

The Early Renaissance: Centered in Italy, 15th Century:

The Renaissance was a period of great creative activity, in which artists broke away from the restrictions of Byzantine Art. Throughout the 15th century, artists studied the natural world, perfecting their understanding of such subjects as anatomy and perspective.

Among the many great artists of this period were Paolo Uccello, Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Piero della Francesca.

During this period there was a parallel advancement of Gothic Art centered in Germany and the Netherlands, known as the Northern Renaissance.

The Early Renaissance was succeeded by the mature High Renaissance period, which began around 1500

The High Renaissance: Centered in Italy, Early 16th Century:

The High Renaissance was the culmination of the artistic revolution of the Early Renaissance, and one of the great explosions of creative genius in history. It is notable for three of the greatest artists in history: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Raphael.

Also active at this time were such masters as Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione and Titian.

The Northern Renaissance: Centered in Germany and the Netherlands, 15th-16th Centuries

By about the 1520's, High Renaissance art had become exaggerated into the style known as Mannerism.

The northern European tradition of Gothic Art was greatly affected by the technical and philosophical advancements of the Renaissance in Italy. While less concerned with studies of anatomy and linear perspective, northern artists were masters of technique, and their works are marvels of exquisite detail.

The great artists who inspired the Northern Renaissance included Robert Campin, Jan van Eyck (and his brother Hubert, about whom little is known) and Rogier van der Weyden.

As Italy moved into the High Renaissance, the north retained a distinct Gothic influence. Yet masters like Dürer, Bosch, Bruegel and Holbein were the equal of the greatest artists of the south.

In the mid-16th century, as in the south, the Northern Renaissance eventually gave way to a highly stylized Mannerism.

Mannerism: Europe, Mid to Late 16th Century

Mannerism, the artistic style which gained popularity in the period following the High Renaissance, takes as its ideals the work of Raphael and Michelangelo Buonarroti. It is considered to be a period of technical accomplishment but of formulaic, theatrical and overly stylized work.

Mannerist Art is characterized by a complex composition, with muscular and elongated figures in complex poses. Discussing Michelangelo in his journal, Eugène Delacroix gives as good a description as any of the limitations of Mannerism:

"[A]ll that he has painted is muscles and poses, in which even science, contrary to general opinion, is by no means the dominant factor... He did not know a single one of the feelings of man, not one of his passions. When he was making an arm or a leg, it seems as if he were thinking only of that arm or leg and was not giving the slightest consideration to the way it relates with the action of the figure to which it belongs, much less to the action of the picture as a whole... Therein lies his great merit; he brings a sense of the grand and the terrible into even an isolated limb."

Prominent Members: In addition to Michelangelo, leading Mannerist artists included Rosso Fiorentino, Pontormo, and Parmigianino.

By the late 16th century, there were several anti-Mannerist attempts to reinvigorate art with greater naturalism and emotionalism. These developed into the Baroque style, which dominated the 17th century.

The Baroque Era: Europe, 17th Century

Baroque Art emerged in Europe around 1600, as a reaction against the intricate and formulaic Mannerist style which dominated the Late Renaissance. Baroque Art is less complex, more realistic and more emotionally affecting than Mannerism.

This movement was encouraged by the Catholic Church, the most important patron of the arts at that time, as a return to tradition and spirituality.

One of the great periods of art history, Baroque Art was developed by Caravaggio, Annibale Carracci, and

Gianlorenzo Bernini, among others. This was also the age of Rubens, Rembrandt, Velázquez, and Vermeer. In the 18th century, Baroque Art was replaced by the more elegant and elaborate Rococo style

Rococo Art: Europe, 1715 to 1774

The Rococo style succeeded Baroque Art in Europe. It was centered in France, and is generally associated with the reign of King Louis XV (1715-1774). It is a light, elaborate and decorative style of art. Quintessentially Rococo artists include Watteau, Fragonard, François Boucher, and Tiepolo. Rococo was eventually replaced by Neoclassicism, which was the popular style of the American and French revolutions.

Neoclassical Art: Mid-18th Century to Early-19th Century

Neoclassical Art is a severe, unemotional form of art harkening back to the style of ancient Greece and Rome. Its rigidity was a reaction to the overbred Rococo style and the emotional Baroque style. The rise of Neoclassical Art was part of a general revival of classical thought, which was of some importance in the American and French revolutions.

Important Neoclassicists include the architects Robert Adam and Robert Smirke, the sculptors Antonio Canova, Bertel Thorvaldsen, and Jean-Antoine Houdon, and painters Anton Raphael Mengs, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Jacques-Louis David.

Around 1800, Romanticism emerged as a reaction to Neoclassicism. It did not really replace the Neoclassical style so much as act as a counterbalancing influence, and many artists were influenced by both styles to some degree.

Neoclassical Art was also a substantial direct influence on 19th-century Academic Art

Romanticism: Late 18th Century to Mid 19th Century

Romanticism might best be described as anti-Classicism. A reaction against Neoclassicism, it is a deeply-felt style which is individualistic, beautiful, exotic, and emotionally wrought.

Although Romanticism and Neoclassicism were philosophically opposed, they were the dominant European styles for generations, and many artists were affected to a greater or lesser degree by both. Artists might work in both styles at different times or even mix the styles, creating an intellectually Romantic work using a Neoclassical visual style, for example.

Great artists closely associated with Romanticism include J.M.W. Turner, Caspar David Friedrich, John Constable, and William Blake.

In the United States, the leading Romantic movement was the Hudson River School of dramatic landscape painting.

Obvious successors of Romanticism include the Pre-Raphaelite movement and the Symbolists. But Impressionism, and through it almost all of 20th century art, is also firmly rooted in the Romantic tradition

Victorian Classicism: Britain, Mid to Late 19th Century

Victorian Classicism was a British style of historical painting inspired by the art and architecture of Classical Greece and Rome.

In the 19th century, an increasing number of Europeans made the "Grand Tour" to Mediterranean lands. There was a great popular interest in the region's ancient ruins and exotic cultures, and this interest fuelled the rise of Classicism in Britain, and Orientalism, which was mostly centered in continental Europe.

The Classicists were closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelites, many artists being influenced by both styles to one degree or another. Both movements were highly romantic and were inspired by similar historical and mythological themes -- the key distinction being that the Classicists embodied the rigid Academic standards of painting, while the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was initially formed as a rebellion against those same standards. Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Frederick Leighton were the leading Classicists, and indeed in their lifetimes were considered by many to be the finest painters of their generation.

Realism: Mid-19th Century

Realism is an approach to art in which subjects are portrayed in as straightforward manner as possible, without idealizing them and without following the rules of formal theory.

The earliest Realist work began to appear in the 18th century, as a reaction against the excesses of

Romanticism and Neoclassicism. This is evident in John Singleton Copley's paintings, and some of the works of Goya. But the great Realist era was the mid-19th century, as artists became disillusioned with the *Salon* system and the influence of the Academies.

Realism came closest to being an organized movement in France, inspiring artists such as Corot and Millet, and engendering the Barbizon School of landscape painting.

Besides Copley, American Realists included Thomas Eakins, and Henry Ossawa Tanner, both of whom also received formal training in France.

French Realism was a guiding influence on the philosophy of the Impressionists.

The Ashcan School, the American Scene Painters, and, much later, on the Contemporary Realist movement are all following the American Realist tradition.

Impressionism: Centered in France, 1860's to 1880's

Impressionism is a light, spontaneous manner of painting which began in France as a reaction against the formalism of the dominant Academic style. Its naturalistic and down-to-earth treatment of its subjects has its roots in the French Realism of Corot and others.

The movement's name came from Monet's early work, *Impression: Sunrise*, which was singled out for criticism by Louis Leroy on its exhibition.

The hallmark of the style is the attempt to capture the subjective impression of light in a scene.

The core of the earliest Impressionist group was made up of Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Alfred Sisley. Others associated with this period were Camille Pissarro, Edgar Degas, Gustave Caillebotte, Frederic Bazille, Edouard Manet, and Mary Cassatt.

The Impressionist style is still widely practiced today. However, a variety of successive movements were influenced by it, grouped under the general term Post-Impressionism.

Post-Impressionism: France, 1880's to 1900

Post-Impressionism is an umbrella term used to describe a variety of artists who were influenced by Impressionism but took their art in different directions.

There is no single well-defined style of Post-Impressionism, but in general it is less casual and more emotionally charged than Impressionist work.

The classic Post-Impressionists are Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Henri Rousseau. The Pointillists and *Les Nabis* are also generally counted among the Post-Impressionists

Expressionism: Centered in Germany, C.1905 to 1940's

Expressionism is a style of art in which the intention is not to reproduce a subject accurately, but instead to portray it in such a way as to express the inner state of the artist. The movement is associated with Germany in particular, and was influenced by such emotionally-charged styles as Symbolism, Fauvism, and Cubism.

There are several different and somewhat overlapping groups of Expressionist artists, including Die Brücke, Der Blaue Reiter, Die Neue Sachlichkeit and the Bauhaus School.

Leading Expressionists included Wassily Kandinsky, George Grosz, Franz Marc, and Amadeo Modigliani.

In the mid-20th century, Abstract Expressionism (in which there is no subject at all, but instead pure form) was developed into an extremely influential style.

Cubism: Europe, 1908-1920

Cubism was developed between about 1908 and 1912 in a collaboration between Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Their immediate influences are said to be Tribal Art (although Braque later disputed this) and the work of Paul Cezanne. The movement itself was not long-lived or widespread, but it began an immense creative explosion which resonated through all of 20th century art.

The key concept of Cubism is that the essence of objects can only be captured by showing it from multiple points of view simultaneously.

Cubism had run its course by the end of World War I, but among the movements directly influenced by it were Orphism, Purism, Precisionism, Futurism, Constructivism, and, to some degree, Expressionism.

Dada: Europe, 1916-1924

Dada was a protest by a group of European artists against World War I, bourgeois society, and the conservatism of traditional thought. Its followers used non sequiturs and absurdities to create artworks and performances which defied intellectual analysis. They also included "found" objects in sculptures and installations.

The founders included the French artist Jean Arp and the writers Tristan Tzara and Hugo Ball. Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp were also key contributors.

The Dada movement evolved into Surrealism in the 1920's.

Futurism: Italy, 1909-1914

Futurism is an Italian modernist movement celebrating the technological era. It was largely inspired by the development of Cubism. The core themes of Futurist thought and art were *machines* and *motion*.

Futurism was founded in 1909 by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, along with painters Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Gino Severini.

Surrealism: Europe, 1924 to 1950's

Surrealism is a style in which fantastic visual imagery from the subconscious mind is used with no intention of making the artwork logically comprehensible. Founded by Andre Breton in 1924, it was a primarily European movement which attracted many members of the chaotic Dada movement. It was similar in some respects to the late 19th-century Symbolist movement, but deeply influenced by the psychoanalytic work of Freud and Jung. The Surrealist circle was made up of many of the great artists of the 20th century, including Jean Arp, Max Ernst, Giorgio de Chirico, Man Ray, Joan Miro, and Rene Magritte. Salvador Dali, probably the single best-known Surrealist artist, was somewhat of an outsider due to his right-wing politics - during this period leftism was fashionable among Surrealists, in fact in almost all intellectual circles.

The Magic Realists were American artists somewhat influenced by the Surrealists.

Pop Art: 1950's to 1960's

Pop Art is a style of art which explores the everyday imagery which is part of contemporary consumer culture. Common sources include advertisements, consumer product packaging, celebrities, and comic strips.

Leading Pop artists include Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein.

Optical Art: 1950's to 1960's

Optical Art is a mathematically-oriented form of (usually) Abstract art, which uses repetition of simple forms and colors to create vibrating effects, moiré patterns, an exaggerated sense of depth, foreground-background confusion, and other visual effects.

In a sense all painting is based on tricks of visual perception: using rules of perspective to give the illusion of three-dimensional space, mixing colors to give the impression of light and shadow, and so on. With Optical Art, the rules that the eye applies to makes sense of a visual image are themselves the "subject" of the artwork.

In the mid-20th century, artists such as Josef Albers, Victor Vasarely, and M.C. Escher experimented with Optical Art. Escher's work, although not abstract, also deals extensively with various forms of visual tricks and paradoxes.

In the 1960's, the term "Op Art" was coined to describe the work of a growing group of abstract painters. This movement was led by Vasarely and Bridget Riley. Other Op Artists included Richard Anuszkiewicz, Jesús-Rafael Soto, Kenneth Noland, François Morellet, and Lawrence Poons.

Source:

ARTCYCLOPEDIA: A Guide to Great Art on the Internet

<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/history/index.html>