister’s name, and a pipe, also adorned with a bronze plaque that reads:

23. Liza Kirwin, “Regional Reports,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 24, no. 1 (1984): 30, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://link-gale-com.exproxy.ardc.talonline.ca/apps/doc/A393211753/CPI?u=red68720&sid=CPI&xid=430a07d4>
24. “Edward Mitchell Bannister,” Smithsonian.
25. Tatiana Walk-Morris, “You’ve Probably Never Heard Of This Black Beauty Hero – But Here’s Why You Need To”.
26. Smithsonian.

“ This pure and lofty soul ... who, while he portrayed nature, walked with God.”²⁷

All this information that made Edward Mitchell Bannister check out to be an amazing part of Canadian and American history had been shrouded and lost due to the same racism that he spent a lot of his life trying to fight. Black artists are in the collections of every great museum, just maybe not put out on show.²⁸ He was able to win the hearts of society back in the 19th century with his timeless landscapes, he could easily do it again today if our museums did our artists of color throughout history, the justice they deserve.

27. Smithsonian.

28. "America's Art Museums and the Broad Canvas of American Racial Thought," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Summer 1997, 49.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2962897>.



Edward Mitchell Bannister, Boston Street Scene (Boston Common), oil on canvas, 1898-99

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27. Chapter II - Art Nouveau

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Victor Horta, Tassel House, Brussels, 1893

Victor Horta's Tassel House in Brussels is one of the earliest examples of the Art Nouveau style. Horta designed the building's architecture and every detail of the interior decoration and furnishings, making the house into a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total art work in multiple media. The repeated use of organically curved, undulating lines – often called whiplash lines – unifies the design, repeating in the floor tiles, wall painting, ironwork, and even in the structure of the spiraling staircase and surging entryways.



Victor Horta, *Horta House*,
detail of column

Art Nouveau artists and designers created a completely new style of decoration, rejecting the widespread nineteenth-century practice of copying historical, and especially Classical and Medieval, forms. While each designer invented their own decorative motifs, organic, often plant-based, forms and the whiplash line became hallmarks of Art Nouveau design, appearing in multiple media and contexts.

Art Nouveau architects and designers also embraced modern building materials, notably cast iron. Cast iron

is both stronger and more flexible than traditional wood or stone and allows for much thinner supports, like the slender columns in Horta's own house. Iron support structures also made it possible to create curved facades with large windows, which became prominent elements in many Art Nouveau buildings, including Horta's *Maison du Peuple*.

Art Nouveau is only one of many names given to this international *fin-de-siècle* style, which had many regional variations.

The term (French for "New Art") derives from *La Maison de L'Art*

Nouveau, the Paris art

gallery run by Siegfried Bing, who was a major promoter of the new style, as well as of Japonisme and the Nabis.

In addition to marketing individual objects, Bing commissioned artists and designers to create model rooms in his gallery to display Art Nouveau ensembles that included furniture, wallpaper, carpets, and paintings.



Victor Horta, *Maison du Peuple*, Brussels, 1899 (demolished)



Left: Siegfried Bing's Maison de l'Art Nouveau, Paris (demolished); right: Eugène Gaillard, Bedroom for the Pavillon de l'Art Nouveau Bing, 1900

In addition to Paris, major centers of the modern fin-de-siècle style included Brussels, Glasgow, Munich (where it was known as Jugendstil or Youth Style), and Vienna (where it was called

French Art Nouveau was linked to government-supported efforts to expand the decorative arts and associated craft industries. Private residences and luxury objects were the focus for many Art Nouveau designers, including Emile Gallé, who made both decorative glass and furniture. Despite the close association of Art Nouveau with luxury items, the style is also apparent in urban design, public buildings, and art for the masses. Horta's *Maison du Peuple* was the center for the socialist Belgian Workers' Party, and among the most famous examples of Art Nouveau style are Hector Guimard's entrances to the Paris Metro, the city's new public transportation system.

Secession
Style).
Barcelona's
Catalan
Modernis
m,
especially
Antoni
Gaudi's
architectu
re and
decorative
designs, is
also
closely
related to
Art
Nouveau.



Hector Guimard, Porte Dauphine,
Metro entrance, 1900, Paris



Hector Guimard, Bastille Métro Pavilion entrance, 1900, demolished in 1962

Like Horta's designs for the Tassel House, Guimard used cast iron and invented stylized motifs based on plant forms. Industrially fabricated in modular units, the cast iron was relatively cheap, but it was painted green to resemble oxidized copper, a much more expensive material that adds a sense of luxury to the elaborate entrances. The use of modules made it possible to individualize each station while maintaining stylistic unity throughout the city.

Art Nouveau designs were also widely visible in the advertising posters that decorated Paris. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Alphonse Mucha, and Jules Chéret depicted famous *fin-de-siècle* performers such as Jane Avril, Sarah Bernhardt, and Loïe Fuller. Their posters stylized the female body and used sinuous whiplash lines, decorative plant forms, and flattened abstract shapes to create vivid decorative images.



Left: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril*, lithograph, 1893;
Center: Alphonse Mucha, *La Dame aux Camélias*,
lithograph, 1896; Right: Jules Chéret, *La Loie Fuller*,
lithograph, 1893

The English designer William Morris and the English Arts and Crafts Movement that he initiated were a key influence on many designers associated with Art Nouveau. Morris promoted a holistic approach to interior decoration as well as advocating for the social importance of design and high quality craftwork. In 1907 the art Nouveau furniture designer (heavily influenced by Morris in his work), Henry van de Velde founded the School of Arts and Crafts in Weimar, Germany, which promoted similar values. It later became the famous modern art and design school, the Bauhaus, which maintained the tradition of integrating art, craft, and design for the improvement of society.



Left: Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Room de Luxe, Willow Tea Room, Glasgow, 1903; Right: Margaret Macdonald, O ye that walk in Willowwood, decorative panel for Willow Tea Room, gesso and beads on burlap, 1903

Curving whiplash lines are a common characteristic of French and Belgian Art Nouveau, but architects and artists working in Glasgow developed a more rectilinear style exemplified by the Willow Tea Room. Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald designed every component of the tea room, including the architecture, stained glass, decorative panels, furniture, cutlery, and staff uniforms. In keeping with Art Nouveau artists elsewhere they developed original stylized design motifs based on plant forms, but theirs were rigidly contained within elongated rectangles rather than expanding into supple curves.

Art Nouveau was fashionable for only a brief period around the year 1900, but the movement was part of a long-term modern trend that rejected historicism and Academicism and embraced new materials and original forms. In the modern period artists and designers increasingly recognized that the health and well-being of society and all its members were supported and enhanced by well-designed objects, buildings, and spaces. The unified designs of Art Nouveau presaged the innovations of the Bauhaus as well as architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier.

Excerpted from: Dr. Charles Cramer and Dr. Kim Grant, “Art Nouveau,” in *Smarthistory*, June 14, 2020, <https://smarthistory.org/art-nouveau/>.

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28. Chapter 11 - Antoni Gaudi (part 1)

A Brief Summary: Antoni Gaudi

REBECCA SEVIGNY

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Antoni Gaudi, Casa Batlló, 1904

You know, there are artists who are well known for one of their many artworks. Like, everyone in general knows a specific piece out of the multitude creations the artist worked on during their lifetime. Take Antoni Gaudi for example, Antoni Gaudi was a Spanish architect known for his distinctive style in architecture during the late 1800s up to the 1920s in Barcelona, Spain. Some may have heard of him for his incomplete building – La Sagrada Familia – because he died before he ever got the chance to finish. [Okay, that

sounds a bit depressing even without much context about how the architect passed away. That's besides the point.] Some may recognise the building (or buildings) from looking through pictures on the internet. Some may never heard of the artist at all and have no clue on what I'm talking about. And that's okay. It's important to learn about the artist's work and their impact on the art world because an artist's work can influence other artists – even their not well known projects and incomplete ones too.

As mentioned before, Antoni Gaudi was indeed a Spanish architect born on June 25, 1852, in Reus, Spain; with numerous projects completed; and not completed during his lifetime. Though, one of Gaudi's strongest aspects to stand out was indeed his consistent elements in the modernesque style consisting of free flowing movements inspired by nature and his own construction techniques he used throughout his lifetime.

During his lifetime, Gaudi had developed and changed his own style a few times, while art throughout Europe was generally more

invested in the Victorian style. Basically he was one of the founders influencing the Catalan movement in the art world at the time. For instance, Gaudi's style at one point was in a "Mudejar" style – a style consisting of a mix of both Spanish and Arabic artistic elements – to Neo-Gothic and even testing out Victorian and baroque styles in some of his earlier works.¹ It wasn't until later on in his life he created his own modernesque style which can be considered to defy the traditional convention classification for stylizing. The main elements that are consistent throughout his work are his use of freedom, form, colour, texture, and organic unity. Although those elements are consistent, Gaudi's style mostly emphasizes more of the natural movements and forms – and they're inspired from his experiences growing up with nature around his birth place in Catalonia before moving to Barcelona. Construction wise, he developed a type of structure method he uses is the "equilibrated" – a structure designed to stand on its own without the use of internal support² – when creating both the Casa Batllo and the Casa Mila in his later life.

One of his completed works is the construction of two "apartments" called the Casa Batllo [constructed in 1904-06] and Casa Mila [constructed in 1905-10]. Well, the Casa Batllo was actually owned by a businessman, Josep Batllo, and granted Gaudi permission with full creative freedom in



Antoni Gaudi, Casa Mila Rooftop, 1906

1. "Antoni Gaudi," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antoni-Gaudi>
2. "Antoni Gaudi Biography," A&E Television Networks, <https://www.biography.com/artist/antoni-gaudi>

reconstructing the interior of the building. At one point, Batllo wanted the building to be destroyed but Gaudi convinced him to keep the exterior of the building.³ Afterwards, the Casa Batllo was used for renting rooms out and owned by the Batllo family. Over the years after Batllo's death, The Casa Batllo was owned by different businessmen in the 1950s until later owned by the Bernat family in the 1990s and is restored to its original designs to this day.



Antoni Gaudi, Casa Mila, 1906

On the other hand, The Casa Mila [also known as “La Pedrera”] was technically a residential house owned by a couple, Pere Mila and Roser Segimon, and Gaudi was commissioned to build their new home. However, during the construction there were a few complications such as Gaudi

spending a bit over budget – which caused a bit of financial conflict between Gaudi and Mila and was taken to court. Gaudi eventually won the court case and Mila had to pay the fines for the property. Although Casa Mila was used to rent out rooms after completion, the public actually ridiculed the structure due to the unusual design and the relationship between Gaudi and Mila.⁴ Casa Mila was also owned by different business companies and was generally used as another apartment complex. Currently, both the Casa Mila and Casa

3. “The history of Casa Batllo,” Casa Batllo Newsletter, <https://www.casabatllo.es/en/antoni-gaudi/casa-batllo/history/>
4. “La Pedrera - Casa Mila, History,” Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera, <https://www.lapedrera.com/en/la-pedrera/history>

Batllo have become popular historical sights for tourists to visit in Barcelona.

The most popular historical sight that Gaudi built was the Sagrada Familia – which was the one project he never had the chance to finish. Gaudi was working on the building in around 1883 and continued construction during the 1920s. Well, technically he ended up committed to completing the church due to the deaths and passing of family and friends throughout the 1910s; so he



Antoni Gaudi, Passion façade of the Sagrada Familia, 1882-present

focused more on his work in the 1920s.⁵ He was invested in completing the project to the point he moved his studio inside the building, declined any more commissions, plus changing personal habits like not taking care of his appearance and devoted more of catholic beliefs. If you think about it, the 1920s was around the time when work was starting to become a struggle prior to heading into the great depression and far after the First World War. It's no wonder that his dedication, although impressive and determined, ended up costing his life.

In the last year of his life, Gaudi got hit by a tram when he was heading to his daily confessional at the Sant Felip Neri Church. He basically was left unconscious after getting hit for a couple

5. “Gaudi’s Accidental Death: Why the great architect was mistaken for a beggar,” The Mental Floss, <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/72482/gaudis-accidental-death-why-great-architect-was-mistaken-beggar>

days until he was taken to the Santa Creu hospital. Gaudi died on June 10, 1926 from his injuries and later buried at the crypt of the Sagrada Familia a couple days later.⁶ What's even more depressing was passerbys didn't recognise the artist after being struck – so basically people ignored him because of his appearance (Gaudi was neglecting his appearance, focusing more on his work than social gatherings, and devoting more of a religious sentiment) and he didn't have any identification on him.⁷ It wasn't until the Priest of the Sagrada Familia recognised him at the hospital. After his death, his legacy would continue on through other architects working on his work and his tourists visiting to see Gaudi's monuments.



Antoni Gaudi, Sagrada Familia columns, 1882-present

6. "The traffic accident that killed Gaudi," Rome Reports, <https://www.barcelonayellow.com/bcn-tourist/785-how-when-where-did-gaudi-die>
7. "Where did Gaudi die?" BarcelonaYellow, <https://www.barcelonayellow.com/bcn-tourist/785-how-when-where-did-gaudi-die>

To this day, Gaudi's work became important pieces of art in the Art world as one of the few founders for modernism – especially in this day of age. Antoni Gaudi was indeed a Spanish architect. Yet the impact he participated during and after his lifetime affected the art world in more ways than one – even by a little.



Antoni Gaudi, *Sagrada Família Vault of the Nave*, 1882-present

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29. Chapter 11 - Antoni Gaudí (part 2)

Sagrada Família



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Although Antoni Gaudí was influenced by John Ruskin's analysis of the Gothic early in his career, he sought an authentic Catalan style at a time, the late 19th

century, when this region (currently mostly in northern Spain) was experiencing a resurgence of cultural and political pride. Ruskin, an English critic, rejected ancient classical forms in favor of the Gothic's expressive, even grotesque qualities. This interest in the value of medieval architecture resulted in Gaudí being put in charge of the design of *Sagrada Família* (*Sacred Family*) shortly after construction had begun.

Gaudí was a deeply religious Catholic whose ecstatic and brilliantly complex fantasies of organic geometry are given concrete form throughout the church. Historians have identified numerous influences especially within the northeast façade, the only part of the church he directly supervised. The remainder of the church, including three of the southwest transept's four spires, are based on his design but were completed after Gaudí's death in 1926. These include African mud architecture, Gothic, Expressionist, of course a variant of Art Nouveau that emphasizes marine forms.



Nave ceiling, Antoni Gaudí, Church of the Sagrada Família or Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família, 1882- (consecrated 2010, but still under construction)

The iconographic and structural programs of the church are complex but its plan is based on the traditional basilica cruciform found in nearly all medieval cathedrals. However, unlike many these churches, Sagrada Família is not built on an east-west axis. Instead, the church follows the diagonal orientation that defines so much of Barcelona, placing the church on a southeast-northwest axis.



*The Glory Façade
(southeast):*

This will eventually be church's main façade and entrance. As with the transept entrances, it holds a triple portal dedicated to charity, faith, and hope. The façade itself is dedicated to mankind in relation to the divine order.

*View of the Passion Façade,
Josep Maria Subirachs
(sculptor), Antoni Gaudí, Church
of the Sagrada Família or
Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la
Sagrada Família, 1882-
(consecrated 2010, but still
under construction)*

*The Passion Façade
(southwest):*



*Detail of the Passion Façade,
Josep Maria Subirachs
(sculptor), Antoni Gaudí, Church
of the Sagrada Família or
Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la
Sagrada Família, 1882-
(consecrated 2010, but still
under construction)*

Dedicated to the Passion of Christ, its four existing bell towers are between 98 and 112 meters tall and are dedicated to the apostles

James the Lesser, Bartholomew, Thomas and Philip (left to right). Josep Maria Subirachs is responsible for the façade sculpture.

The Nativity Façade (northeast):



Depicts the birth of Christ and is the only façade to be completed during Gaudi's lifetime. its four existing bell towers are between 98 and 112 meters tall and are dedicated to the saints Barnabas, Jude, Simon and Matthew (left to right).

View of the Nativity Façade, Antoni Gaudi, Church of the Sagrada Família or Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família, 1882- (consecrated 2010, but still under construction)

Ten additional belltowers (98-112 meters high) are planned though these will be overwhelmed by six towers that will be

significantly taller. Four of these towers will be dedicated to the Evangelists, one to the Virgin Mary, and the grandest, rising to 170 meters, to Jesus Christ.



Detail of the Nativity Façade, Antoni Gaudí, Church of the Sagrada Família or Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família, 1882- (consecrated 2010, but still under construction)



Sagrada Família in 1905



Sagrada Família, Facade of the Nativity, in 2002

Adapted from: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker,
“Antoni Gaudí, Sagrada Família,” in *Smarthistory*, August
9, 2015, accessed November 20,
2020, <https://smarthistory.org/gaudi-sagrada-familia/>.
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30. Chapter 11 - Aubrey Beardsley

Art Nouveau

SPENCER BEAUDOIN

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Aubrey Beardsley, The Climax from the illustrations for Salomé, 1893-4

Art is an expression that allows artists to visualize unique ideas and produce works that are appreciated for their beauty. Aubrey Beardsley's art became eminent in the 19th century when he was

inspired by Japanese woodcuts, the grotesque and the erotic which helped him develop his style. Beardsley was a controversial artist during the Art Nouveau Era because his artwork displayed erotic illustrations that were deemed unacceptable to some. Bridget Elliot claims that the females that were drawn “challenged middle-class feminine ideals of the dependent wife and mother.”¹ Some of Beardsley’s more perverse art is what led to him becoming a recognized artist. Beardsley featured naked people along with large dark areas of contrast which is how his work can be recognized. The majority of his artwork is done in ink against a white background that develops a deep contrast. Beardsley’s art challenged norms in his time by expressing his art in a sexual manner and suggesting vices, making him a controversial artist.

1. Bridget Elliot, "New and Not So "New Women" on the London Stage: Aubrey Beardsley's "Yellow Book" Images of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Réjane," *Victorian Studies*, no.1 (2020): 2.



Aubrey Beardsley, *The Peacock Skirt*, 1893

Prior to Beardsley's fame in the art community he participated in art classes to enhance his natural skills. Beardsley began to push the boundaries of his art which is described as "sharp [and] elegant"² in Sasha Dovzhyk's 'Review of Aubrey Beardsley at Tate Britain.' Dovzhyk describes Beardsley's accumulation of followers from countries such as Germany and China as "The Beardsley Craze."³ I argue that Beardsley's following not only encouraged him to push his boundaries, but figure out

where his interests lie. Illustrations such as *The Peacock Skirt* and *The Stomach Dance* are prime examples of Beardsley incorporating sexuality and Japanese culture into his drawings. *The Peacock Skirt* is one of Beardsley's more famous illustrations and it challenges sexuality and gender roles because the piece shows a dominant woman intimidating a Syrian boy. The sexually driven woman is trying to seduce and eventually devour the man with her great presence. The woman has subtle Japanese features which is something Beardsley has been influenced by in his art. This illustration is Beardsley's interpretation of Oscar Wilde's play *Salome*. Journalist Nicole Fluhr claims that "*Salomé* made [Beardsley] famous and linked his reputation to that of Oscar Wilde,

2. Sasha Dovzhyk, "Review of Aubrey Beardsley at Tate Britain." *Open Library of Humanities* 19, no. 30 (2020): 1.
3. Dovzhyk, "Review of Aubrey Beardsley at Tate Britain" 1.

whose arrest two months later cost Beardsley his job as art editor for *The Yellow Book*.⁴

Beardsley's illustration *The Stomach Dance*, portrays a woman dancing which is shown using a variation of swirls and curved lines. She has an ambiguous body that is open to interpretation. The woman appears to have Japanese facial features which is something Beardsley incorporates into many of his illustrations. The woman appears indifferent as the creature strums its instrument as if it is luring her into the water. With regard to Wilde, it is argued that he "was



Aubrey Beardsley, The Stomach Dance, 1893-4

arrested for gross indecency (that is, homosexuality) in 1895, and imprisoned, following his famous trial, shortly thereafter."⁵ Perhaps Beardsley was making a statement by continuing to produce art that was deemed sexualized and queer so that he could support Wilde and his lifestyle by incorporating these elements into his art.

One's image in the art community can take years to build and seconds to shatter. The 19th century was a time where people were pressured to live traditional lifestyles and stay in between the lines.

4. Nicole Fluhr, "Queer Reverence': Aubrey Beardsley's Venus and Tannhäuser." *Cahiers Victoriens et Édouardiens*, no. 90 (2019): 1.
5. Morgan Meis, "The Faith Behind Aubrey Beardsley's Sexually Charged Art," *The New Yorker*, no. 1 (2020): 3.

Beardsley was cut from a different cloth, meaning he was an advocate for alternative lifestyles which he expressed through his art. Donald S. Olson believes that Beardsley “battled for artistic freedom in a world of stultifying conventions and condemnations.”⁶ That being said, I maintain that although Beardsley was “fighting against the narrowmindedness of a public”⁷ while confronting his own truth. Beardsley’s sexuality remains in question, however, “His conversion to Roman Catholicism is another indication that he was struggling with issues of faith and redemption.”⁸ During this time Beardsley had his “obscene drawings [destroyed]”⁹ which suggests that he was uncomfortable with his beliefs pertaining to sexuality. In short, I believe that Beardsley had the desire to get rid of his sexually suggestive illustrations because the way society saw him had a greater impact on him than living his truth. Olson Claims that the “public that knows nothing about art except how to destroy it,”¹⁰ which adds to my argument that Beardsley’s artistic legacy needed to coincide with what the public believed so he could thrive as an artist.

The artists that we remember are the ones who made an impact in the art community and colour outside the lines. Juliana F. Duque proposes that Beardsley’s art “brought a fresh and rebellious intensity.”¹¹ Beardsley’s art faced many critics, however, he used his

6. Donald S. Olson, “The Fall of Aubrey Beardsley,” *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, no. 27 (2020): 17.

7. Olson, “The Fall of Aubrey Beardsley” 17.

8. Olson, “The Fall of Aubrey Beardsley” 17.

9. Olson, “The Fall of Aubrey Beardsley” 7.

10. Olson, “The Fall of Aubrey Beardsley” 17.

11. Juliana F. Duque, “Spaces in Time: The Influence of Aubrey Beardsley on Psychedelic Graphic Design,” *Hart*, no. 5 (2019): 15.

art to express inequalities. He was concerned about social issues such as “the inequities and hypocrisies of Victorian society.”¹² Specifically, the illustration “The Climax” features a woman staring into the eyes of a severed head while asserting dominance over him. This symbolizes the power of “femme fatale.”¹³ Lots of Beardsley’s illustrations demonstrate women freely expressing their gender. These women are empowered and are typically larger than the men to show their dominance. Beardsley portrayed men in his artwork to be struggling for power and lusting for wealth. He shows men corrupting each other intellectually which led to him facing criticism. Beardsley defended his art in the statement “People hate to see their darting vices depicted [but] vice is terrible and it should be depicted.”¹⁴ Beardsley is a highly recognized artist who not only produces visually pleasing illustrations, he also seeps his art with his political views.

With regard to Beardsley’s illustrations and place in the art community it is safe to say that his art challenged norms and reflected his personal beliefs in relation to gender. The majority of Beardsley’s artwork suggests vices and reflects dominance which is why his work is seen as controversial. Beardsley’s illustrations are bold and show deep contrasts which is how his art can be identified. I believe his openness towards gender and sexuality can be appreciated more in the 21st century than the 19th century because we live in a society that is far more accepting to lifestyles. He demonstrates his intellectual side by portraying his political

12. Duque, “Spaces in Time: The Influence of Aubrey Beardsley on Psychedelic Graphic Design” 15.
13. Duque, “Spaces in Time: The Influence of Aubrey Beardsley on Psychedelic Graphic Design” 15.
14. Erin Smith, “The Art of Aubrey Beardsley: A Fin De Siecle Critique of Victorian Society,” *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 4.

beliefs in his illustrations which adds a bold flavour to the artwork. Sexuality is something that is to be celebrated which is exactly what Beardsley demonstrated in his art.



Aubrey Beardsley, John the Baptist and Salome, 1893-4

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3I. Chapter 11 - Symbolism

Art Nouveau

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19thcenturyart/?p=403#audio-403-1](https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=403#audio-403-1)



Paul Sérusier, The Talisman, oil on panel, 1888

In the fall of 1888 Paul Sérusier spent an afternoon with Paul Gauguin in Brittany painting a small landscape on a cigar box lid. He followed Gauguin's instructions to emphasize the colors he saw by using paint directly from the tube with little or no mixing. The result was a patchwork design of vivid colors only vaguely

suggestive of its subject, trees on a riverbank.

Later in Paris Sérusier showed the landscape to fellow art students at the Académie Julian who saw it as an artistic revelation. They named the painting "The Talisman" and formed a group called the Nabis, after the Hebrew word for prophet. In addition to Sérusier the group included Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard, Maurice Denis, Paul Ranson, and Ker-Xavier Roussel, as well as others. In the 1890s the Nabis were one of the most innovative Post-Impressionist groups working in Paris.

Like Gauguin and many other artists of the period, the Nabis were engaged with the spiritual and mystical concerns associated with fin-de-siècle Symbolism.

Sérusier's *Portrait of Paul Ranson in Nabi Costume*

documents their early interest in esoterica and occult ceremonies.

The simplified style Sérusier used derived from Gauguin's

Synthetism but was only

one of the styles associated with Symbolism. It forms a marked contrast to the academic naturalism used by many fin-de-siècle Symbolist painters such as Jean Delville, who depicted the Symbolist writer Joséphin Péladan in robes and accompanied by ceremonial objects and symbols, much as Sérusier portrayed Paul Ranson.



Paul Sérusier, Portrait of Paul Ranson in Nabi Costume, oil on canvas, 1890



Jean Delville, Portrait of the Grand Master of the Rosicrucians in Choir Dress, oil on canvas, 1895

Symbolism began as a literary movement with the 1886 publication of Jean Moréas' Symbolist manifesto in the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*. It quickly became a kind of catch-all term for a widespread fin-de-siècle aesthetic attitude that embraced the spiritual significance of art while rejecting science and objectivity. Symbolist artists favored idealism over realism, suggestion over specificity, and subjective expression over objective representation. They employed a variety of styles and approaches, including both traditional naturalism and modern techniques associated with Post-Impressionism. Many of the painters who exhibited at the popular Symbolist Salon of the Rose + Cross organized by Péladan in the 1890s favored a highly-detailed naturalism. These included Delville and Fernand Khnopff, whose dream-like images became prominent examples of Symbolist art.

Nabi painters used the modern Synthetist style of Gauguin, which emphasized abstract form, to convey spiritual meaning as well as a means of suggestion and personal expression. Maurice Denis was the most prominent art theorist associated with the Nabis, and one of his early statements became a famous touchstone of formalist modernism:

Emphasis on color and surface design is a primary characteristic of Nabi painting, which conveys emotion and meaning through abstract formal relations.

“A painting — before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote — is essentially a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order.”¹



Maurice Denis, *Climbing to Calvary*, oil on canvas, 1889

In Denis' *Climbing to Calvary* the simple dark shapes of black-robed nuns rise diagonally towards a large cross carried by a barely-defined red Christ. One nun reaches out to embrace Christ at the top of the hill, and a strip of bright sky tops off the scene. The basic forms convey the combination of mourning and hope that Christians associate with Christ's death and resurrection. The scene is timeless, containing elements

1. Maurice Denis, “Definition of neo-traditionalism” (1890), in Jean-Paul Bouillon, ed., *Le Ciel et l'arcadie* (Paris: Hermann, 1993), p. 5

of the present (the nuns) and the past (Mary embracing Christ on the way to the Crucifixion, the dark silhouette of a crowd of Roman soldiers over the hill). The figure of Christ suggests both the nuns' spiritual vision of Christ carrying the cross, similar to Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon*, and a Good Friday procession re-enacting the Crucifixion.

A comparison of Denis' painting with Carlos Schwabe's *Death and the Gravedigger* shows two very different approaches to Symbolist painting. In Denis' work, the forms are reduced and simplified to mostly flat color areas. Basic symbols, shapes and their relationships convey meaning: the Christian cross, black for mourning, red for the blood of sacrifice, the upward movement towards light and resurrection.



Carlos Schwabe, *Death and the Gravedigger*, watercolor and gouache on paper, c. 1895

Schwabe uses similar compositional devices to convey the theme of death and resurrection; both paintings show darkness and symbolic death at the bottom of the painting, light and resurrection rise above. Unlike Denis, however, Schwabe employs a traditional naturalistic technique that records many details based on careful observation. The figures and location are so specific

that they suggest the illustration of a particular scene in a story. Denis by contrast depicts a more generalized, anonymous image of death and Christian resurrection.

Symbolism is perhaps easiest to recognize in artworks that present known symbols, such as the Christian cross, or overtly symbolic meanings through recognizable themes such as youth, old age, love, death, etc. In addition to Denis' *Climbing to Calvary*, many well-known Post-Impressionist works use conventional symbolism in this way, including Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon*. Symbolism was also, however, associated with both a conception of art as subjective expression and the capacity of art to suggest profound meanings indirectly. As a result, many artworks that lack obvious symbols or clear symbolic significance are also associated with Symbolism.

Although some Symbolist works depict ordinary leisure activity (a typical subject of Impressionist painting), the mood is usually melancholy and dream-like, in keeping with Symbolist attitudes. And regardless of the style of painting and technique, a mysterious dream-like quality is typical of much Symbolist painting (regardless of its style).

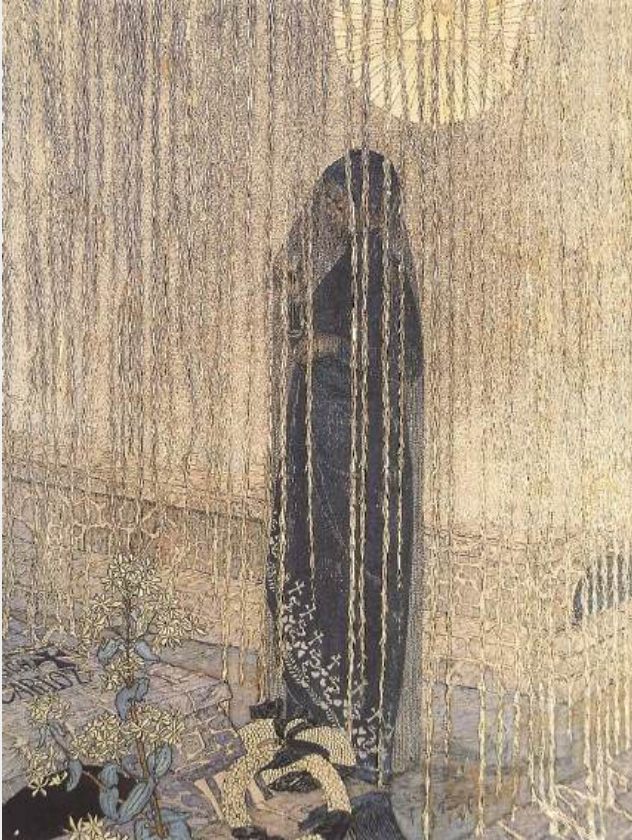


Fernand Khnopff, Memories (Lawn Tennis), pastel on paper mounted on canvas, 1889

A Symbolist work in a more traditional naturalistic style is Fernand Khnopff's *Memories*, in which several women holding racquets stand on a lawn seemingly lost in thought. Khnopff has turned an ordinary modern subject into an image that suggests greater depth and significance without specifying any particular meaning.

The subjects of Nabi paintings varied from the overt, often religious, symbolism of Maurice Denis to scenes of contemporary urban and suburban life depicted by Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard. Whatever their subject, though, the Nabis relied on the formal qualities of color, pattern, and surface design to enhance the dreamy moods and profound meanings of Symbolist art. Their emphasis on the capacity of formal elements to

convey meaning and emotion was an early contribution to the developments that led to abstract art.



Carlos Schwabe, Death Day, c 1890

Excerpted and Adapted from: Dr. Charles Cramer and Dr. Kim Grant, “The Nabis and Symbolism,” in *Smarthistory*, June 14, 2020, accessed November 20,

2020, <https://smarthistory.org/nabis-symbolism/>.

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32. Chapter II - Gustave Moreau

The Mystic Moreau

ERIC WALTERS

Audio recording of this chapter is available here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lqvWpzUoeq-1os-RXR-rpuDuys0n09C/view?usp=sharing>

Gustave Moreau was born in Paris, France on April 4, 1826, to parents extremely passionate about the arts¹. In 1841, before going on a trip with his mother to Italy, his architect Father Louis, gave Moreau a sketchbook and ordered him to fill it by the time he came home². When Moreau returned, he exhibited a newfound passion for drawing.³ Around 1844, after devoting all his free time

1. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 24-29.
2. Selz, Jean. "Gustave Moreau." New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1979: 8-22.
3. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 24-29

to practicing, Moreau was accepted into École des Beaux-Arts to be taught by painter François-Édouard Picot.⁴ It was not until Moreau left the school and Picot's teaching that he could be free to submerge himself in such things as spirituality, myth, literature, color, and decor, which we know him for today.

As a young artist, Moreau began to seek inspiration for his art. In 1846, an interest in the poetic nature of history and myth started to take form. His first artwork to have been inspired by this was the pencil drawing *Sappho on the Edge of the Cliff*.⁵ Soon after, Moreau came to greatly admire two artists by the names of Eugène Delacroix and Théodore Chassériau. Eventually, Moreau became close friends with Chassériau. Painting with Chassériau inspired Moreau to work with rich color, examine literature for inspiration, and paint the same subject multiple times as Chassériau did with Hamlet.⁶ The two's friendship left a lasting impact on Moreau's style.⁷

Chassériau died suddenly in 1856, causing Moreau to lock himself in his study and focus on his work.⁸ His depression and dissatisfaction with the work he was producing inspired him to

4. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 24-29
5. Selz, Jean. "Gustave Moreau." New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1979: 8-22.
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7. Selz, Jean. "Gustave Moreau." New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1979: 8-22.
8. Schiff, Bennett. "The Many Faces of Gustave Moreau." *Smithsonian*, 1999. 100.

take a trip to Italy.⁹ Here he studied the Renaissance, as well as Greek and Roman architecture and artifacts.¹⁰ Moreau began to take even more of an interest in decor when he became fascinated by the Byzantine enamels, early mosaics, and Persian and Indian miniatures that he was exposed to.¹¹ While trying to understand the essence of some of the Italian master painters' styles, he replicated works by artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael¹². During his stay in the Italian countryside, Moreau painted several watercolor landscapes, realizing it was a medium he adored and was good at.¹³ This influenced him to create many watercolor masterpieces¹⁴.

Moreau always considered himself a history painter, although he did not accept all the conventions by which it had been categorized by the artistic establishment. He was not out to make an academic history painting, but rather one he considered to be epic. History painting at the time used an academic system of facial expressions taken from Charles le Brun's 1732 collection *Expressions des Passions de l'ame*, a system Moreau despised as he saw the theatrics of the

9. Schiff, Bennett. "The Many Faces of Gustave Moreau." *Smithsonian*, 1999. 100.
10. Schiff, Bennett. "The Many Faces of Gustave Moreau." *Smithsonian*, 1999. 100.
11. Schiff, Bennett. "The Many Faces of Gustave Moreau." *Smithsonian*, 1999. 100.
12. Schiff, Bennett. "The Many Faces of Gustave Moreau." *Smithsonian*, 1999. 100.
13. Selz, Jean. "Gustave Moreau." New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1979: 27.
14. Selz, Jean. "Gustave Moreau." New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1979: 27.

history painting as idiotic, childish and not for the pictorial form.¹⁵ This did not change the academics from viewing him as a history painter though¹⁶. A great example of his history painting is 1869's, *The Martyred Saint Sebastian*.

15. Cooke, Peter. "Gustave Moreau and the Reinvention of History Painting." *Art Bulletin*, 2008. 394. doi:10.1080/00043079.2008.10786400.
16. Cooke, Peter. "Gustave Moreau and the Reinvention of History Painting." *Art Bulletin*, 2008. 394. doi:10.1080/00043079.2008.10786400.



Gustave Moreau, *The Martyred Saint Sebastian*, oil on canvas, 1869

The art Moreau created was fueled in part by his quest for spiritual enlightenment. In his search, he researched the history of many cultures and belief systems. His focus was on Greece, India, the Orient, Judaism, Christianity, the occult, and Neo-Platonic

traditions.¹⁷ This research led Moreau to embrace Gnosticism¹⁸. Moreau may not have been following all of what the academics thought was proper in art, but one thing they could agree on was mythology and the bible being one of the most favorable themes. The intense passion he had for these themes, and the attachment to his view of history painting, led him to use archaeological documents as a reference to add to the depth of the paintings that were beginning to be hung in the Salons¹⁹.

Moreau loved using ornaments and other decorations in his art, having been inspired by his trip to Italy. When talking about the Italian masters he loved, Moreau stated they “feel that in framing the subject with a profusion of decorative formulas, they ennoble the subject.”²⁰ Moreau saw this as a great form of symbolism as he

17. Ellem, Lucy M. Grace. “Gustave Moreau and Gnosticism.” Essay. In *Religion, Literature and the Arts Project: Conference Proceedings of the Australian International Conference*, 1995: 155.

<https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/SSR/article/view/11671/10994>

18. Ellem, Lucy M. Grace. “Gustave Moreau and Gnosticism.” Essay. In *Religion, Literature and the Arts Project: Conference Proceedings of the Australian International Conference*, 1995: 155.

<https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/SSR/article/view/11671/10994>

19. Selz, Jean. “Gustave Moreau.” New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1979: 26-51.

20. Gordon, Rae Beth. “Aboli Bibelot? The Influence of the Decorative Arts on Stéphane Mallarmé and Gustave Moreau.” *Art Journal*, 1985. 105. doi:10.2307/776787.

often painted people of importance. For example, Salome's nobility is shown through the jewels on her outfit. On Salome Moreau said, "I should like to render the idea of a sibyl and religious enchantress with a pronounced character. I, therefore, conceived of the costume as a reliquary."²¹

Wanting to dive into the themes of dreaming, obsession, magic, exoticism, and extravagance, Moreau took to the character archetype of the *femme fatale*. Once again embracing his love for history, literature and myth, Moreau painted many women including Salome, Helen of Troy, and Lady Macbeth²². With lots of his depictions of women being evil, Moreau was often criticized for being a misogynist. It is worth noting that many romantic artists at this time, including poet Charles Baudelaire, often used women as a symbol of nature's force²³. It is only natural for an attraction that we cannot control to feel powerful and dangerous. Moreau himself had an interesting love life. He has been linked to Adelaide-Alexandrine Dureux, who he painted several times over decades, but there is much ambiguity if the two were actually a couple or not as he did

21. Gordon, Rae Beth. "Aboli Bibelot? The Influence of the Decorative Arts on Stéphane Mallarmé and Gustave Moreau." *Art Journal*, 1985. 105. doi:10.2307/776787.

22. "Gustave Moreau and the Eternal Feminine." NGV. National Gallery of Victoria, September 3, 2010. https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/media_release/gustave-moreau-and-the-eternal-feminine/.

23. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Rodolphe Bresdin*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co, 1961: 112-114. https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_3419_300062233.pdf

not live with her.²⁴ One could speculate that this relationship also reinforced the inspiration for the themes around the women he depicted.

The Apparition (1876) captures many of Moreau's themes perfectly. Salome is a historical biblical figure who plays the role of a *femme fatal*, she is covered in jewels as mentioned before, and the head of John the Baptist is ennobled by Moreau's use of decoration behind his floating head. Moreau was also the first to depict this scene with John's head floating, providing the viewer with a symbolic experience.²⁵ Ary Renan has said he believes Moreau was inspired by Heinrich Heine's poem *Atta Troll*, as Moreau had a copy²⁶. This was not the only time Salome made an appearance in Moreau's art as she became a recurring character throughout his career.

24. Selz, Jean. "Gustave Moreau." New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1979: 26-51.
25. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 124-126.
26. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 124-126.



Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition*, watercolor on paper, 1876

In 1891, things came full circle for Moreau when Jules-Élie Delaunay

on his deathbed asked Moreau to take over for him at École des Beaux-Arts²⁷. Here he taught young artists such as Léon Bonhomme, Edgar Maxence, and René Piot. It has been said that Moreau had a deep passion for fostering artist's personal styles.²⁸ His students loved him so much that years after his death, they put on two exhibitions in his memory, one in 1910, and the other in 1926.²⁹ When Moreau died in 1898, his students felt lost with all the new teachers who came and went attempting to fill his position. Not having the same coaching Moreau provided, lots of his students left the school.³⁰

Moreau's creations have left a lasting impact on the art world. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the poetic nature of Moreau's art would become an inspiration to the artists who began to call themselves symbolists. Just as Moreau was inspired by

27. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 211-256.
28. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 211-256.
29. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 211-256.
30. Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. "Gustave Moreau with a Catalogue of the Finished Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings." Boston, MA: New York Graphic Society, 1976: 211-256.

literature, writers and poets alike would in return become inspired by his works. Oscar Wilde wrote his play *Salome* (1893) with Moreau's art as his muse. Claude Debussy even told Victor Segalen to look to Moreau's art to fuel his creativity when he had proposed writing his opera *Orphée-Roi* (Mathieu 1976, 255-256). For an artist of any sort who wants to create anything mystic, poetic, decorative or historic, Moreau is one of the most interesting artists to seek out for inspiration.

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33. Chapter 11 - Pierre Puvis de Chavannes

Symbolism & The Academy

HANNAH MYLES

Audio recording of chapter is available here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/10cCr4rHwgguAiSeyPtBlzuGoSPURpR-e/view?usp=sharing>

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes is “held in great regard as one of the greatest muralists in his home country – and arguably in Europe.”^[1] This quote really outlines the large amount of influence Puvis de Chavannes had on artwork. He pushed boundaries, while serving as a source of inspiration for other artists. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes’ artwork caused an uproar in the Paris Salon. However, he stood up for himself and others and would not conform to the Salons traditional norms, which proved to make Pierre Puvis de Chavannes an influential figure for other artists and styles.



Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, 1869, oil on canvas

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was most well-known for his decorative mural work; however, he did other types of paintings as well. He did admire Eugene Delacroix, however, he strongly disliked romantic anarchy with “it’s disordered passions, and despised academic conventions, the timid taste and feeble ideas of the so-styled classical.”^[2] Mécistas Goldberg, an anarchist critic from the 1900s, believed that Puvis de Chavannes’ “ability to express an ideal community is linked not to what he paints but how he paints.”^[3] Puvis de Chavannes’ style is characterized by a muted color palette along with abstract linework and the unique compositional arrangements of his paintings.^[4] One of his earlier works is *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist* in 1869, this oil painting is a complex symbolic piece. Puvis de Chavannes applies muted colors throughout the piece except for around the crown of St. John’s head, which is surrounded by a narrow ray of light. Puvis de Chavannes’

subject matter varies, but often contained “religious themes, allegories, mythologies, and historical events.”^[5] *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist* is a religious theme and a historical event.



Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Summer*, 1891, oil on canvas, Esquisse pour l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes decorative mural *Summer* was one of his most recognized pieces and it represented a pivot in his career. There are two *Summer* paintings, one in the Cleveland Museum and the other in The Hotel-de-Ville of Paris. *Summer* in the Hôtel-de-Ville (city hall) of Paris depicts women participating in many different activities in a beautiful park, like a woman bathing a child, a couple in a boat, a woman nursing a baby.^[6] I think the overall feeling of this section is peace and tranquility, women are in nature relaxing and performing motherly tasks. Puvis de Chavannes also shows the beauty in the natural body too. Although, Puvis de Chavannes painted a second version of *Summer* (in The Cleveland Museum) it is quite different from the first. Puvis de Chavannes changes the composition multiple times, there is no longer the void created by the doorway as in the original, he also “simplified the

background, eliminated the three figures on the far river bank, and enclosed the three women ... in an embracing cluster of trees.”^[7] The results of the composition change push figures “closer to the viewer... as if we are now witnessing some private, dream-like vision.”^[8] I think the biggest change from the first to the second *Summer* is the more personable feeling. *Summer* in the Hôtel-de-Ville emanates the feeling of tranquility to the viewers, while *Summer* in the Cleveland Museum actually makes you feel apart of not only the painting scene but Puvis de Chavannes vision for the piece; like you have been there the whole time he was making it. The *Summer* murals seem to take one back to an older time, almost more primitive. The contrasting versions also suggest that Puvis de Chavannes was aware of the links he made between “maternal imagery and national sentiment,”^[9] as France was at the “height of pronatalist campaign meant to address fears about France’s falling population.”^[10] This is a constant theme throughout Puvis de Chavannes murals *Summer*, he has woman nursing babies, while in the French countryside. These two murals also show his ability to reimagine, be creative, and adapt similar pieces, while evoking a wide variety of feelings. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes creativity and imagination are unquestionably strong.



Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Summer*, 1891, oil on canvas, Cleveland Museum of Art

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was a prominent influence among many different artist styles including Modernism, Symbolist avant-garde, and Post-Impressionists. Some of the modernist artists he has influenced include Georges Seurat, Paul Gauguin (also considered a symbolist), and Pablo Picasso who valued Puvis



Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Hope*, oil on canvas, 1872

de Chavannes' "dreamlike themes and anti-naturalistic style of simplified, flattened forms."^[11] The Symbolists also claim Puvis de Chavannes as part of their movement because of the shared goal of "conveying feelings and ideas through direct plastic meanings."^[12] This can be seen in Puvis de Chavannes color and linework. Take for example *Hope*, he used abstract linework and the muted colors

compared to the bright white of the females dress to convey meaning[13]. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was also influenced of the avant-garde; he veered away from traditional painting styles of the Salon, like Neo-Classicism, and pushed boundaries into new modern techniques like his muted color palates and wide variety of themes. In other words, Puvis de Chavannes is characterized by an interest in the “irrational and the ambiguous, by a distrust of realism and enthusiasm for dreams and visions.”[14]



Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *The Poor Fisherman*, 1881, oil on canvas

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes stood up for movements and artists he believed in and was not going to let outside opinions effect his judgement on artwork. Puvis de Chavannes was familiar to the struggle of being an artist in France and the struggle getting work noticed by the Salon; Puvis de Chavannes work did not get accepted into the Paris Salon until 1859.[15] The Salon could make or break an artist career, however, it has a massive impact on art as a whole because “it allowed an elite organization to dictate the definition of art.”[16] This is crucial because the Paris Salon should have allowed artists to dictate art not elite and powerful organizations that possibly do not know anything about art. Puvis de Chavannes was a member on the Salon jury, however, he did not let the elite organizations have power over him when it came to artwork he believed in. In 1872 Puvis de Chavannes resigned from the Salon jury “to protest its rejection of entries of Gustave Courbet, a leader in the assault on academic painting conventions.”[17] Puvis de Chavannes related to rejected artists from the Salon because he was one of them; as many of his paintings can be viewed as “radical.” Take for example his oil painting *The Poor Fisherman*, it was viewed as quite radical and received negative feedback from the 1881 Salon exhibit, but later in 1887 was bought by the French government.[18]

A possible reason for the dislike of *The Poor Fisherman* in 1881 is the dullness, however, with more in-depth examination one can see the melancholy the piece radiates.

Puvis de Chavannes had a complex relationship with the Paris Salon. The Salon valued more traditional styles like Neo-Classicism and did not like anything seen as different. Therefore, styles like growing Impressionism and the artists of the avant-garde were often rejected. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes supported the artwork rejected by the Salon many times. In 1873 Puvis de Chavannes began “exhibiting at the galleries of Paul Durand-Ruel ... [and he] joined the campaign demanding that the state accept the gift of Manet’s *Olympia*.”^[19] Manet’s artwork was controversial much like Puvis de Chavannes’, *Olympia* was not liked by the Salon for many of the same reasons Puvis de Chavannes artwork was disliked because of its muted color and flatness. Puvis de Chavannes was not going to let an elite organization dictate the art world.

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes impact on art has been immense, his legacy represents a shift “away from representation and toward the language of formal abstraction.”^[20] He has been an influential figure in many artist styles and artists. Puvis de Chavannes did not bow to elite organizations and stood up for what he believed in. Puvis de Chavannes’ imagination was huge, his artwork escaped reality, his artwork often leaves the viewers questioning the true meaning. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes pushed art towards the imaginary, leaving naturalism behind.

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[7] Robinson, “Puvis de Chavannes’s “Summer” and the Symbolist Avant-Garde,” 8.

[8] Robinson, “Puvis de Chavannes’s “Summer” and the Symbolist Avant-Garde,” 8.

[9] Jennifer L. Shaw, “Imagining the Motherland: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France,” *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 4 (December 1997): 60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3046277>.

[10] Shaw, “Imagining the Motherland: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France,” 601.

[11] The Cleveland Museum of Art, “Summer,” accessed on October 19, 2021, [Summer | Cleveland Museum of Art \(clevelandart.org\)](https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1967.10.1).

[12] Robinson, “Puvis de Chavannes’s “Summer” and the Symbolist Avant-Garde,” 15.

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[19] Robinson, “Puvis de Chavannes’s “Summer” and the Symbolist Avant-Garde,” 4.

[20] The Art Story, “Pierre Puvis de Chavannes – Biography and Legacy,” accessed on September 26, 2021, [Puvis de Chavannes Biography, Life & Quotes | TheArtStory](https://www.theartstory.org/artist-puvis-de-chavannes-biography-life-quotes/).



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34. Chapter 11 - Arts & Crafts Movement

Art Nouveau

SHAYLA BEAUCHAMP

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William Morris (Morris & Co.), *Strawberry Thief* textile detail, 1883

The Arts and Crafts movement was a defining period in the late 19th century and early 20th, its influence granted the modern world the opportunity to finetune traditional morals to suit a new, more developed society. With these reinvented morals came new perspectives and opinions. The movement allowed artists that typically would not have had a voice to be recognized. The influx of diverse artists during the Arts and Crafts Movement allowed for the art to be influenced by many different perspectives, thus promoting unique and rare styles that otherwise would not have been spotlighted.

The Arts and Crafts movement created drastic change and spread its roots all over the world, beginning in the United Kingdom around 1860 it grew to spread its influence to the rest of Europe, American and eventually Japan by 1920.¹ “Anxieties about industrial life fueled a positive reevaluation of hand craftsmanship and precapitalist forms of culture and society”² This movement entailed many factors that catalyzed its success but the main aspect was the fear that the world had become too industrialized. “The division of labour had led to a moral and artistic collapse that could only be reversed by returning control over working practices to the craftsman.”³ Motivated by concerns that machinery was



A Wooden Pattern for Textile Printing from William Morris's Company (Morris & Co.)

1. Suichi Nakayama, “The Impact of William Morris in Japan, 1904 to the present” 1996, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1316044>.
2. Monika Obniski, “The Arts and Crafts Movement in America” 2008, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/acam/hd_acam.htm.
3. Mary Greenstead, “The Arts and Crafts Movement: exchanges between Greece and Britain (1876-1930)”

absorbing society of its true craftsmen and unique art the people began a revolution of home made, quality crafted and practical goods in order to “suppress the proliferation of cheap, mass-produced objects.⁴” The movement included architecture, painting, sculpture, furniture, ect. Social reformists began the movement with a goal of “preserving handcraft and the authenticity of the artist.⁵”

**“I do not want art for a few,
any more than I want
education for a few, or
freedom for a few.”
– William Morris.**

This movement was not developed for the rich or poor, it was created for the masses and curated in such a way that it aimed to improve the lives of everyone involved. “The craftsman was given the

freedom to select consciously or unconsciously whatever design motives forms and techniques he or she deemed appropriate – the result was a wide range of products that expressed the individual personality of the designer.⁶”

Accessed October 23, 2020. https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1110/1/Greensted10MPhil_A1a.pdf.

4. Catherine W. Zipf, *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (The University of Tennessee Press. 2007), 125
5. Peter Clericuzio, “Arts and Crafts Movement” 2017, <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/arts-and-crafts/history-and-concepts/>.
6. Catherine W. Zipf, *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement*, 5.

With no definitive style this form of art was more accepting than others. It did not require prior skills, education or knowledge. Artists were not bound to rules or styles but instead encouraged to create their own unique, handcrafted art in support of the movement and its beliefs. “The Movement had no manifesto, and is notoriously difficult to define as a style.⁷” With this open-mindedness the movement



William Morris, Design for “Trellis” wallpaper, 1862

invited artists from all ways of life and encouraged them to develop the Arts and Crafts into their own style. Contrasting art periods prior to its time the Arts and Crafts sought out less known and less established artists in order to incorporate a multitude of pieces that were authentic and created with integrity, two very important factors to this idea.

7. Mary Greenstead, “The Arts and Crafts Movement: exchanges between Greece and Britain (1876-1930)” 7.



William Morris, Design for
"Windrush" textile pattern, 1881-83

The demand for new ideas granted aspirant artists the chance to showcase their work regardless of experience or background. "The Arts and Crafts community was open to the efforts of non-professionals, encouraging the involvement of amateurs and students.⁸" The optimism held within amateur artists was a major factor in the success and influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement. With new artists came new or reworked perspectives and styles, a defining aspect of the movement. "The magazine, *The*

Studio -included -competitions for amateur artists and designers.⁹" Opportunities such as these were a big deal to undiscovered artists, if they were not born into wealth or status they were now granted a chance for their art to be recognized. If the movement and society did not hold such value to ideas of non-mechanized, authentic items there would be no need to search for such a vast amount of new and diverse artists. William Morris, "The leading champion of the Arts

8. Victoria and Albert Museum "Arts and Crafts: An Introduction" Accessed October 23, 2020, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/arts-and-crafts-an-introduction>.
9. Mary Greenstead, "The Arts and Crafts Movement: exchanges between Greece and Britain (1876-1930)" 13.

and Crafts movement.¹⁰” was a strong advocate for ideas of non-mechanized art and originality. In his pursuit to further the movement he developed schools that were aimed to assist Arts and Crafts artists. “He (Morris) had initiated a genuine revival of art industry and was now instrumental in forming a school of designers and makers.¹¹” These schools offered artists the ability to improve their skills and further their craftsmanship. This in turn furthered the movement, resulting in items that were more skilled and rare in style. If not given the opportunity to be educated and evolve their skills many of the artists from this movement may not have produced work. This school created by William Morris encouraged artists to perfect and produce their own, unique styles.

With the new inclusion of diverse artists into the scene pieces from the movement became increasingly more distinct. “For the first time, women as well as men could begin to take an active role in developing new forms of design, both as makers and consumers.¹²” The acceptance of women into the movement allowed for even further unique creations and the demand for them as well. With the addition of more feminine qualities and ideas this art assisted in the further development of the movement’s ideals. The works of the time now contained the ideas and opinions of a women. When

10. Amy Dempsey, “Arts and Crafts Movement Origins, History, Aims and Aesthetic” 2007, <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/arts-and-crafts.htm>.
11. Oscar Triggs, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (Parkstone International. 2009), 69.
12. Victoria and Albert Museum “Arts and Crafts: An Introduction” Accessed October 23, 2020, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/arts-and-crafts-an-introduction>.

these opinions are included pieces can become even more practical around the house and become further appealing to women.

Women taking a more involved roll as a consumer allowed them to have a say in the importance of Arts and Crafts products, resulting in them further assisting in the success of the movement, “Unlike other women of the time Arts and Crafts women were able to build professional careers for themselves.^{13,}” Previously it was very uncommon for a women who was not of status to be able to produce art and receive recognition. With the



Newcomb Pottery, Vase, 1902-1904

movement’s reform to society and its thoughts it now became a possibility for these women to truly be considered artists and consumers, in the world of Arts and Crafts. In doing so they gained the ability to make a meaningful contribution to society and the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The Arts and Crafts Movement brought great social and artistic reform to society. One of the contributing factors to its success was the idea that an Arts and Crafts artist did not have to possess a certain background. If amateur artists were not included in Arts and Crafts the movement would’ve been stunted with the same, manufactured pieces that began it. The newly found inclusion of

13. Catherine W. Zipf, *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement* 1.

various types of artists directly influenced the art, allowing the pieces to be extremely authentic and diverse.

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35. Chapter 11 - Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh

Art Nouveau

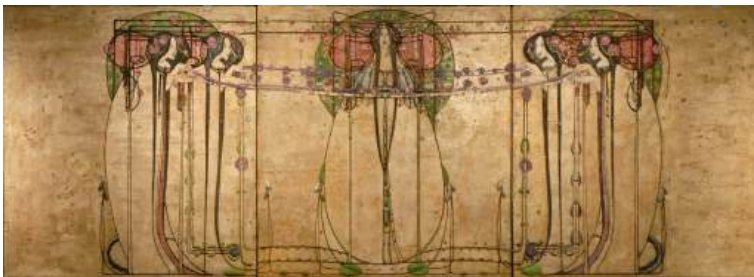
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Margaret Macdonald Macintosh, *The May Queen*, mural, 1900

Margaret Macdonald (1864-1933) was a Scottish artist who was specialized primarily in Design. She spent most of her art career

collaborating with other artists, and her collaboration work has brought a lot of scrutiny as to whether she was as skilled an artist as some claim or if she simply clung onto the success of her very skilled husband, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Many factors need to be examined to determine whether Margaret was deserving of the status of a great artist. Societal norms and any misogynistic viewpoints could have played a big part in a lot of the criticism Margaret Macdonald faced in her career and even after she passed away as well. Was she a talented artist who suffered from the opinions of critics who seemed to be against her succeeding or was she overrated and lived in the shadow of the success of her husband?



Margaret MacDonald Macintosh, *The White Rose and The Red Rose*, paint on glass, 1902

Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh started her art training with her younger sister, Frances, in 1890-1891 at the Glasgow School of Art which was one of the top art schools in Britain. They learned various art styles such as design and drawing and then moving onto metal work which both were very skilled in.¹ Over time, Margaret proved to be skilled in watercolour, metalwork, embroidery, and textiles and

she and her sister would collaborate on many pieces of work and

1. Helland, Janice. “The “New Woman” in Fin-De-Siecle Art: Frances And Margaret Macdonald”

they drew their inspiration from Celtic imagery, literature, symbolism, and folklore.²

It was during her time at Glasgow where Margaret would meet the man who would become her husband, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Margaret and her Sister, Frances, would collaborate with two men and the four of them would be called the “Glasgow Four”.³ The group would collaborate on many pieces of work, some received well and others not. Scottish Critics took offense to the conventionalized figures used in their work, labeling the group, “The Spook School.”⁴ Collaboration was big for Margaret Macdonald, more than half of her Art came from working with another Artist. In her thesis, Kristie Powell explains that collaboration was essential for any aspiring female artist.⁵ This could be due to that men were predominantly involved in all of the “important art” (architecture) so for women in design, collaborating with a male artist was a good way to get your art seen at all.



Margaret MacDonald Macintosh, *Seven Princesses*, gesso on panel, 1907

2. Panther, Patricia. " Margaret MacDonald: The Talented Other Half of Charles Rennie Mackintosh."
3. Powell, Kristie. " The Artist Couple"
4. Powell, Kristie. " The Artist Couple"
5. Powell, Kristie. " The Artist Couple"

Charles Rennie Mackintosh started at Glasgow in 1884. Margaret Macdonald and him would develop an artistic relationship with the Glasgow Four and then later the two developed a romantic relationship and started collaborating art between the two of them. They designed houses for people, focusing on not building a machine for them to live in but a work of art.⁶ They designed thirteen buildings and architectural designs, Macdonald's roles in these were her including one or more pieces to an overall theme. Charles himself vouched for her involvement in these designs and both Artists achieved their greatest success and critical claim during the peak of their collaboration with each other.⁷ Many would say Margaret Macdonald benefited from working with Mackintosh but it is clear that there was mutual benefit for the two of them. In a society that heavily favoured masculinity, one can not deny that Margaret Macdonald played a key role in her husband's success.

6. González Mínguez, María Teresa. “ Dark/
Masculine—Light/Feminine: How Charles Rennie
Mackintosh and Margaret MacDonald Changed Glasgow
School of Art ”

7. Powell. “ Artist Couple ”

When discussing the criticism Margaret Macdonald faced, one must not forget the gender norms that were common when she was an artist. Pamela H. Simpson talks about these norms in her review of the book *The Studios of Frances and Margaret Macdonald* written by Janice Helland. Pamela Simpson talks about how she believes misogyny of the critics played a role in how Margaret



Margaret MacDonald Macintosh,
Opera of the Winds, gesso on panel, c
1903

Macdonald's art was received. Architecture was deemed masculine while design was labeled as feminine and thus architecture was held to a higher standard than design was.⁸ This saw Charles Rennie Mackintosh being viewed as a hero of architecture. When critiquing their collaborated work, Margaret is already at a disadvantage when her style of art is seen as lesser to that of her husband. It does not help that her husband is also very skilled and when comparing how much she contributed, critics already see her art as less of a contribution simply because it is the feminine style of art. One would need to not critique the style of art she is creating but critique how well the art itself is. Many sources mention this patriarchal structure during this time period and if Art did not conform to that structure, this may be a reason for it not being received well by male critics.

It is well known that Margaret Macdonald was known for using symbolism in her art. Macdonald liked to do watercolour paintings, which she preferred over oil painting even though oil painting was

8. Simpson, Pamela H.. " The Studios of Frances and Margaret Macdonald ."

deemed more important or more masculine. Janice Helland discusses this symbolism and how it is representative of women during this time period, particularly the silence of women.⁹ It discusses the lack of rights women had compared to their male counterparts and the patriarchal norms that favoured masculinity over feminism. In Margaret Macdonald's work *Pool of Silence*, a woman is looking into her reflection in water and holding a finger to her mouth, asking for silence. There are three faces in this drawing and Critics had written that this drawing was the "dead figure of a beautiful woman".¹⁰ It was common for Margaret Macdonald to focus on women and death and critics agreed that this piece had fulfilled that purpose. Margaret Macdonald used her art to voice the lack of equality between men and women and this may have been why critics may have not liked her art because it challenged the norms that existed then.

Visit the National Gallery of Canada link below to see Margaret Macdonald Macintosh's *Pool of Silence* drawing:

Margaret Macdonald Macintosh, *Pool of Silence*, watercolour and gouache with other pigments on wove paper, 1913. <https://www.gallery.ca/collection/artwork/pool-of-silence>

9. Helland, Janice. "The Critics and the Arts and Crafts: The Instance of Margaret Macdonald and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Pg 252

10. Helland. 252, 253

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36. Chapter 11 - Kay Nielsen

Art Nouveau

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19thcenturyart/?p=428#audio-428-1](https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=428#audio-428-1)



Kay Nielsen, *Illustration from East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, 1914

Kay Nielsen was born in Copenhagen into an artistic family; both of his parents were actors – Nielsen’s father, Martinus Nielsen, was the director of Dagmarteater and his mother, Oda Nielsen, was one of the most celebrated actresses of her time, both at the Royal Danish Theater and at the Dagmarteater.¹ Kay Nielsen studied art in Paris at Académie Julian and Académie Colarossi from 1904 to 1911.²



Kay Nielsen – Illustration from *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, 1914

In 1914, Nielsen provided twenty-five colour plates and more than twenty-one monotone images for the children’s collection *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. The colour images for both *In Powder and Crinoline* and *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* were reproduced by a four-colour process, in contrast to many of the

1. Allan, Robin (1999). *Walt Disney and Europe* (1st ed.). John Libbey and Company, Ltd. p. 162
2. Haase, Donald, ed. (2008). *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Fairy Tales & Folk Tales*. 2 (1st ed.). Greenwood Press. p. 678

illustrations prepared by his contemporaries that characteristically utilized a traditional three-colour process. Also in that year, Nielsen produced at least three illustrations depicting scenes from the life of Joan of Arc. When published later in the 1920s, these images were associated with relevant text from *The Monk of Fife*.

While painting landscapes in the Dover area, Nielsen came into contact with The Society of Tempera Painters where he learned new skills, and was able to reduce the time involved in the painting process. In 1917 Nielsen left for New York where an exhibition of his work was held and

subsequently returned to Denmark. Together with a collaborator, Johannes Poulsen, he painted stage scenery for the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen. During this time, Nielsen also worked on an extensive suite of illustrations intended to accompany a translation of *The Arabian Nights* that had been undertaken by the Arabic scholar, Professor Arthur Christensen. According to Nielsen's own published comments, these illustrations were to be the basis of his return to book illustrations following a hiatus during World War I and the intention had been to publish the



Kay Nielsen, *Illustration from In Powder and Crinoline*, 1912

Danish version in parallel with versions for the English-speaking world and the French market. The project never came to fruition and Nielsen's illustrations remained unknown until many years after his death.

During the 1920s, Nielsen returned to stagecraft in Copenhagen designing sets and costumes for professional theater. During that time, at age 40, he married the charismatic 22-year-old Ulla Pless-Schmidt and they became a devoted couple. At this point, he was Scandinavia's most famous artist.³



Kay Nielsen, *Illustration from Of Powder and Crinoline, on the way to the dance*, 1912

Following his theatrical work in Copenhagen, Nielsen returned to contributing to illustrated books with the publication of *Fairy Tales* by Hans Andersen in 1924. That title included twelve colour plates and more than forty monotone illustrations. The colour images were prepared with integrated formal and informal borders; the

informal borders were produced in a *mille fleur* style. A year later, Nielsen provided the artwork for *Hansel and*

3. "The brilliance of Kay Nielsen now on view". Greenfield Recorder. 2019-12-05. Retrieved 2020-08-28.

Gretel and Other Stories by the Brothers Grimm which was first published with twelve colour images and over twenty detailed monotone illustrations. A further five years passed before the publication of *Red Magic*, the final title to be illustrated comprehensively by Nielsen. The 1930 version of *Red Magic* included eight colours and more than fifty monotone contributions from the Danish artist.

In 1939 Nielsen left for California and worked for Hollywood companies. A personal recommendation from Joe Grant to Walt Disney secured Nielsen a job with The Walt Disney Company.⁴ At Disney, his work was used in the *Night on Bald Mountain* and *Ave Maria* sequences of *Fantasia*.⁵ Nielsen was renowned at the Disney studio for his concept art and he contributed artwork for many Disney films, including concept paintings for a proposed adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. The adaptation was to be part of a package film containing various segments based on Andersen's fairy tales. The film, however, was not made within Nielsen's lifetime and his work went unused until production started on the 1989 film.⁶

4. Allan, p. 30

5. Johnston, Ollie; Thomas, Frank (1981). *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation* (1st ed.). Walt Disney Productions. p. 139.

6. Allan, 163; (2006) Audio Commentary by John Musker, Ron Clements, and Alan Menken Bonus material from

Nielsen worked for The Walt Disney Company for four years, from 1937 to 1941 before being let go due to budget constraints and Nielsen's slow creation process.⁷ Destitute, Nielsen died in illness and poverty, his work nearly forgotten until the 21st century.

Excerpted and adapted from: Wikipedia, (October 7 2020), s.v. "Kay Nielsen." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kay_Nielsen

The Little Mermaid: Platinum Edition [DVD]. Walt Disney Home Entertainment.

7. Haase, Donald, ed. (2008). The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Fairy Tales & Folk Tales. 2 (1st ed.). Greenwood Press. p. 678.

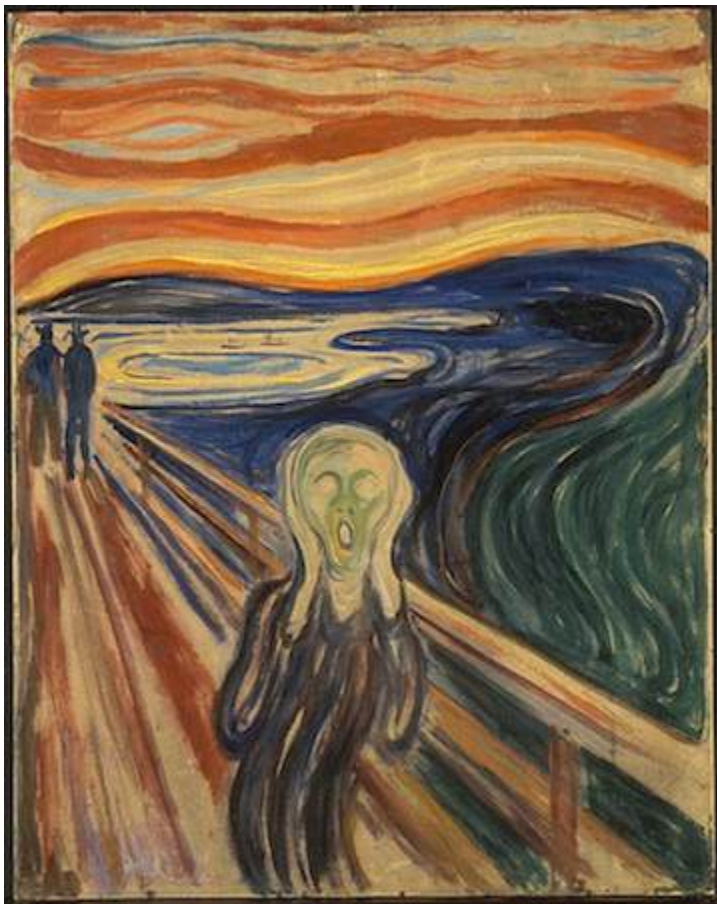
37. Chapter II - Edvard Munch

Art Nouveau

Audio recording of chapter available here:



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Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, tempera on board, 1910

Second only to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Edvard Munch's *The Scream* may be the most iconic human figure in the history of Western art. Its androgynous,

skull-shaped head, elongated hands, wide eyes, flaring nostrils and ovoid mouth have been engrained in our collective cultural consciousness; the swirling blue landscape and especially the fiery orange and yellow sky have engendered numerous theories regarding the scene that is depicted. Like the *Mona Lisa*, *The Scream* has been the target of dramatic thefts and recoveries, and in 2012 a version created with pastel on cardboard sold to a private collector for nearly \$120,000,000 making it the second highest price achieved at that time by a painting at auction.

Conceived as part of Munch's semi-autobiographical cycle "The Frieze of Life," *The Scream's* composition exists in four forms: the first painting, done in oil, tempera, and pastel on cardboard (1893, National Gallery of Art, Oslo), two pastel examples (1893, Munch Museum, Oslo and 1895, private collection), and a final tempera painting (1910, National Gallery of Art, Oslo). Munch also created a lithographic version in 1895. The various renditions show the artist's creativity and his interest in experimenting with the possibilities to be obtained across an array of media, while the work's subject matter fits with Munch's interest at the time in themes of relationships, life, death, and dread.

For all its notoriety, *The Scream* is in fact a surprisingly simple work, in which the artist utilized a minimum of forms to achieve maximum expressiveness. It consists of three main areas: the bridge, which extends at a steep angle from the middle distance at the left to fill the foreground; a landscape of shoreline, lake

or fjord, and hills; and the sky, which is activated with curving lines in tones of orange, yellow, red, and blue-green. Foreground and background blend into one another, and the lyrical lines of the hills ripple through the sky as well. The human figures are starkly separated from this landscape by the bridge. Its strict linearity provides a contrast with the shapes of the landscape and the sky. The two faceless upright figures in the background belong to the geometric precision of the bridge, while the lines of the foreground figure's body, hands, and head take up the same curving shapes that dominate the background landscape.

The screaming figure is thus linked through these formal means to the natural realm, which was apparently Munch's intention. A passage in Munch's diary dated January 22, 1892, and written in Nice, contains the probable inspiration for this scene as the artist remembered it: "I was walking along the road with two friends—the sun went down—I felt a gust of melancholy—suddenly the sky turned a bloody red. I stopped, leaned against the railing, tired to death—as the flaming skies hung like blood and sword over the blue-black fjord and the city—My friends went on—I stood there trembling with anxiety—and I felt a vast infinite scream [tear] through nature." The figure on the bridge—who may even be symbolic of Munch himself—feels the cry of nature, a sound that is sensed internally rather than heard with the ears. Yet, how can this sensation be conveyed in visual terms?

Munch's approach to the experience of synesthesia, or the union of senses (for example the belief that one

might taste a color or smell a musical note), results in the visual depiction of sound and emotion. As such, *The Scream* represents a key work for the Symbolist movement as well as an important inspiration for the Expressionist movement of the early twentieth century. Symbolist artists of diverse international backgrounds confronted questions regarding the nature of subjectivity and its visual depiction. As Munch himself put it succinctly in a notebook entry on subjective vision written in 1889, “It is not the chair which is to be painted but what the human being has felt in relation to it.”

Since *The Scream*'s first appearance, many critics and scholars have attempted to determine the exact scene depicted, as well as inspirations for the screaming figure. For example, it has been asserted that the unnaturally harsh colors of the sky may have been due to volcanic dust from the eruption of Krakatoa in Indonesia, which produced spectacular sunsets around the world for months afterwards. This event occurred in 1883, ten years before Munch painted the first version of *The Scream*. However, as Munch's journal entry—written in the south of France but recalling an evening by Norway's fjords also demonstrates—*The Scream* is a work of remembered sensation rather than perceived reality. Art historians have also noted the figure's resemblance to a Peruvian mummy that had been exhibited at the World's Fair in Paris in 1889 (an artifact that also inspired the Symbolist painter Paul Gauguin) or to another mummy displayed in Florence. While such events and objects are visually plausible, the work's effect on the viewer does not depend on one's

familiarity with a precise list of historical, naturalistic, or formal sources. Rather, Munch sought to express internal emotions through external forms and thereby provide a visual image for a universal human experience.

Excerpted from: Dr. Noelle Paulson, “Edvard Munch, *The Scream*,” in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/munch-the-scream/>.

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Dr. Juliana Kreinik and Dr. Amy Hamlin, “Edvard Munch, *The Storm*,” in *Smarthistory*, December 18, 2015, <https://smarthistory.org/edvard-munch-the-storm/>.

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38. Chapter 12 - Gustav Klimt

The Work of Gustav Klimt

RACHEL SLUGGETT

Audio recording of this chapter is available here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yDn_OiqeWIZD3lTmrhFDiKWCZh3ah0Zi/view?usp=sharing

Gustav Klimt, *The Beethoven Frieze: The Hostile Powers*, 1901

Gustav Klimt was born in July of 1862 as the second of seven children. Although they were poor for most of Gustav's life, the whole family was known to be artistically talented¹. His



Gustav Klimt, *Hope II*, oil, gold, and platinum on canvas, 1907-08

1. Moffat, Charles. *Biography of a Symbolist Painter: Gustav*

father had experience working with gold which may have led Gustav to using gold in his work later on. Klimt was enrolled in the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts in 1876, not long after he had dropped out of grade school. He was only fourteen. There he studied architectural painting until he was in his early twenties. Shortly after he began accepting commissions in order to earn a small wage for himself. With help from his only older sibling Ernst, the Klimt Brothers were able to make quite a name of themselves. They were well-known all-over Austria. Over the span of his life, Klimt had created a good life for himself. He was both loved and hated, as every good artist should be. He had helped revolutionize the way art was made, and the way art was viewed by both critics and the general public.

Klimt - Symbolist Painter – (The Art History Archive, 2008)



Gustav Klimt, *Judith II*, oil on canvas, 1909.

As one of the co-founders of the Secession Movement, Klimt had become a large player in the rebirth of art in Vienna. He had brought many ideas of foreign art back home from his travels. Klimt was known to have many influences on his work from around the world. Many say that his art reflects influences from Egyptian, Byzantine, Minoan, and Classical Greek art². The goal of the Secession group was to provide a way for unconventional artists to have a platform to showcase their work. The group “did not encourage any particular style and thus Naturalists, Realists, and Symbolists all coexisted.”³

The group was able to get government support and built an exhibition hall. They would be able to show off work of

smaller and larger artists who may have had work that the public was not privy to. In Vienna there was a building put up which was designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich who was another founding member of the movement. It was completed in 1898 as a manifesto to the movement. Above the main doors of the exhibition hall read the words *Der Zeit ihre Kunst der Kunst ihre Freiheit* which

2. Moffat. *Biography of a Symbolist Painter*.

3. Moffat. *Biography of a Symbolist Painter*.

translates to “to every age its art, to art its freedom”⁴. The Secession group stirred much controversy, one reason being that artists such as Klimt were already in a group of artists that would have an upper hand over the art industry. This group, known as the Association of Viennese Artists, was against any immigrant art, and soon Klimt and ten other artists left because of this. Klimt was a part of this group until 1908. Even though Klimt left the movement before many other artists, his art is often the face of the movement, namely his pieces *Beethoven Frieze*, *Judith II*, and *Hope II*.

Within his symbolism, Klimt would often use rectangles to represent the man, and circles to represent the woman. This can prominently be seen in *The Kiss*. It was symbolism such as this that showed the fact that Klimt had seen men and women as unique and different creatures. One of his larger works *Beethoven Frieze* was 112 feet long and had visually depicted Beethoven’s 9th



Gustav Klimt, *The Kiss*, oil on canvas, 1907-08

Symphony. It was pieces like this that really showed how Klimt was able to use symbolism and artistic vision in his art. This work was also one of his more explicit paintings at the time, showing motifs of both love and sex. The sexual nature surrounding women in his work was believed to be inspired in part by French sculptor Auguste Rodin who had done many sculptures of naked people, often in erotic positions. Despite any negative criticism such as being called a misogynist, Klimt continued to focus his gaze on the female form. Many of his more erotic pieces had used symbolism more than

4. Gotthardt, Alexxa. Klimt’s Iconic “Kiss” Sparked a Sexual Revolution in Art. (Artsy, May 8, 2019).

naturalistic depictions. This is partially because at this time it was unusual to depict naked humans, especially if they are shown in an erotic nature. Even during the Secessionist Movement t, he was told he had to censor parts of his paintings. Due to this censorship, he had to find different ways to capture his vision using symbols. Thus, Klimt ended up being extremely well known for his use of symbolism in his artwork. Klimt would end up incorporating gold or colour into his work in order to censor more exotic natures of the art.



Gustav Klimt, Adele Bloch-Bauer I, oil, silver and gold on canvas, 1907

After his father and older brother passed, Klimt was the bearer of

the family name, which he did well with⁵. He had kept to himself for the most part of his life because he had become so well known that he had the luxury of being selective with his clients. This led to only the most beautiful work being done during his Golden Phase. Many of Klimt's pieces would be commissioned portraits of Vienna's upper-class women. The wife of a wealthy Jewish banker is the subject of his work titled *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*⁶. For this piece Klimt had used gold and silver leaf for the majority of the frame. This work painted in 1907 ended up being one of the most prominent works within Klimt's Golden Phase due to the extreme use of gold leaves.⁷ In a letter to his long-time partner Emilie Flöge, Klimt writes:

I have never painted a self portrait. I am less interested in myself as a subject for a painting than I am in other people, above all women... There is nothing special about me. I am a Painter who paints day after day from morning to night... Whoever wants to know something about me... ought to look carefully at my pictures.⁸

This shows that Klimt had put his heart and soul into every piece he did. To say that you must look at his art to know about him shows how each painting or drawing he did had a bit of him in it, and that each one is uniquely his.

5. Moffat. *Biography of a Symbolist Painter*.
6. Gotthardt. *Klimt's Iconic "Kiss" Sparked a Sexual Revolution in Art*.
7. Gotthardt.
8. Richman-Abdou, Kelly. *The Splendid History of Gustav Klimt's Glistening "Golden Phase"*. (My Modern Met, September 2018)



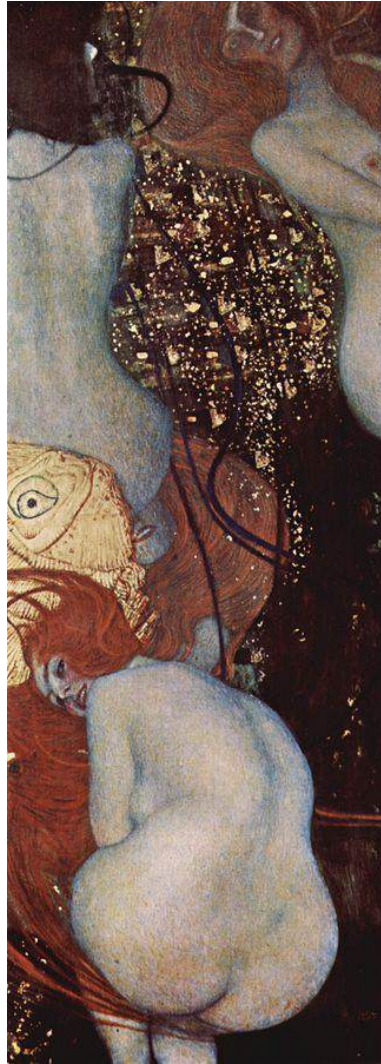
Gustav Klimt, *Pallas Athene*, oil on canvas, 1898

Klimt's Golden Phase was quite a success within the art world. He had already created a good name for himself but his work with gold leaf had sent him into the history books. Klimt was quite peculiar about his use of pure gold within his Golden Style. He had also visited Ravinia, Italy twice in the early 1900s so he could study mosaics. He ended up using gold as both additives to his paintings, as well as entire background details. The work most commonly associated with this period of Klimt's includes *The Kiss*, which to many is considered better than the Mona Lisa. His work titled *Pallas Athene* from 1898 is believed to be the earliest piece in his Golden Phase. It shows the Greek goddess Athena in Golden armor. For many, the use of gold would seem to draw the mind to religious figures⁹. For Klimt, using gold around a woman was his way to show the almost supreme nature of women. "Klimt's women are covered in gold, supreme creatures mounted into precious surfaces like jewels and icons of a new religion."¹⁰

9. Gotthardt.

10. di Stefano, Eva. *Gustav Klimt: Art Nouveau Visionary*. (New York: Sterling, 2008).

Prior to *The Kiss*, Klimt had used art to explore the life cycle, and how sex played a role within it¹¹. In this group of paintings was a piece titled *Medicine*. When it was unveiled it was immediately criticized and deemed pornographic due to both the sight of female public hair, as well as female bodies intertwined. In response to his critics, Klimt titled a work *To My Critics*, later changed to *Goldfish*, which shows a woman naked from



Gustav Klimt, *Goldfish*, oil on canvas, 1901-2

11. Gotthardt. Klimt's Iconic "Kiss" Sparked a Sexual Revolution in Art.

behind¹². Klimt's work within his Golden Phase was cemented in time. "When Klimt created his masterpiece at the height of the Viennese avant-garde and its psycho-sexual revolution, it was brazenly erotic, politically charged, and artistically revolutionary."¹³ Still, Klimt's work would often be focused on the female form from a more sensual viewpoint. Art critic Ludwig Hevesi had described the work during the Golden Phase, comparing his work with gold to "zebra stripes flashing like lightning, tongues of flame... vine tendrils, smoothly linked chains, flowing veils, tender nets."¹⁴ Gold was no longer the subject of interest of Klimt after about 1911, when he instead began using bright colours and patterns.

Although in many cases Klimt's work with gold was facing rejection, some art critics had noted that the use of gold had shown a great resemblance to the original medieval mosaics. As a prominent art critic, Hevesi had noticed this, and noted that he felt immersed in their painting due to the glittering from the gold. In the end, Klimt's paintings would be some of the most valuable individual works of art. After his death, many of his pieces sold for tens of millions of dollars, his work *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* sold for \$135 million in 2006¹⁵. Many works from his Golden Phase are prominent in Viennese culture in the modern day, being on everything from life sized replicas to keychains to printed t-shirts. Although Klimt would have known his impact on Viennese culture during his lifetime, he could not have known the legacy he would leave behind.

12. Gotthardt.

13. Gotthardt.

14. Gotthardt. *Klimt's Iconic "Kiss" Sparked a Sexual Revolution in Art.*

15. Moffat. *Biography of a Symbolist Painter.*



Gustav Klimt, *Hygieia - Medicine* (detail), mural, 1899-1907. Destroyed 1945.

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39. Chapter 12 - Franz von Stuck

Art Nouveau

KAYDIN WILLIAMS

Audio recording of this chapter available here:



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Franz von Stuck, *Self-Portrait*, oil on panel, 1905

There were many great artists throughout the nineteenth century who were known for not only perfecting their medium of choice and being the most skilled at what they did, but also for influencing future artists and their craft. One artist from Germany, however, stands out from the rest. Franz von Stuck. Franz Stuck was an influential Symbolist/Art Nouveau artist who practiced



Franz von Stuck, Spring, oil on canvas, 1902

“*gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art¹” and that is exactly the phrase that best describes him. Franz Stuck embodied art in every way he could, it wasn’t simply just his painting skills that made him such an icon, his wholistic devotion and success in such multiple areas of art is truly what made him “the last prince of art of Munich’s great days.²” Franz von Stuck was an icon and had even influenced people outside the world of art. Franz von Stuck was a prodigy who was able to become one of the most iconic artists to ever influence the world of art because of his early commitment to the arts at a young age, his outstanding talent in several mediums, and his patriotic admiration and self-made success.

1. “Franz Von Stuck,” Frye Art Museum, Accessed October 12, 2020, <https://fryemuseum.org/exhibition/5097/>.
2. “Franz Von Stuck (1863 - 1928),” Art Experts Website, October 21, 2019, <https://www.artexpertswebsite.com/artist/stuck-von/>.



Franz von Stuck, The Guardian of Paradise, oil on canvas, 1889

A lot of known artists usually have some sort of mentor but Stuck did not. “Franz Stuck came from a peasant stock, and his talent as an artist was evident from an early age.³” His father was a miller and as soon as Stuck was able to he supported himself.⁴ After his talents in drawing were noticed he went to live in Munich, where he lived the rest of his life, and where “he received his artistic training at the Academy of Applied Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich.”⁵ His first jobs that he

started to earn income from weren't all that fancy, but they were still jobs in the art world. These jobs included such things as being an illustrator, making drawings or caricatures for magazines, making bookplates, menus,⁶ and any other job of the sort. He needed work somehow so he turned to the everyday run of the mill artistic jobs that he could find; working for the magazine the

3. “Franz Von Stuck,” Stephen Ongpin Fine Art, Accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.stephenongpin.com/artist/236640/franz-von-stuck>.
4. “Franz Von Stuck,” Stephen Ongpin Fine Art.
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Fliegende Blätter is where most of his early career started.⁷ In 1889 when Stuck was twenty six he exhibited his first paintings, and won the gold medal, at the Munich Glass Palace exhibition.⁸ The winning painting was *The Guardian of Paradise*. Because of Franz Stuck's early years as a lower working artist, and having many different jobs, he was able to further hone his craft skills even more and even outside the realm of painting and drawing.

When it came to talent, Franz Stuck was a jack of all trades and a master of all. Stuck was not simply just a painter but he was also an active sculptor, printmaker, and architect.⁹ In painting he was known for his close attention to describing three-dimensional forms. While Stuck won many gold medals for painting at exhibitions, he also won gold at the Paris World Exhibition in 1900 but for the furniture he made¹⁰; they were made for an artist's studio and private living villa. As stated before, Franz Stuck practiced *gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art and Villa Stuck embodies this perfectly. With Franz Stuck's multiple talents focused into one area, it was bound to be a success. He put thought

7. "Franz Von Stuck (1863 - 1928)," Art Experts Website, October 21, 2019, <https://www.artexpertswebsite.com/artist/stuck-von/>.
8. "Franz Von Stuck (1863 - 1928)," Art Experts Website.
9. "Franz Von Stuck," Stephen Ongpin Fine Art, Accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.stephenongpin.com/artist/236640/franz-von-stuck>.
10. "Museum Villa Stuck." Museum Villa Stuck: Ein Museum der Stadt München. Accessed September 26, 2020. <https://www.villastuck.de/museum/index.htm>.

everywhere that he could, “life, architecture, art, music and theatre are combined¹¹” all into the creation of Villa Stuck.

Even on his paintings Stuck did not simply put them into just any frame but a handmade frame made by himself for each piece; He paid such “close attention to the frames for his paintings and generally designed them himself with such careful use of panels, gilt carving and inscriptions that the frames must be taken as an integral part of the overall piece.¹²” Franz Stuck did not simply just make art but he embodied it. He added detail and looked for any amount of



Franz von Stuck, *The Sin*, oil on canvas, 1893

space he could find, in any aspect of his creations, that could somehow be altered and created into an artist’s image. When people describe a piece made by Stuck it is always no short of a sophisticated astonishment claimed to be made by a genius. “It’s marked originality of color generally, and luminosity of the flesh-tones; its aplomb, life, style; its unusual distinction of line and modeling; together with a certain sculpturesque grace of pose.¹³”

11. “Museum Villa Stuck,” Museum Villa Stuck: Ein Museum der Stadt München.
12. “Franz Von Stuck (1863 - 1928).” Art Experts Website, October 21, 2019. <https://www.artexpertswebsite.com/artist/stuck-von/>.
13. Moran, J. W, ""Saharet," by Franz von Stuck," *Fine Arts*

As Stuck started to cross the line from rags to riches, his claim to fame was followed by enormous admiration from his people as an artist and as a German.



Franz von Stuck, *The Dance*, oil on canvas, 1896

Journal 23, no. 1 (1910): 23, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23905827>.



Franz von Stuck, Dissonance, oil on canvas, 1910

Franz Stuck worked for his fame, from being born a peasant, to becoming famous to the point where he was awarded nobility. “In 1905 he was awarded a Knight’s Cross of the Order of the Bavarian Throne, which raised him to the nobility, and from this point onwards he signed his works as ‘Franz von Stuck.’¹⁴” He was a full-fledged patriot icon for Germany. During his time alive he was very successful, he won

multiple gold medals at exhibitions in more than just painting. Franz von Stuck was also a phenomenal teacher. “When only thirty-two, he was appointed professor at the Munich Academy in 1895¹⁵” he used his talents to give back to his country by teaching new generations of artists at the academy where he had started his career; “His notable students included Paul Klee, Hans Purrmann, Wassily Kandinsky, and Josef Albers.¹⁶” The number of Stuck’s pupils

14. “Franz Von Stuck,” Stephen Ongpin Fine Art, Accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.stephenongpin.com/artist/236640/franz-von-stuck>.
15. “Franz Von Stuck,” Franz Von Stuck - Biography & Art - The Art History Archive, Accessed September 26, 2020, <http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/symbolism/Franz-Von-Stuck.html>.
16. “Franz Von Stuck,” Franz Von Stuck - Biography & Art - The Art History Archive, Accessed September 26, 2020,

who went on to great success served to enhance the teacher's own fame even further.¹⁷ He touched people's heart through his story of being born into the lower end of society and being completely self-made in an American dream sense and creating his own success from the ground up. He elevated himself from famous artist into an example of ideal Germanic values. When Franz von Stuck passed away it was a big loss for the whole country "A great artist who had been a distinguished figure in international art for a generation and had done much honor to Germany had closed his career. Franz von Stuck was dead. This even, too, profoundly touched the people of Munich."¹⁸

The Life of Franz von Stuck is one of rags to riches, making something from nothing. Since his early years he started learning and devoting himself in any way he could to his journey in art. He gained the recognition he deserved and was even able to become a noble; through nothing but work. He was able to succeed in so many different mediums and

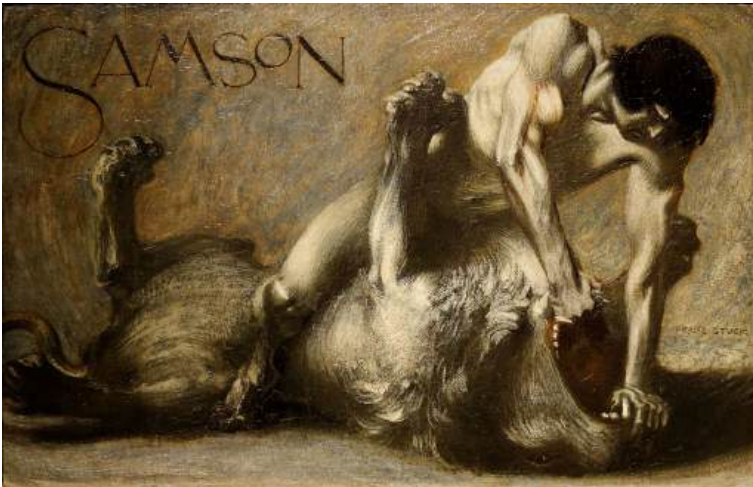


Franz von Stuck, *Wounded Amazon*, oil on canvas, 1903

<http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/symbolism/Franz-Von-Stuck.html>.

17. "Franz Von Stuck (1863 - 1928)," Art Experts Website, October 21, 2019, <https://www.artexpertswebsite.com/artist/stuck-von/>.
18. Fox, William H, "Franz Von Stuck and the Bavarian Exhibition," *The Brooklyn Museum Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1929): 1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26459703>.

ideals in art as well as be able to stay true and express himself through his many creative outlets. He won multiple medals, became a professor at his academy at only thirty-two and was able to give back to his country by teaching many successful artists in the next generation. Furthermore, he ascended past just an artist and became an example of what a proud German should be. Franz von Stuck pushed the limits and set the bar higher for what it means to be a true artist.



Franz von Stuck, Samson and the Lion, oil on canvas, 1891

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40. Chapter 12 - Thomas Eakins

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here: <https://openeducationalberta.ca/19thcenturyart/?p=653#audio-653-1>



Thomas Eakins, *Self-Portrait*, 1902, oil on canvas

Thomas Eakins was an American painter who through his career as an artist founded American Realism.^[1] “[He] depicted naturalistic scenes of boating, swimming, hunting, surgeons operating, scientists with their apparatus, musicians performing, boxers in the ring.”^[2] For his whole career Eakins’ paintings were only of people, places and things he has seen in his daily life.^[3] “In his pictures there is nothing unnecessary, nothing meaningless, nothing that is not significant.”^[4] His passion was for

anatomy, “[for] him the human body was the most beautiful thing in the world – not as an object of desire, or as a set of proportions, but as a construction of bone and muscle.”^[5] Eakins studied at Jefferson Medical College for two years to gain a deeper understanding of the human body in order to replicate it in his paintings.^[6] Eakins also spent time teaching at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art before he was forced to resign due to his unconventional and revolutionary teaching practices.^[7] Eakins’ passion for the human body and his goal of achieving realism was often taken to the extreme. Thomas Eakins was the center of much controversy during his career; he pushed a lot of boundaries and broke many rules but he was a passionate, meticulous artist with great talent and knowledge.

The most problematic of his teaching practices which led to Eakins’ forced resignation from the Pennsylvania Academy of Art was the use of fully nude models for his students, both male and female, to work from in his classes.^[8] “In the midst of an impromptu lecture on anatomy in a life study class attended by female students he



Thomas Eakins, *The Swimming Hole*, 1885, oil on canvas

had impulsively stripped away the loincloth of a male model, leaving nothing to the imagination.”^[9] Apart from bringing in nude models for his students to work off of in class, Eakins himself appears in the nude in the photograph, *Circle of Eakins*.^[10] Photographs showcasing both male and female nudity were very much unprecedented at the time and ran the risk of disapproval.^[11] “Eakins was breaking all the rules with teaching practices such as these. What we see in the [*Circle of Eakins*] photograph did not constitute normal studio procedure, not in Philadelphia, nor in Paris.”^[12] “While his highly specialized interest in figure construction contributed to his uniqueness as an artist and theoretician, it narrowed the scope of his teaching until it was no

longer appropriate for the majority of his students. Eakins's insistence on a specific course of study limited the flexibility of the curriculum and alienated many pupils. These problems were compounded by his deliberate disregard of conventional Victorian moral standards and by his uncompromising advocacy of intensive professional training for women."[\[13\]](#) Eakins' passion for anatomy came across in a way that portrayed him in a very salacious light. It was so comfortable for him to be in the presence of the fully nude body that he failed to respect the boundaries of others in that regard. He was surrounded by much scandal due to his carelessness with nudity and sexuality.



Thomas Eakins, *Dr. Gross's Clinic* , 1875, oil on canvas

The time that Thomas Eakins spent at Jefferson Medical College he worked alongside professor Samuel Gross, his muse for one of his most famous masterpieces, *The Gross Clinic*.[\[14\]](#) “*The Gross Clinic* is eight feet high and six and one half feet wide. It was originally painted [with oil] on a seamless but light weight linen canvas.”[\[15\]](#) Eakins had high hopes for *The Gross Clinic* in terms of its success at the Centennial Exposition of 1876

but the committee refused to put it on display in the art hall because of its gore and clinical nudity.[\[16\]](#) “Instead they put it in a mock army field hospital, a minor exhibit, foreshadowing rejections that dogged Eakins for the rest of his life.”[\[17\]](#) Eakins admired the ways in which surgeons worked so much that he created intricate works depicting real life scenes of medical procedures. His passion for anatomy would make these particular scenes very fascinating for him but I can understand that not many others would be interested in admiring the details of

medical procedures. There was an under-appreciation and misinterpretation of these works because his realistic art was very raw and real.

Another one of Thomas Eakins' popular paintings is *The Agnew Clinic*. It took Eakins only three months to portray Agnew conducting a clinic for his devoted medical students.^[18] The medical procedure being performed in this painting is a mastectomy; this sparked controversy once



Thomas Eakins, The Agnew Clinic, 1889, oil on canvas

again for Eakins.^[19] It was first deemed revolting and unnecessarily gross and “has more recently been addressed for what has been considered its overly sexist representation of the female body within the realm of medical discourse.”^[20] The students in attendance of Agnew’s clinic all possess the ‘gaze’ which represents the hierarchy of male doctor over female patient.^[21] The inclusion of a healthy breast in *The Agnew Clinic* sexualizes and fetishises the patient.^[22] Once again, one of Eakins’ works faced criticism because “period medical texts suggest that operating for breast cancer was controversial – not only was the surgery a long, gruelling procedure, but one whose efficacy was questioned.”^[23] Even though his similar painting, *The Gross Clinic*, wasn’t well received he continued to create art that he believed in and was passionate about.

It was nothing close to a dull career for Thomas Eakins. Not only did he submerge himself into a lifestyle of art and education, he navigated his way through a career of controversy and scandal. Eakins was a very inspired man. He took intricate details from many parts of his life and found a way to replicate them for others to appreciate through art and passed along his wisdom to a number of students. Although he had to deal with backlash and judgment

from many, his intentions came from a place of passion and genuine curiosity. There is something to be said for a man whose talent is able to stand out above all the criticism and disapproval he was faced with. Although he was a very controversial man, Eakins was a very talented and intentional artist.

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[2] Erwin, “Who Was Thomas Eakins?,” 655.

[3] Lloyd Goodrich, “Thomas Eakins, Realist,” *Bulletin of the Pennsylvania Museum* 25, no. 133 (1930): 13, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3794382>.

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[10] Lubin, “Projecting an Image: The Contested Cultural Identity of Thomas Eakins,” 516.

[11] Lubin, "Projecting an Image: The Contested Cultural Identity of Thomas Eakins," 516.

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[19] Athens, "Knowledge and Authority in Thomas Eakin's 'The Agnew Clinic,'" 482.

[20] Athens, "Knowledge and Authority in Thomas Eakin's 'The Agnew Clinic,'" 482.

[21] Athens, "Knowledge and Authority in Thomas Eakin's 'The Agnew Clinic,'" 482.

[22] Athens, "Knowledge and Authority in Thomas Eakin's 'The Agnew Clinic,'" 485.

[23] Athens, “Knowledge and Authority in Thomas Eakin’s “The Agnew Clinic,” 485.



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