

THE  
FEMALE  
FIGURE  
IN ART  
AT  
THE  
NORTH  
CAROLINA  
MUSEUM  
OF  
ART



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*The contents of this document are based on information culled from various sources, including but not limited to Gardner's "Art Through the Ages," Masters and Smith's "Art History: A Study Guide," the North Carolina Museum of Art's "Handbook of the Collections," notes from lectures given by curators and other scholars at the North Carolina Museum of Art, online art sources, as well as my own analysis. My goal in creating this document was to prepare a virtual tour of twenty eight works on view at the North Carolina Museum of Art, the theme of which was the female figure, and place these works within an historical context that was brief and to the point.*

*Francesca Rappa*



## The Female Figure in Art

### Ancient

(1) *Female Figurine*, Attributed to the Steiner Master, Cycladic, circa 2500-2400 BCE

### Egyptian

(2) *Coffin of Djed Mut*, Egyptian, Third Intermediate-Late Period, circa 715-525 BCE

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(24) *Portrait of Emy*, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, German, 1919

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Surrealism

(25) *Sunset (Medusa)*, Eugene Berman, American, 1945

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Abstract Expressionism (NY School)

(26) *Two Figures*, Robert Motherwell, American, 1960

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Pop Art

(27) *Six Women*, Alex Katz, American, 1975

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## Ancient

- (1) *Female Figurine*, Attributed to the Steiner Master, Cycladic, circa 2500-2400 BCE  
(marble)

### Cycladic Civilization—3200-2000 BCE

History: The late Neolithic and early Bronze age culture of the Cycladic islands— islands that circle around Delos as well as the adjacent islands of the Aegean excluding Crete—is called “Cycladic.” This culture had no written language and has left few traces of its existence.

Object: Female figurines made of clay, limestone, and (more rare) white marble share qualities of Paleolithic and Neolithic fertility figures. Cycladic figurines are striking for their stylized forms that modern artists later emulated. These figurines are funerary objects. Although most figurines are female, male figurines of musicians in active, rounded forms were also made.

Style characteristics: Composed of simple, rigid geometric shapes and large flat planes. Broad U-shaped head and small, high-placed nose. Thick torso and slender legs. Arms folded beneath breasts. Elegant triangular body. Reclined rather than stood, indicated by the extended position of the feet. Painted details, such as the eyes.



## Egyptian

- (2) *Coffin of Djed Mut*, Egyptian, Third Intermediate-Late Period, circa 715-525 BCE  
(wood with linen, gesso, and paint)

### Late Period—1070-333 BCE

History: Scholars claim that Ancient Egyptian civilization adapted or perhaps reinvented for their own use much of earlier Sumerian technology in irrigation, metallurgy, writing, and the use of the wheel and plow. A number of provinces were brought together around 3100 BCE, and Egypt was unified for most of the next 3000 years. Annual flooding of the Nile was vital to the survival of the ancient Egyptians. The Nile flowed through regions in Egypt that at times



were almost entirely desert. Drought and famine were real concerns, so the ancient Egyptians learned how to control the Nile through irrigation and by fertilizing their crops with the silt from the flooding. By using the silt deposits to make the surrounding land fertile, the ancient Egyptians were able to grow crops such as wheat (used to make flour), barley (used to make beer), and flax (used to make linen).

The real flowering of ancient Egyptian culture came in three waves: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom. Our work was made during the Late Period, which came after the New Kingdom. Periods of great achievement were interrupted by periods of conflict, brought about by drought and famine. However, during periods of prosperity, an advanced society emerged with a kingship ruling over the land, complex religious beliefs, commerce, pyramids and enduring art.

Object: Hieroglyphs on the back of this inner coffin spell out the name of Djed Mut, whose mummified body was at one time contained inside. The ancient Egyptians believed that after a person died, his *ka* or spirit (life force) would live on in what they believed was an afterlife and needed to receive offerings of food and drink to sustain itself spiritually. The ancient Egyptians also believed that each and every person possessed a *ba*, which was a set of unique spiritual characteristics (personality). Unlike the *ka* that left the body after death, the ancient Egyptians believed the *ba* was released from the body and rejoined the *ka* only through funeral rituals. They also believed the *ba* needed a place to reside each night in order to receive new life. For this reason in part, the ancient Egyptians began the practice of mummification. At first reserved for the pharaohs because originally it was believed that only the pharaohs had *ba*, mummification later became available for anyone in the community who could afford it. Hieroglyphs on the front of Djed Mut's coffin spell out prayers and incantations from the *Book of the Dead*, a text dating from the New Kingdom, which was believed to help guarantee Djed Mut's safe journey into the afterlife.

Style characteristics: An idealized likeness of Djed Mut is painted on her coffin. She is wearing a wig with vulture's wings. The vulture's wings represent the protection of the goddess Isis. Across her pectoral collar is the sky goddess Nut. Nut spreads her wings in protection. Below Nut, Djed Mut is shown being conducted toward the ancient Egyptian god of the underworld—Osiris, who greets her after the weighing of her heart. The ancient Egyptians believed that before entering Paradise there was judgment in which one's heart was weighed. They believed before entering Paradise, a person's heart had to be as light as a feather—not heavy with sin nor too light (lazy) or it would be eaten by a beast that was part lion,

part hippopotamus, and part crocodile. Egyptian canonical style involves figures that are rigid, frontal; forms that are compact, solid. This is a general rule and does not describe all ancient Egyptian figural art.

Notes: The Old Kingdom (2670-2160 BCE) is known for its pyramid-type tombs. The Middle Kingdom (2040-1650 BCE) is known for its rock-cut tombs and mortuary temples. The New Kingdom (1550-1070 BCE) is known for the colossal size of its tombs and temples. During this later period, the pharaoh Akhenaten declared one god (Aten) the only god. Initiating what scholars describe as a monotheistic religion into Egypt, Akhenaten completed what his father had begun. He abolished the native cult of Amun, emptied all the temples, and moved the capital downriver from Thebes to a site now called Tell el-Amarna. There was a temporary relaxation of the Egyptian preoccupation with death and a greater concern with life on earth. Art responded to the change. The human figure was represented more naturally. Figures became more realistic and lively.

## Classical

(3) *Aphrodite of Cyrene*, Copy of a Greek Hellenistic statue,  
1<sup>st</sup> Century, Roman Period  
(marble)

Hellenistic Period—323-30 BCE

History: By the fifth century BCE, Athens had emerged as the most powerful of the Greek city-states. The Greeks had long lived under the threat of invasion by Persia. In 480 BCE, Persia succeeded in plundering and burning Athens, but the Greek communities pulled together long enough to win important victories.

Victory over a common enemy and dominance over the other Greek city-states gave the people of Athens a strong sense of confidence. For centuries, the main form of government had been a monarchy with a single ruler. Slowly, monarchy gave way to oligarchy (rule by a few). With the rise of power in Athens, a form of government—a democracy—with participation by common citizens firmly took hold. Originally, the Greek word “tyrant” meant no more than the lord (absolute ruler) of an area. The Athenians despised the word and insisted that government was the concern of every male citizen over the age of eighteen. A popular assembly debated and then passed or



rejected laws and regulations. Democracy was direct rather than representative. Any male citizen of age could take part, and it was his duty to do so. Ten “generals,” chosen in annual elections, prepared measures for deliberation by the assembly. Advantages were not for everyone. Women’s instruction was limited to matters of the home, and neither they nor slaves, who made up one fifth of Athens’s population, were allowed to vote.

Object: Our work is of the ancient Greek goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite. In ancient myth, Aphrodite was born from sea foam. She is shown as she rises from the sea with a dolphin at her feet. A lock of hair would have rested against her body and above her breast as is evidenced by the scars above her breast. In all likelihood, one of her arms would have rested at her side as is evidenced by the pieces of marble supports at her side, while her other arm would have covered her body in a gesture of modesty. She also would have been painted and worn jewelry. This is an example of sculpture from the Hellenistic period. It places more of an emphasis on realism, emotion and sensuality rather than the idealism and restraint that can be found in sculpture from the earlier Classical period. As such, this Greek goddess of love and beauty is shown completely nude.

Style characteristics: Variation on the ancient Greek use of *contrapposto* (counter balance). *Aphrodite* copies a natural human pose, in which one leg carries the weight of the body while the other leg is relaxed. This contrasts to ancient Egyptian sculpture, which was generally rigid and frontal. Ancient Egyptian standing figures were portrayed with the left leg forward. The ancient Greeks adopted three mathematical canons for the figure in their sculpture: the normal, the ideal, and the heroic. *Aphrodite* follows most closely a heroic body type. That means her height is about eight and one half times the length of her head. She is proportioned thusly: the distance from her ankle joints to her knees is the same as the distance from her knees to the top of her thighs, which is the same as the distance from there to her breasts, and from there to the top of her head.

Materials: softer marble is instrumental to the more natural poses generally found in Greek sculpture. Belief system: heroic body type in ancient Greek sculpture harmonizes with a belief system in which men strove to be heroic like the immortal gods and, in honoring them, sought their favor. Greek gods looked like men only more perfect.

Notes: In Greek art there was a Geometric Period (900-600 BCE), Archaic Period (650-480 BCE), Early Classical Period (480-400 BCE), Late Classical Period (400-323 BCE), ending with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, and the Hellenistic Period (323-31 BCE), ending with

the decisive naval victory by Octavian (Augustus) in the Battle of Actium against his foes Mark Antony and Queen Cleopatra. In 30 BCE, Octavian and his men would deal his enemies the final blow at Alexandria, and the defeated lovers would commit suicide. The Romans “liberated” Greece in 146 BCE, the Greco-Roman Period, when they conquered the Greek heartlands.

In the Geometric Period, the surface of pottery was patterned. Sculpture consisted of small bronze and marble animals and human figures.

In the Archaic Period, the earliest extant temples were built in the Doric order with squat proportions. Life-size sculpture was fashioned in bronze as well as marble and progressed from stiff figures to natural, rounded forms. Decoration on pottery progressed to naturalistic representations on *black-figure* and *red-figure* ware.

*Black-figure* ware was invented by the Corinthians and copied by the Athenians. Black silhouettes were painted on the clay surface. A sharp, pointed instrument was used to incise linear details within the forms. At times, highlights in purplish-red or white were added over the black figures before firing the vessel. Black areas are called glazes, but the black is neither a pigment nor a glaze but an englobe, which is a slip of finely sifted clay that originally is of the same color as the clay of the pot. Through the firing process, the englobe turns red, then black, and then remains black. In the same firing process, the pot turns red, then black, and then red again.

*Red figure* was a refinement of *black-figure*. The invention of red figure ware is credited to an anonymous painter who worked for the potter Andokides from 530-515 BCE. The slip was used in the negative space. The outlines of the figures were drawn with the slip, and the background was painted with the slip. Interior details were drawn with a soft brush. Artisans could vary the thickness of the slip, building it up to give relief to curls of hair or diluting it to create shades of brown, expanding the chromatic range.

The Classical Period was the “golden age” of culture and art in ancient Greece. Doric and Ionic temples were built. Pottery declined as an art form. Sculpture idealized the human figure. Art reflected the self-confidence and intellectual fervor of the period.

During the Hellenistic Period, architecture rose in importance. Buildings increased in size and for the most part followed Ionic and Corinthian

orders. Sculpture stressed dramatic realism, emotion and sensuality over Classical idealism and restraint.

(4) *Funerary Monument*, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup> c.  
(marble)

Republic Era—509-27 BCE

History: The legend of how Rome was founded is renowned. According to lore, Rome was founded by Romulus, who as an infant was suckled by a she-wolf along with his twin brother Remus, whom he would later kill for challenging his authority. Whether based on historical fact or mere fiction, this fratricidal legend would define the real history of ancient Rome, as the nation widened its influence and generals engaged in bloody battles with one another.



For many years, the Roman Republic consisted of a government led by two consuls, elected annually by the citizens and advised by a senate. Overtime, however, the assemblies merely went through the motions of administration, while real power in Rome rested increasingly in the hands of military men. Chief among them was Julius Caesar. Caesar had gained popular support with military victories in Gaul (western Europe), Asia, Egypt and Africa. Caesar promised to restore the Republic but ruled as a dictator, which angered his opponents. His chief opponent was Senator Brutus. Brutus would assassinate Caesar in 44 BCE on the Ides of March (March 15). Brutus and his allies hoped to restore the constitutional government of the Republic. However, a series of civil wars broke out.

After the defeat of Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 30 BCE, Octavian, adopted son of Caesar, found himself in a position to rule. However, he would do so only through acquiring power slowly, by courting the Senate as well as the people, and by upholding republican traditions so as not to appear that he was aspiring to dictatorship. In 27 BCE, the Roman Senate voted new titles for Octavian, and he was given the name Augustus. This marks the start of the Early Empire.

Object: In the Roman Republic, the patrons of the great temples were men from old and venerated families. Often these men were triumphant generals who used the booty of war to finance their public works. They were fiercely proud of their lineage. The style (but not the function) of this

funerary monument echoes a long tradition of treasured household *imagines*—preserved likenesses of ancestors that old and distinguished families would display in their homes and parade at funerals.

Style characteristics: Unlike Greek statuary, in which the head and body were inseparable parts of an integral whole, Roman sculpture consisted of full figures as well as busts. Here we have a funerary monument with busts of a family of former slaves—husband and wife, Stabillio and Iucunda, and their son, Faustus. This funerary monument would have been mounted onto a free-standing tomb made of brick and stone and would have been the resting place for either the cremated remains or bodies of several generations of this family of former slaves.

Unlike Greek sculpture, in which features were for the most part idealized, Republic sculpture is veristic (super realistic). It is a blunt record of each of the sitter's features and a statement about his personality: serious, experienced, resolute—virtues much admired at this time. Figures are stern and frontal. Proudly on display are the wrinkles and the bulge and fold of their skin. It is a statement about identity and the proud display of family status. Made at the end of the Republic and on the cusp of the Early Empire, the work is in the style of sculpture made during the Republic, in that it emphasizes portraits in extreme realism.

Notes: In Roman art there is the Republic Era (509-27 BCE), Early Empire (27 BCE-AD 284), starting with the reign of Augustus in 27 BCE and ending in AD 284 when Diocletian became emperor, and Late Empire (AD 284-395), ending with the death of Theodosius I in AD 395.

The Romans were known for creating large, complex structures and for widely using concrete. Architecture included temples based on Greco-Etruscan examples, houses, apartments, baths, amphitheaters, basilicas, bridges, and aqueducts. Painting included illusionistic wall painting. During the time of the Republic, sculpture emphasized portraits in extreme realism. Portraits became more idealized during the period of the Empire.

## Italian Medieval

(5) *Madonna and Child*, Circle of Berlinghieri Family, Italian, circa 1230-1240

(tempera and gold leaf on panel)

Byzantine Period—330-1453

History: Toward the end of the Roman empire, barbarians attacked the borders. Resources might have been sufficient to protect these borders, but they were wasted in battles between rival emperors. After Diocletian became emperor in AD 284, he realized the empire was too large for any one person to govern. He decided to share the empire with his rivals by dividing it into two parts, one sector in the east and another sector in the west. A tetrarchy or rule by four emperors was established in AD 293. The four emperors ruled without strife for several years. However, when Diocletian abdicated in AD 305, fighting between powers occurred and the tetrarchy fell apart. Constantine the Great, son of Caesar of the West, seized the opportunity. After his father's death, he invaded Italy in AD 312 and defeated and killed his chief rival, Maxentius. Constantine believed his victory was due to the aid of the Christian god. In AD 313, he and his co-emperor in the east issued what some scholars call the Edict of Milan, in effect ending the persecution of Christians and giving liberty to all religions. In AD 324 Constantine then defeated and executed his co-emperor near Byzantium and a one-man rule was restored.

That year Constantine built a new imperial residence at the ancient Greek city Byzantium and reportedly renamed the city, New Rome (now Istanbul, Turkey), a city situated favorably for trade and defense near both the Black and Aegean seas. In honor of Constantine, the Romans would call the city Constantinople. Constantinople would become the capital of the vast Byzantine empire, an empire that would endure for one thousand years.

Constantine was baptized on his deathbed in AD 337. However, it wasn't until AD 380 that a single Christian doctrine was established by Emperor Theodosius I, and Christianity became the official state religion. During those early years, Christian churches were constructed in great numbers. According to many scholars, the transfer of the seat of power of the empire from Rome to Constantinople and the establishment of Christianity as the official state religion mark the beginning of the Middle Ages.



While the western half of the empire shrank due to constant attacks by Germanic tribes, Constantinople became the center of the most prosperous and best-governed region in the Christian world. However, competitive forces eventually took hold in Europe. The Frankish king Charlemagne became a powerful force in Europe after he conquered territory that included modern-day France, the Netherlands, Germany, and most of Italy. He forced the conquered to convert to Christianity and in 800 was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman empire by the pope in Rome. The Byzantines ended up ratifying Charlemagne's emperorship, because according to what had occurred more than five hundred years earlier, the Roman world was still divided into two sectors, east and west, and governed by two different heads. However, the cooperation that had existed when Diocletian had created the two-headed empire no longer existed. The Franks had carved out a new power for themselves in the west, while Byzantium ruled in the east. Latin disappeared as a common language, leaving Greek to dominate in Byzantium and German and Latinated Romance languages to dominate in the west. The split between eastern and western halves of the former Roman empire would result in an ever-widening rift between what would become the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

*Iconoclasm*—During the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, several waves of iconoclasm occurred in the Byzantine empire. The iconoclasts, under the influence of religious and imperial authorities within the Eastern Church, led to the destruction of many religious works of art. Artists were forced westward, where they found employment in the courts of the Germanic kings. And in 1204, the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople, after which many Byzantine artists fled to Italy. Such movement by Byzantine artists would influence the development of western styles of art. The Byzantine empire would last until 1453, when Constantinople was taken over by the Ottoman Turks.

Object: Early Byzantine art was an integration of Christian themes with Greco-Roman traditions of illusionism (realistic looking, true-to-nature) and a flat, decorative, symbolic Medieval style. Over the years, Greco-Roman traditions were lost, and the flat, decorative, symbolic style developed more fully into a mature Byzantine style. Panel paintings in tempera (icons) were produced in great quantities. Icons depicted the Crucifixion and the Madonna (Virgin Mary) and child (Jesus) and inspired the mystery of Christ to an illiterate people. Our painting, in the Italo-Byzantine style, is believed by scholars to be the central panel of a triptych in which side panels would have depicted saints as well as scenes from the life of Jesus. This triptych was in all likelihood meant for private devotion.

Style characteristics: This panel painting follows a longstanding artistic tradition, in which it was believed Saint Luke painted the original version. The Madonna has elongated, slender proportions. Her head is tilted to one side. The look on her face is somber, alluding to the future passion of Jesus. She has a long, straight nose, pursed lips and dark, triangular shadows under her eyes. She is wearing a fringed veil adorned with stars to show that she is the “Star of the Sea,” the meaning of the Jewish form of her name, Miriam. The child is portrayed as a young adult with a full head of hair. He is holding onto a scroll of Old Testament scriptures, which symbolizes that he is the Messiah as foretold by Jewish prophets. Madonna and child are flat, linear, lacking shading and volume, and are weightless. Figures do not cast any shadows nor do they throw any light. Drapery is flat and stylized. The Madonna gazes past us into a mysterious, unreal world that is timeless and spiritual. Christianity originated as a mystery cult. Eastern Christianity kept mystery and mystical power at its core. Italo-Byzantine figurative art promoted a hieratic supernaturalism that looked beyond matter and material values. The heavenly space surrounding the Madonna and child is a blank, golden space, resulting in a perspective of Paradise, which is nowhere and everywhere.

### Italian Proto-Renaissance

(6) *Peruzzi Altarpiece*, Giotto and Assistants, Italian, circa 1310-1315  
(tempera and gold leaf on panel)

Italian Proto-Renaissance  
—1250-1350

History: The Italian Renaissance was a time of new ideas and practices. Changes were significant for the elite, but for the majority of people life was little changed from the Middle Ages. In Italy the roots of the Renaissance lie firmly in classicism—the art and literature and philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome. Education during this period turned away from the logic of Scholasticism toward empiricism, knowledge acquired through experience, testing and observing nature. From the late fifteenth to middle sixteenth centuries, foreign invasions would disrupt the region (Italian Wars), affecting the lives and work of artists. However, the new ideas and ideals of the Italian Renaissance would take hold and would reach the rest of Europe. Similarly, artistic practices in the north would come south.



Object: Large fresco wall paintings (painting into fresh wet plaster), secco wall paintings (painting done on dry plaster) and tempera panel paintings were made. Our tempera panel painting is a rare altarpiece, which many scholars believe was painted by the father of the Italian Renaissance, Giotto, for the Peruzzi family chapel in the church of Santa Croce in Florence. Its attribution is such, because sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti recorded that Giotto painted works for four chapels in the church of Santa Croce. This altarpiece is believed to have been painted for the Peruzzi family chapel, due to the fact that Santa Croce is a Franciscan church and the Peruzzi family's patron saints were John the Evangelist and John the Baptist, both of whom are represented in the work along with Saint Francis.

The style of this work is a break from the Italo-Byzantine style. Starting with Giotto in the proto-Renaissance, artists would observe nature and would use illusionistic devices to give figures weight and psychological purport. Depth would be implied by the use of modeling from light to dark resulting in a new roundness of form, by overlapping figures in groups, and by an imperfect linear perspective (a specific method for representing three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional surface, in which the diagonal lines converge in a single vanishing point—not correctly used until the 1400s). The human body would be defined under clothing and gestures would convey emotion. Emphasis would be on narrative rather than symbolism. Actual places would be represented rather than fantasy.

Style characteristics: In the work, Renaissance innovations include the use of some 3-D modeling (shading from light to dark) and a more realistic rendering of form as opposed to the flat, stylized Medieval style. Giotto's figures have weight. They cast shadows. They throw light. They occupy space. Drapery behaves like real drapery. Figures form personal, individual gestures. Jesus is shown as teacher, savior. He is giving a blessing. We can see his wounds. The cross behind and above his head becomes a halo. The Virgin Mary has a star on her shoulder, a symbol of her Jewish name Miriam, meaning "Star of the Sea." John the Evangelist is holding a book. He is youthful. John the Baptist is more mature. He has a full beard, a hair shirt, and unkempt hair. He is holding onto a scroll that reads "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." This refers to the passage in the Gospel of John in the Bible when John sees Jesus and exclaims as such. Saint Francis is the most naturalistic of the figures. He has the stigmata on his hands that shows he suffered the same as Jesus. Some Medieval elements remain, including the gold background representing Paradise and the larger size of Jesus and his placement in the center, both of which convey his importance.

## Italian Renaissance—Venetian

(7) *Madonna and Child in a Landscape*, Cima, Italian, circa 1496-1499

(oil on panel)

Italian Renaissance (Venetian)—1500s

History: Oil painting spread from northern Europe to Italy after mid-fifteenth century, but while color became richer, it would be employed primarily in the building up sculptural form. This would set Italian Renaissance artists apart from their northern European counterparts, who would emphasize color over form. As such, in general Venetian Renaissance artists, like their Tuscan friends, emphasized form over color. However, Venetian artists quickly became masters of the oil medium as well, exactly what was needed in the damp Venetian climate in which tempera and fresco, favored in Tuscany, could not survive. Also, for Venetian artists, emotional impact would be more important than the mathematical precision of design found in the tempera and fresco works of High Renaissance artists from Tuscany, including the works of Leonardo and Michelangelo.

Object: The artist who made our work, Cima, was born in a thriving market town north of Venice in the foothills of the Italian Alps called Conegliano. Cima and his fellow artists ushered in the “Golden Age” of Venetian painting. Our work reveals a refinement of the oil medium and a skillful rendering of color and what many call the unique, “golden light” of Venice.

Style characteristics: The Madonna (Virgin Mary) is young, beautiful and 3-D. She holds her child (Jesus), who looks like a child (no longer a little man) and who has been stripped of all his Christian narratives (Passion, Resurrection). He is plump and fussing like any real child would be. Cima has given the viewer psychological insight into the Madonna’s personality. Although the Madonna is idealized (the artist has painted her to look perfect, without flaws), Cima has successfully shown the real love between a mother and her child. The setting is of a real place—a landscape of a hill town and monastery. Yet as a High Renaissance work, the scene is idealized as well. Soft clouds float in a calm blue sky. Weather is timeless, perfect. (Renaissance artists brought props from the outside into the studio to paint



landscapes.) Cima employs atmospheric perspective and offers the viewer a composition that, if not strictly linear, is centered (pyramidal) and nearly symmetrical. One looks into the distance as if looking through a window. Cima has used the harmonious primary colors red, blue, yellow—colors favored by High Renaissance artists. (The colors of the Madonna’s dress are red and blue, which symbolize her purity.) Scholars believe Cima was the first Italian artist to make works entirely of oil paint. This sets Cima apart from the Tuscan artists of the High Renaissance. Because oil paint dries slowly, Cima was able to *paint* strokes of light pigment blended into dark pigment to build up form. Because Tuscan artists used egg tempera (which dries quickly), they had to *draw* overlapping, crosshatched lines of light pigment over dark pigment to build up form. The luminous oil paint in Cima’s work gives the landscape elements and the heads of the Madonna and child an almost ethereal quality of light. In particular, the embroidery on the Madonna’s headdress looks richly detailed and transparent.

Notes: The Italian Renaissance includes the Proto-Renaissance of Giotto (1250-1350), Early Renaissance of Ghiberti and Botticelli (1350-1498), High Renaissance of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael (1498-1520), Late Renaissance of Michelangelo and Correggio (1520-1600), Mannerism of Pontormo, Parmigianino and Bronzino (1520-1600), and the distinctive oil painting of the Venetian style (1500s). Giorgione and Titian are the undisputed masters of Venetian painting.

The Proto-Renaissance was a break from the Medieval Italo-Byzantine style, in which artists began to observe nature and use illusionistic devices.

During the Early Renaissance, the artist Ghiberti completed his bronze eastern doors of the Florence baptistery (1425-1452), later named the *Gates of Paradise* by Michelangelo. Ghiberti correctly used one-point perspective. Such linear perspective was “discovered” by artist and architect Brunelleschi circa 1413 (the ancients did not correctly use a central vanishing point) and was simplified by architect Alberti in 1435. Eventually, artists would use two-point perspective with two vanishing points on the horizon line as well as three point perspective with three vanishing points, the third of which moves the eye upward or downward. In addition to using linear perspective, Ghiberti used high relief for figures closer in space and low relief for objects extending backward to create the illusion of great depth. This is aerial perspective in that forms are less distinct the deeper they appear to be in space. In painting, aerial perspective involves less distinct outlines and less detail for objects in the background.

During the period of the Early Renaissance, the artist Botticelli painted his masterpiece, the *Birth of Venus* (c. 1482-1486). Botticelli was known as the master of line. His style was one of clearly defined outlines and shading within contours. In *Birth of Venus*, Botticelli turned the myth of Venus into a Neo-platonic allegory of the human soul uniting with God through contemplation of the beautiful.

Leonardo's *Last Supper* (c. 1494-1498) ushered in the High Renaissance in central Italy. The High Renaissance revolved around the masterpieces of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael and ended with the deaths of Leonardo in 1519 and Raphael in 1520. High Renaissance ideals include order, unity, harmony of proportion, clarity, simplicity, balance and symmetry. Tempera continued to be used on wood panels. Fresco remained important. Oil painting would eventually replace tempera. Michelangelo outlived Leonardo and Raphael.

After the Sack of Rome in 1527, Michelangelo's work took on a new pessimism. This was the period of the Late Renaissance. Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (Sistine Chapel, 1536-1541) was painted during this period and approached the grotesque. Mannerism grew out of such work by the master. Mannerist artists reacted against the calm of High Renaissance art. They used clashing colors, spatial ambiguity, asymmetry, frantic action, contrived poses and elongated figures. Venetian painters perfected the oil medium.

### Northern European Medieval—Romanesque

(8) *Madonna and Child in Majesty*, Auvergne region, French, circa 1150-1200

(wood and traces of polychrome)

Romanesque Period—1000-1150

History: The mid-eleventh century is a turning point in European history. A distinctive culture took hold. Invasions that had disrupted life for five hundred years came to an end. The last of the barbarian invaders had been Christianized. Towns were founded and a market-based economy developed. Roman towns like London and Paris were populated by merchants, tradesmen, artisans, free peasants, and escaped serfs. Towns declared independence from lords and became



corporations. While a merchant class rose in power, feudal lords, despite competition from towns, remained the center of Romanesque society. A lord's Christian religion and his feudal oath to protect his fiefs defined Romanesque culture.

Object: Enthroned Madonna (Virgin Mary) and child (Jesus) embody *majesty*, a term used by twelfth century writers to describe this type of sculpture. The Madonna is seated on an architectural throne with round, Romanesque arches. As the "Throne of Wisdom" according to the Latin liturgy, the Madonna serves in turn as a throne for the child.

Small in scale, the sculpture perhaps was carried in processions during religious festivals or was used in liturgical dramas, in which the figures would have represented Mary and Jesus and the story of the Magi would have been performed, thereby teaching religious stories to a fellowship that was largely illiterate. The sculpture might also have been used as a reliquary (container for sacred relics), as suggested by a hole in its back. When not in use, the sculpture would have likely stood on an altar or pedestal in a church.

Style characteristics: Rigid, frontal, staid. The child has a mature appearance, which tells the viewer that he is divine, all-knowing. He holds a Bible, which shows he is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The heads of both figures, perhaps later replacements carved in the characteristic style of twelfth century *majesties* from the Auvergne region in France, are purposely large to show the importance of the Madonna and child. In Medieval art, important figures are depicted larger than lesser figures. This, in addition to the overall stylized interpretation of the human form and linear, patterned draperies, give the work an otherworldliness intended to inspire awe and religious devotion. Traces of red and blue pigment indicate the wooden sculpture originally was painted. Wooden sculptures were typically painted during the Middle Ages.

Notes: In early Medieval art there is the Carolingian Period (AD 750-900) and the Ottonian Period (AD 900-1024). The Romanesque Period (AD 1000-1150) followed.

In the Carolingian Period, basilican and central plan churches were built. Wall paintings were made, but none have survived. Manuscript illumination continued in importance. There was a bit of illusionism in the rendering of forms but less so than in Mediterranean sources. Some small figural sculptures were made.

In the Ottonian Period, basilican churches continued to be built but were more refined than Carolingian types. Some wall frescoes survive. Manuscript illumination continued to dominate. Free-standing sculpture based on religious themes was reintroduced.

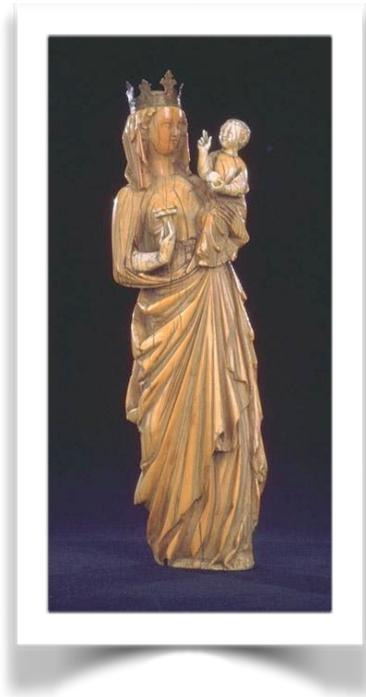
In the Romanesque Period, churches modified the basilican plan and became massive and blockish forms. Manuscript illumination continued to dominate painting. Sculpture, especially in France, was used to decorate portals and interiors of churches. Manuscript illumination influenced styles, forms and subjects in sculpture.

### Northern European Medieval—Gothic

(9) *Madonna and Child*, Parisian, French, circa 1260-1290  
(ivory and metal)

Gothic Period—circa 1140-1500

History: The term “gothic” was used by later critics in the Renaissance to deride art that did not conform to the standards of classical Greek and Roman art that Italian Renaissance artists emulated. Mistakenly, the style was thought to have originated with the Goths. In the thirteenth century, the secular power of the kings of France counterbalanced the ecclesiastical power of the popes of Rome. Paris was the intellectual center of Europe. Rome was the religious and executive center. Medieval culture revolved around these two city centers.



In the Gothic period, universities were established. At the University of Paris students studied arts, medicine, law and theology, which included Scholasticism (the study of ancient Greek texts by philosophers such as Aristotle and by contemporary writers to resolve “contradictions” in biblical texts and prove the existence of God logically and philosophically). Clerical orders within the church began to battle for political and intellectual control over centers of intellectual life. St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) established the order of the Franciscans, one such clerical order. St. Francis saw Jesus Christ not as a terrible judge but as a loving savior. He taught his followers Jesus’s original message—love of oneself and of one’s neighbor. The French King Louis IX (1214-1270) practiced courage, loyalty, self-sacrifice. He supported the

poor and strove to be a good, peace-loving king. He was the only French king to be canonized (St. Louis of France). During this period, polyphonic sacred songs and secular songs (*chanson*) were written and performed by minstrels.

Previously, in the Romanesque period, the “Last Judgment” was supreme in art. Also, there was a monastic prejudice against women, which influenced how women were represented in art. In the Gothic period, however, a cult of the Virgin Mary developed. Chivalrous knights made their appearance. These Christian soldiers followed a code of faith, loyalty, courage and honor and showed courteous respect of women. “Mary Crowned by Christ in Heaven” became the supreme subject in art.

During the thirteenth century, a unified Christendom was firmly established. The century would witness the success of the papacy, a synthesis of religion, philosophy and art, and the first solid formation of states. Within every Gothic city (except in England where the cathedrals were outside the towns) there was a soaring cathedral with its pointed arches and ribbed vaults, clerestory windows of colored glass, and flying buttresses to support the great height of its walls and provide for a higher nave inside. In short, the soaring light-filled interiors of every Gothic cathedral became symbolic of Christianity itself. Cathedrals rose higher and higher as pride of place swelled. Some of these cathedrals, however, stretched engineering beyond its limits and collapsed.

Object: Due to its small size, this intricately carved elephant tusk (ivory) was probably intended for private devotion, kept either in a private chapel or bedchamber. The Madonna (Virgin Mary) played a major role in the devotions of the thirteenth century. She was viewed as a merciful and forgiving intercessor between Jesus Christ and mankind. It was made at a time when the Madonna’s cult was reaching the height of its popularity.

Style characteristics: The figures of the Madonna and child are slender and elongated. The Madonna is crowned like a queen and is elegantly dressed. She has a sweet smile, which complements the delicate features of her face. All of these elements reflect the courtly, refined style of Gothic sculpture developed in Paris in mid-13<sup>th</sup> century under the patronage of King Louis the IX. The crown the Madonna wears identifies her as the “Queen of Heaven.” She holds a rose, which symbolizes her purity as “a rose without thorns,” a metaphor used by medieval religious poets. The child appears to turn in the arms of his mother, who holds him tenderly and looks down at him. The work suggests a palpable intimacy between mother and child. The child holds a piece of fruit in his hand. The fruit is a symbol of the

forbidden fruit as told in the Bible and signifies the role Jesus played as the “new Adam,” who will redeem mankind from the original sin ushered into the world by Adam and Eve.

### Northern European Renaissance

(10) *Female Saint*, Tilmann Riemenschneider, German, circa 1490-1495

(linden wood and traces of paint)

Northern Renaissance—1400-1575

(Gothic and Renaissance overlap in North)

History: Elements of classicism (art of ancient Greece and Rome) characteristic of Italian Renaissance art can be found in northern European art as well. However, the roots of northern European Renaissance art lie mainly in the Gothic tradition. In general, in Northern Renaissance art one can find sharply focused, hard-edged forms and details.



Object: This is a rare work by one of the greatest masters of Northern Renaissance art, Tilmann Riemenschneider—a leading German sculptor of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Riemenschneider worked during the period of transition between Late Gothic and Renaissance styles in northern Europe. The piece is hollowed out in the back to allow for even drying of the wood. It was likely once part of a larger ensemble in a church.

Style characteristics: The work is a transitional piece between late Gothic and Renaissance art. Gothic characteristics include the figure’s S-curve pose, often referred to as the “hip-shot” pose because of the well-defined swing of the hips, as well as the large, stylized folds of the drapery that hide the body underneath. Renaissance characteristics in the figure include a close observation and imitation of nature evident in the naturalism (realistic details) of the face and right hand, in particular the bone structure, veins and fingernails on the hand.

The figure once held a sword, a symbol of martyrdom, in her left hand. The sword and left hand were early 20<sup>th</sup> century additions. As there is no evidence to suggest the sword replaced an original one that was damaged or lost, it is difficult to positively identify her. In any case, she is identified as a saint, because the somber expression on her long, slender face is

characteristic of the artist's female saints, as is her braided hair. Her crown indicates that she was of royal blood, while her book suggests a woman of learning. Scholars think she may be either St. Catherine or St. Barbara. If she is St. Catherine, she would have held a wheel, martyr's palm or sword in her left hand. If she is St. Barbara, she would have held a tower, palm branch or chalice in her left hand. Catherine in particular was a princess who was known for her learning. Both she and Barbara were martyred for their Christian beliefs.

(11) *Madonna and Child in a Landscape*, Lucas Cranach the Elder, German, circa 1518  
(oil on panel)

Northern Renaissance—1400-1575  
(Gothic and Renaissance overlap in North)

History: Windows replaced solid walls in northern European cathedrals during the Gothic period. This led to a tradition of “painted” surfaces made out of stained glass. Also, for centuries northern Europeans were mobile, which led to a tradition of illuminated manuscripts and other objects that could be easily carried. Work in stained glass and illumination would influence developments in northern Renaissance painting. In particular, compared to the sculptural form one finds in Italian Renaissance art, traditions of stained glass and illumination in northern Europe would lead to a style of radiant, decorative color.

Northern artists, including those who made illuminated manuscripts, were not unaware of Italian forms. Northern artists became aware of advances made by Italian Renaissance artists when Italian artists came north, when northern artists traveled to Italy to study, or when Italian engravings circulated throughout northern Europe. However, some scholars claim the ideas and practices of Italian Renaissance artists did not directly influence the work of Northern European artists until nearly the end of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, in their illuminations, northern miniaturists did reduce to page-size and smaller new ideas such as perspective that Italian painters used in large scale fresco and panel works of art.



By the end of the fourteenth century, illuminations by northern artists would become independent paintings, such that by the start of the fifteenth century there was a shift to panel painting. Because northern artists were accustomed to working in miniature and in rich, jewel-like colors, they brought into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a style characterized by saturated color and tiny, detailed shapes and patterns.

Object: Lucas Cranach the Elder was one of the major artists of the German Renaissance. Germany developed along its own expressionist (emotive) lines under the influence of Flemish art. Here we have a religious scene, in which man is shown to be intimately connected to nature. The work reveals the artist's ability to closely observe and imitate nature in that it has the look of a real time and place. This is a devotional painting designed as an aid for prayer or contemplation.

Style characteristics: Like other northern Renaissance artists, Lucas Cranach the Elder imbued his work with deep, intense tones, glowing light, and a hard enamel-like surface. The artist's interest in nature can be seen in the fine details, including the highlights on the foliage and branches of the evergreen trees. The Madonna (Virgin Mary) is seated on the floor of a deeply lush forest, which emphasizes her humility. The child (Jesus) sits upon a tasseled velvet pillow. The Madonna offers grapes to her child, which symbolize the wine of the Eucharist. This in turn represents the shed blood (Crucifixion) of Jesus Christ. Renaissance artists would often include such symbolism in their images of the Madonna and child.

Notes: While the roots of the Renaissance in Italy lie firmly in the ideas and ideals of the antique world, in the north the Renaissance tradition stems directly from the Gothic Period. Jan van Eyck (1390-1441), a Netherlandish Renaissance painter active in Bruges, was the most significant northern painter of the fifteenth century. Most Renaissance sources credit Jan van Eyck with the invention of oil painting. However, oil paint had been used in western Afghanistan perhaps as early as the fifth century and in Europe since the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the practice of building up the details in a painting by superimposing translucent paint layers firmly took hold in northern Europe during the fifteenth century. Jan van Eyck's masterpiece (believed to have been designed and constructed earlier by his brother, Hubert, but painted after Hubert's death by Jan), the *Ghent Altarpiece* (c. 1430-1432), is characterized by the smooth, enamel-like application of deeply saturated color that can be found in other paintings made during this period in northern Europe.

## Northern European Baroque

(12) *Portrait of Adriana van der Aa*, Jan Daemen Cool, Dutch, 1633  
(oil on panel)

### Baroque Naturalism—1600-1720

History: A schism within Western Christianity began with reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin and other early Protestants, when they protested the doctrines, rituals, and structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther was a monk, priest, and a professor of theology. In 1517, he wrote to his bishop, Albert of Mainz. In his letter he enclosed his disputation, known as his Ninety-Five Theses, in which he argued against the claim that freedom from God's punishment for the sins a person commits could be purchased with money. According to Luther, salvation was not to be earned via money or good deeds but received from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Luther also taught that the Bible was the only source of divinely revealed knowledge. Luther's theology directly challenged the authority of the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.



In short, the reformers demanded that Christianity be cleansed of all the impurities of doctrine that had collected over the years. They stressed that no ecclesiastical machinery with all its miraculous rites and forgivenesses could save the sinner before God. The road to salvation, according to them, was through absolute faith in Jesus Christ and with the guidance of scripture. Luther translated the Bible from Latin into the vernacular (German), making it possible for his followers to practice a faith in which priests no longer held the privileged position as intercessors between God and man.

The Reformation not only protested the doctrines, rituals, and ecclesiastical structure of the Roman Catholic Church. It questioned the Church's patronage of the arts as well. According to Calvin, who was a French theologian and pastor, Church-sponsored art seemed more akin to idolatry and paganism. For example, the Roman Catholic Church accepted as a matter of faith that the Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, died in the ordinary way of nature and then shortly afterward

was assumed body and soul into heaven. Accounts of Mary's Assumption into heaven were told in writings by early Christians that circulated perhaps as far back as the third century. Many works of art advanced by the Roman Catholic Church portrayed the Virgin Mary's Assumption. However, since the account of Mary's Assumption was not in the New Testament of the Bible, early Protestants deemed it to be unsubstantiated and unfit as a subject in art. According to Calvin, only scripture in the Bible (the word of God) should serve as the foundation for Christianity and this applied to art as well. Such teachings would influence the development of art in northern Europe during the Baroque period.

Events in Europe that may have precipitated the developments of the Reformation include: (1) the Black Death, which peaked in 1348-1350 and resulted in the loss of seventy five to two hundred million people; (2) the Western Schism, in which from the late fourteenth century until the early fifteenth century there were more than one man claiming to be the Pope simultaneously, which eroded people's faith in the Catholic Church and the Papacy which governed it; (3) the invention of the printing press and, independently, moveable metal type in mid-15<sup>th</sup> by Gutenberg; (4) the fall of the Byzantine empire; (5) the end of the Middle Ages; and (6) the beginning of the modern era. In general, northern Europe, with the exception of Ireland and parts of Britain, turned towards Protestantism. Southern Europe remained Roman Catholic.

The Dutch Golden Age of the 1600s took place against a backdrop of armed conflict called the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648). The conflict was largely between the Protestant, Spanish-controlled northern provinces (northern half of the low countries, modern-day Netherlands) and their Catholic monarch, Phillip II. The northern provinces eventually declared their independence (1581). However, it wasn't until many years later that the Dutch Republic would be recognized by King Philip IV of Spain as an independent country by treaty (1648). With its newfound political, economic and religious freedoms, the nation achieved commercial prosperity. The city of Amsterdam in the Dutch Republic became the chief financial center of Europe and a world-wide shipping and trading center.

While Flemish artists in the south such as Rubens had royal patronage from the Spanish court and important commissions from the Catholic Church, in the Dutch Republic The Hague was a modest seat of government. In addition, the Reformed Church was the "public" or "privileged" church in the Dutch Republic. The Reformed Church condemned religious imagery promoted by the Catholic Church. As a result, sacred images in churches were destroyed and church walls were painted white. Church commissions

for art in the northern provinces declined, and Dutch painters were forced to look elsewhere for patrons.

At the same time, commerce, banking and shipping in the Dutch Republic led to the rise of an affluent and well-educated middle-class interested in art. Portraits of wealthy burghers and works for guild halls were commissioned. Paintings were sold on the open market and through dealers. Paintings became collectables that promoted ownership, status and wealth. Still life, genre, portrait, and landscape showcased scenes of the everyday and were emblematic of the transience of human existence. In such works, followers of the reformed traditions were reminded to balance earthly pleasures against the spiritual rewards to come.

Object: Here we have a Dutch portrait of Adriana van der Aa. The museum also owns the pendant portrait of Adriana's husband, Arent Kievit. It is known from documentation that Adriana van der Aa and her husband lived in Rotterdam, the city where the artist Jan Daemen Cool practiced his craft, hence in part the work's attribution.

Style characteristics: Typical of realistic Dutch portraiture of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the artist has portrayed a woman who is modest and religious and at the same time comfortably middle-class, as we can see by all her finery. Indeed, although she is wearing a large, somewhat dated, millstone ruff collar, her costume is a document of the high fashions of the day. She wears a double cap on her head, lace cuffs, a sleeveless vest, a bodice embroidered with floral designs, skirt with floral designs, and cut sleeves tied with silk ribbons. She also wears a heavy chain across her bodice, a necklace, rings, bracelets, and a hatpin. In her right hand she holds a pair of kid gloves decorated with embroidery, ribbons, pearls, and a chain. Since a full length pose would show the sin of pride, as would a view of land in the background, the artist has shown Adriana against a dark background in a three-quarter-length pose to convey her humility. This is one convention found in 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch portraits. In short, Adriana reveals herself to be an affluent, middle-class woman as well as a humble servant of God.

Due to the type of costume and accessories in this work, it is believed the portrait of Adriana as well as the pendant portrait of her husband were commissioned to celebrate their wedding. For example, in Adriana's portrait the embroidered flowers on her bodice and sleeves, the rings on both her hands, and the embroidered long cuffs of her kid gloves indicate the work was commissioned thusly. The kid gloves in particular represent the type of gloves a woman might receive from her intended at the time of their engagement.

Notes: While it is true that Dutch Baroque artists focused mostly on genre, portrait, landscape, and still life and in general church-sponsored art declined, it is important to know that some Dutch artists continued to paint biblical works. History painting, including religious imagery, was considered the highest calling, even in Holland. Many Dutch painters, led by Rembrandt, excelled in the genre. Also, while reformers condemned religious imagery promoted by the Catholic Church, some denominations, including a large number of Catholics in clandestine churches, continued to commission altarpieces and other religious works. Moreover, Protestantism was a gradual process and many artists were Catholic or had Catholic relatives. For example, Jan Steen was Catholic, Vermeer converted to Catholicism, and Rembrandt's mother had many Catholic relatives.

(13) *The Holy Family with St. Anne*, Peter Paul Rubens and Workshop, Flemish, circa 1630-1635  
(oil on canvas)

High Baroque—1600-1720

History: Rubens was the most highly regarded Flemish painter of his lifetime. He was a native of Catholic Flanders, a Spanish province in the seventeenth century. His patrons included many royal and aristocratic families throughout Europe. His patrons also included many churches, for whom he painted numerous religious works, including depictions of the Holy Family.



Object: This is a late work. Three generations are portrayed. Mary (Virgin Mary) leans back in her chair dreamily as her child (Jesus) appears to have just fallen asleep in her lap. St. Anne embraces her daughter and looks fondly at her grandson. Joseph gazes upon the domestic scene from the far side of a low wall. Joseph's placement in the picture as separate from Mary and the solemn, contemplative look on his face are in keeping with Christian theology and artistic tradition, which reflect his role as the earthly father of the son of God.

Style characteristics: Rubens was influenced by Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel as well as works by Caravaggio. (For a discussion of Caravaggio, see Italian Baroque below.) One can see Michelangelo's influence in

Rubens's robust figures. The work of Renaissance Venetian artist Titian would influence Rubens's handling of color. Indeed, the reds and blues of Mary's clothing and the iridescent hues of the women's skirts reveal the rich color pallet stemming from Titian that mark Rubens's work. Also characteristic of Rubens's style is his use of complementary colors, all of which give his compositions a lushness and vibrancy. (Notice the complementary colors blue and orange for the sky and red and green for the shadows.)

*Renaissance versus Baroque*—The use of complementary colors by Rubens differs from the primary colors that the Renaissance artist Cima used for his Madonna. Rubens uses a free, energetic brushwork, in which paint is applied thickly with a soft broad brush. Cima's paint application was hard-edged and flat. Rubens's Mary is no longer an ideal type like Cima's Madonna was. Here she is a real woman—perhaps modeled on Rubens's second young wife, whom he adored. Also, Mary wears everyday clothing that is contemporary and realistic. Whereas, Cima's Madonna wore antiquated clothing of the nobility. Also, Rubens employs a Baroque diagonal compositional line. Cima's composition was centered and pyramidal, the type of balance sought by High Renaissance artists in Italy.

*Composition*—The architecture provides a horizontal compositional line that frames the individual figures. St. Anne sits in a darkened niche on one side of the canvas, while Joseph looks upon the scene through a window-like opening on the other side of the canvas. These elements, including the vertical column in the background, help to frame the composition and focus the viewer's attention on Mary and Jesus. The Baroque element of dramatic light also focuses attention on the mother and child. The light illuminates their fair skin and glistens across the child's honey-colored curls. Rubens closely observes nature to create a work that is at once naturalistic, emotive and religious. In general, his works have elements of Baroque Naturalism as seen in Jan Daemen Cool's work above and High Baroque. (For a clarification of these styles, see Italian Baroque below.)

Notes: Dutch and Flemish Baroque art share the following characteristics: (1) dramatic contrasts of light and dark, (2) naturalism in a wide range of subjects, and (3) expression of deeply felt emotions. However, differences in patronage and religion led Dutch Baroque paintings to be generally smaller and with a style that was more modest and down-to-earth compared to Flemish Baroque paintings, which are generally larger, grander, courtly and dynamic. (Baroque artists went outside to draw nature but painted landscape elements in the studio.)

## Italian Baroque

(14) *Madonna and Child*, Guido Reni, Italian, circa 1628-1630

(oil on canvas)

### Baroque Classicism—1600-1720

History: The Roman Catholic Church reacted to the criticisms of Luther and Calvin and other early Protestants and initiated the Counter Reformation. Part of their efforts was a reaction against the claims of paganism in art. With the ascension of Pope Paul III, the Council of Trent was initiated and held for nearly twenty years (1545-1563) to reaffirm Catholic doctrine. In the final year, the Council held a meeting concerning art in the Church and its use to propagate ideas to a largely illiterate populace. They opposed the Protestant demand for narratives based solely on scripture and affirmed that narratives from other religious texts were valid as well. There were only two criteria that artists had to follow: (1) artists had to bring images before the eyes of the viewer and make images real (visually and emotionally), and (2) images had to be tasteful. Such demands would influence the style of Baroque art.



Object: This is a painting of the Madonna (Virgin Mary) and child (Jesus). The artist Reni has captured the grace and modesty and beauty of the Madonna. At Reni's death, his name would be preceded by the adjective *divine*, a title to which only the Renaissance artists Raphael and Michelangelo could previously lay claim. The work was intended for private devotion as an aid for prayer or contemplation.

Style characteristics: The Baroque rich, dark background and curtain frame the Madonna and child and dramatically set off their porcelain skin. These elements help to define the figures and give them a sculptural quality and weight. The Madonna is leaning forward and her knee projects out of the picture frame—a Baroque design element that brings viewers into the compositional space and helps to connect viewers emotionally to the figures in the scene. Light appears to come from within. Indeed, the Madonna's skin appears to glow with an internal light. The diagonal compositional line and strong contrast between light and dark define Baroque style and help to focus narrative.

This is an example of Baroque Classicism in that the Madonna is an ideal type. She conveys a gentleness and serenity—both of which harken back to High Renaissance works in Italy. However, Reni's Madonna is more realistic than the Italian Renaissance example of Cima's Madonna. For example, there aren't any halos. Instead, Reni uses the colors of the Madonna's red gown and blue mantle to indicate her purity. Her golden veil becomes her halo. Reni has offered the viewer a glimpse into the love between a mother and her child that is at once earthly and spiritual.

Notes: In general, Italian Baroque art is characterized by a diagonal compositional line, movement and light. There are three distinct styles: (1) the adherence to Renaissance ideals in Baroque Classicism (Carracci), including Neo-platonic ideas and Aristotle's mimesis in which intellect wins over emotion; (2) the close observation of nature in Baroque Naturalism (Caravaggio and his followers in Italy, France and Holland); and (3) the visual turbulence, emotional ecstasy and religious fervor in High Baroque (Bernini). A discussion of these distinct styles follows.

Baroque Classicism: In Bologna, Italy the Carracci brothers started the first modern academy. They sought to bring back Renaissance narratives (idealized mythological and biblical figures and landscapes) into the Baroque style. While employing Baroque elements such as diagonal compositional lines, Baroque Classical artists strove for Renaissance ideals and sought to improve upon nature. Their scenes are pastoral, calm and serene.

Baroque Naturalism: Baroque Naturalism was championed in Italy by the painter Caravaggio, who died in his late thirties on the run from a manslaughter charge. He had an impetuous personality and a dramatic life to match. He learned about Venetian color and painted *alla prima* (pigments laid on in one application, with little or no drawing or underpainting). He used tenebrism (violent contrasts of light and dark) to create theatrical effects and often employed a strong diagonal light to focus narrative. His followers would use a hidden light source. Tenebrism involves a greater contrast between light and dark to model forms than does *chiaroscuro*. *Sfumato* (modeling from light to dark to create a smoky haze) was used by Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci.

High Baroque: The High Baroque was championed in Italy by the sculpture, painter and architect Bernini. Bernini was interested first and foremost in metamorphosis, transformation and how the body expresses the soul. For example, Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* for the Sistine

Chapel, a Renaissance work, portrays the idea of creation, of Adam acquiring life. It is not a fantastic image. If it had been a later Mannerist work, it would have revealed the fantasy of the narrative. If it had been an even later Baroque work, it would have revealed the transformation itself.

Thus, in Michelangelo's *David*, a Renaissance work, we witness the moment David sees Goliath. We see the idea of what David is about to do. We see David's inner concentration. In contrast, Bernini's Baroque sculpture *David* reveals the transformation—the moment before the stone is flung. We feel the intensity of David's limbs, the tension in his body pulled to an extreme, his visual and emotional turbulence. Movement is emphasized. We imagine the stone being flung and in our minds see it project outward into space.

*France*—During the Baroque period in France there were two schools headed by two important artists: (1) Poussin, who painted in the Baroque Classical style of the Carracci brothers, and (2) Georges de Le Tour, who painted in the Baroque Naturalism style of Caravaggio.

Poussin's art championed human control over nature, will over passion, human intellect over emotion. In Poussin's art there is no glistening depth that one finds in the Baroque Naturalism works of Caravaggio. Shadows are darker gradations of the same color. Embracing the Baroque Classical style, Poussin used harmonious primary colors *alla* Renaissance artist Raphael, not the complementary colors that one finds in the works of contemporary Baroque artist Rubens. Following Renaissance ideals, Poussin's classical landscapes are timeless, ideal worlds. No weather is shown. Poussin's paint was purposely flat and dry. Lacking are the visible, energetic brushstrokes that one finds in the works of Rubens. Indeed, one views Poussin's mind not his physical hand.

On the other hand, the work of Georges de Le Tour adheres to the style of Baroque Naturalism. Le Tour created an earthy realism and often used a single candle or hidden light source in a darkened space and tenebrism (violent contrasts of light and dark) to dramatically reveal narrative.

The Baroque period in France saw the building and furnishing of the court at Versailles and the supreme rule of the sun king, Louis XIV.

*Spain*—During the seventeenth century in Spain, art followed two opposing trends: (1) the intense mysticism of El Greco, whose style was so individualistic scholars refrain from categorizing him into any conventional school, and (2) the detached realism of Velazquez. Evident in both styles

are tenebrism and an earthy realism that can be found in the works of Caravaggio (Baroque Naturalism), and strong emotion and movement that can be found in the works of Bernini (High Baroque).

## Rococo

(15) *Venus Rising from the Waves*, Francois Boucher and Studio, French, circa 1766  
(oil on canvas)

Rococo—1700s

History: The style of art called Rococo developed in Paris, France. It is associated with the reign of Louis XV and the beginning of the reign of Louis XV's grandson Louis XVI. Louis XV began his reign in 1715 and ruled until his death in 1774. He enjoyed a favorable reputation at first but eventually became one of the most unpopular kings in the history of France. Louis XV's decisions, scholars claim, damaged the power of France, weakened the treasury, and arguably (some scholars claim otherwise) led to the French Revolution, which broke out fifteen years after his death.



The Rococo developed in France as a reaction against the grandeur and strict regulations of the Baroque under the reign of Louis XIV and his Palace of Versailles. Rococo themes often portray frivolous games of love. Rococo style is characterized as ornate, playful, witty and graceful, with creamy, pastel-like colors and asymmetrical, curvilinear designs. The word “rococo” perhaps is a combination of French *rocaille*, meaning stone, and *coquilles*, meaning shell, both of which were used as motifs in this style of art. Similarly, the word may be interpreted as a combination of *rocaille* and the Italian word *barocco*, meaning an irregularly shaped pearl and possibly the source of the word “baroque.”

Object: The artist Boucher was appointed by Louis XV to be director of Gobelins, the factory built by Louis XV's great-grandfather, Louis XIV, to stimulate commerce and provide furnishings for residences at Versailles and Fontainebleau. Boucher was later appointed to be First Painter to the King. This is a work designed as a model for a Gobelins tapestry. It represents the goddess Venus. In ancient mythology, Venus was born from

sea foam. The dolphin and white doves are her attributes, as are the three cupids. The cupids hold objects that are symbols of love—pink roses representing the sweetness of love as well as its pain, arrows for piercing the heart, and a torch for inflaming the passions. Aristocratic French patrons of day were obsessed with Classical mythology and themes of love.

Style characteristics: With its thinly veiled eroticism, the work showcases a painting style that is painterly, loose, and liquid. The paint was thickly applied in places. In other places, spare brushstrokes were used, giving the work a transparent appearance. Like the Impressionists who would come later, Rococo artists knew viewers would see an incomplete brushstroke and would complete the form in his or her own mind. In Boucher's hands, Baroque diagonal lines have been transformed into curvilinear (serpentine) Rococo lines, while Baroque drama has been transformed into a sensual, playful Rococo fantasy. As for his pallet, Boucher added white to primary colors (red, blue, yellow) and their complementary colors (green, orange, violet) in order to create intense but soft, pearly hues. The clouds and foliage appear soft and feathery as well.

### Neoclassicism

(16) *The Death of Alcestis*, Pierre Peyron, French, 1794  
(oil on canvas)

Neoclassicism—c. 1770-1820s

History: Since the mid-1600s, upper-class European young men had been undertaking the Grand Tour—a trip of Europe that exposed them to the legacy of classical antiquity and the Renaissance. The Grand Tour led to a fad of collecting antiquities and would lay down the foundation of many great collections. It also spread a Neoclassical revival throughout Europe. As such, by the end of the 1700s, the Rococo fell out of favor and was largely replaced by Neoclassicism.

A reaction against the excesses of the Rococo, Neoclassicism drew inspiration from ancient Greece and Rome and championed art that was noble, simple and grand. It coincided with the Age of Enlightenment and continued into the early 1800s, at which time it competed with Romanticism.



The Age of Enlightenment (1650-1700s) was a cultural movement of intellectuals in Europe and the United States, whose purpose was to reform society and advance knowledge. The movement promoted science and opposed abuses by church and state. It was sparked by philosophers Spinoza and John Locke, the physicist Issac Newton, and philosopher Voltaire. The wide distribution of the printing press, which made it possible to quickly disperse knowledge, precipitated the Enlightenment. In France, the movement began in salons and culminated in the great *Encyclopedie* (1751-1772), edited by Diderot with contributions by hundreds of leading *philosophes* (intellectuals) such as Voltaire and Rousseau. Numerous copies of the *Encyclopedie* were sold, many outside France. The force of new ideas spread to urban centers across Europe and then across the Atlantic.

The *Encyclopedie* and the political ideas of the Enlightenment would influence Thomas Jefferson and would play a major role in the drafting of the American *Declaration of Independence*, in which a new nation called the United States of America would be formed under the beliefs that all men are created equal. The political ideas of the Enlightenment would also influence the drafting of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, a fundamental document of the French Revolution that would define individual and collective rights and would uphold the “natural right” of man. The French Revolution (1789-1799) would have a major impact throughout Europe. The absolute monarchy that had ruled France for centuries would collapse. French society would be transformed. Feudal, aristocratic and religious privileges that had held sway for centuries would come into question. New Enlightenment principles of equality, citizenship and inalienable rights would vie to take the place of old ideas concerning tradition, hierarchy of monarchy, aristocracy and religious authority.

Object: From the 1700s onward, French royalty and revolutionaries alike supported art that could move citizens politically and morally. Works were painted to instill in viewers pride and honor. The goal was to encourage citizens to sacrifice themselves for the greater needs of society and country. As such, art became strongly propagandistic, altarpieces for a new civic “religion.” When searching for subjects to paint, artists looked back to the art and mythology of ancient Greece and Rome and a time that many believed was inhabited with men and women who were both honorable and heroic.

This painting takes as its theme the ancient Greek drama *Alcestis* by the poet Euripides. The heroine of the tale is an honorable Greek woman named Alcestis. Alcestis’ husband, Admetus, angers the gods and must die

but is offered life as long as someone agrees to die in his place. After his aged parents refuse him, Alcestis volunteers to give her own life so that her husband's life might be spared. Peyron shows Alcestis on her deathbed. Her husband and young son are grieving by her side. Alcestis upholds her moral responsibility to her family, and by extension every citizen's moral responsibility to country. The actions of Alcestis are honorable and heroic, and at first glance, tragic. Alcestis, in her willingness to sacrifice her own life for that of her husband's, provides her with her own happy ending. How so? The ancient Greek mythological hero Herakles fights with death and wins, thus bringing Alcestis back from Hades and happily reuniting her with her family.

This painting, made in 1794, is a smaller version of the original painting that was exhibited in 1785 and now hangs in the Louvre. Ironically, Peyron enjoyed the patronage of King Louis XVI for *The Death of Alcestis*. Louis XVI would be executed by French revolutionaries in 1793. At first a paean to the monarchy, the work would become a battle cry for revolution and the rights of man.

Style characteristics: The theme is taken from an ancient Greek source. The composition derives from antiquity as well. Lacking pictorial depth, there is a shallow picture box with figures placed close to the foreground and parallel to the picture-plane. The placement of figures in the composition derives from classical bas-relief sculpture. The stage-space implies a left to right placement of figures. All these elements create a surface that is flat. Pillars flatten out the composition even further. Figures are sculptural. Indeed, the profile of the servant in the center appears to be the profile of an antique sculpture. Drapery folds are classically inspired, and the furniture is from classical antiquity as well. Outlines are clearly defined and crisp. Shapes are filled in with strong primary colors. Neoclassical line and drawing are paramount. Color is secondary. For all its drama, the work is classically balanced and composed.

Notes: The Neoclassical movement flourished until about 1800, after which an emphasis on reason gave way to Romanticism and its emphasis on emotion.

On the one hand, there were the Neoclassical artists Jacque Louis David and Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingre, both of whom would emphasize line and form. The works of David and Ingre have their roots in the work of the Carracci brothers and Poussin, Rafael and the Italian Renaissance, and Pericles and Greco-Roman traditions.

On the other hand, there were the Romantic artists Eugene Delacroix, Theodore Gericault and William Turner, all of whom would emphasize emotion, action and color. The works of Delacroix, Gericault and Turner have their roots in the work of Titian and the Venetian colorists and Rubens.

Out of these two movements, a dualism would develop between line and color that would create a division in painting that would last for one hundred years. This division would be called “the Poussinists verses the Rubenists.”

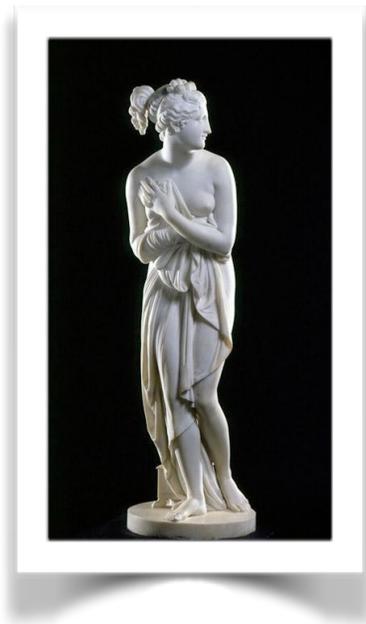
(17) *Venus Italica*, Workshop of Antonio Canova, Italian, circa 1815-1822  
(marble)

Neoclassicism—c. 1770-1820s

History: Sculpture in the late 1700s and early 1800s consisted mostly of monuments to contemporary historical events and public figures represented as heroes or deities and was not as innovative as painting and architecture.

Object: This work is another example of Neoclassicism. The artist Canova, a favorite of Napoleon, was one of the most influential European sculptors of his day. He carved the original *Venus Italica* to replace the ancient Roman *Medici Venus*, which was seized from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence by Napoleon in 1802 and given to France. Canova’s reinterpretation of the ancient *Venus* was considered a masterpiece. At least four other versions of the work were made in Canova’s studio before his death. This work was probably carved by one of Canova’s pupils and under his supervision.

Style characteristics: Drawing inspiration from classical examples, the marble surface of Canova’s *Venus* is smooth and flawless. However, her movement is gentler and she is less idealized than the *Medici Venus*. She more closely resembles a real woman and wears a contemporary hairstyle. As is recounted in the *Handbook of the Collections*, the poet Ugo Foscolo wrote in 1811: “When I saw this divine work of Canova, I sighed with a thousand desires, for really, if the *Medici Venus* is a most beautiful goddess, this is a most beautiful woman.” Canova has shown the goddess at her bath, modestly covering herself. There is a jewelry box at her feet instead



of the typical dolphin found in ancient Hellenistic statues of her. She is shown in profile—a Neoclassical device stemming back to Poussin.

## Romanticism

(18) *Fiercely the red sun*, Thomas Moran, American, 1875-1876 (oil on canvas)



Romanticism—c. 1800-1850

History: Romanticism was in part a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature. It was embodied most strongly in music, literature, and the visual arts. Its effect on politics was considerable.

During its peak, the Romantic movement was associated with classical liberalism. Classical liberalism was a political ideology founded on the ideas of liberty and equality. Expounded by philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), classical liberalism became a powerful force during the Age of the Enlightenment (1650-1700s). It rejected nobility, established religion, absolute monarchy, and the Divine Right of Kings. It stressed an individual's fundamental right to life, liberty and property. Revolutionaries in the American War of Independence and the French Revolution would use liberal philosophy to justify the armed overthrow of tyrannical rule. However, in the long term, Romanticism's effect on the growth of nationalism (strong identification of a group of individuals with a nation) was probably more significant.

While the Romantic movement supported the liberalism of the Enlightenment and idealized the French Revolution and Napoleon (as did the Neoclassical movement that came before it), it prized intuition and emotion over Enlightenment reason. Indeed, it validated strong emotion (horror and awe) as a source of aesthetic experience, in which man, in facing untamed nature, confronts the sublime. Fully embracing the exotic and the power of the imagination, the Romantic movement was an escape from the effects of the Industrial Revolution (circa 1760-1840), when a manual labor and draft-animal-based economy in parts of Great Britain turned toward a machine-based economy. Changes were significant in many areas, including agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transportation and power. The Industrial Revolution would spread throughout Europe, North America and eventually the rest of the world. It would have a

profound effect on social, economic and cultural conditions and would propel the arts toward modernism.

Object: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem titled *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) recounts the story of an Ojibwa chief and his struggle against evil along the shores of Lake Superior. Although Longfellow mistook his hero for a probable historical 16<sup>th</sup> century Iroquois chief named Hiawatha, who unified the Iroquois people and co-founded the Iroquois League, the poem inspired many artists, including the artist Thomas Moran. In fact, in 1860 Moran traveled to the southern shore of Lake Superior—the fictional Hiawatha's "shining Big-Sea-Water." There he sketched the rock formations. Moran titled his work with the following quotation from the poem, "Fiercely the red sun descending/Burned his way along the heavens." It is at this point in the poem that the hero's grandmother Nokomis points across the water toward the western horizon, where the murderer of Hiawatha's ancestor resides. Longfellow's words resound with a vibrancy and potency in Moran's work.

*The Song of Hiawatha* is an example of the Romantic movement in American literature and is not an example of Native American oral traditions. A landscape, the painting can be viewed as embodying the spiritual guidance of the feminine with the physical and emotional pursuit of the masculine.

Style characteristics: Here we have a Romantic primordial world in which the hero must confront the power of creation and his own destiny. A sunset sets the clouds afire, while the rocks rise above the "black pitch-water," reflecting the intensity of Hiawatha's spiritual and physical journey. A chromatic explosion of color and painterly brushstrokes, the work echoes the work of Romantic British painter Joseph M. W. Turner. Indeed, Moran was once called the "American Turner."

American art would lag behind art movements in Europe throughout much of history. Dated 1875-1876, our work was made twenty-five years after the Romantic movement had ended in Europe and at a time when both Realism and Impressionism were well underway there.

Notes: In addition to Turner, in England the artists John Constable and William Blake are considered to be Romantic painters. In Spain, the artist Goya is considered to be a Romantic painter.

## Realism

(19) *Weaning the Calf*, Winslow Homer, American, 1875  
(oil on canvas)

Realism—c. 1850-1880

History: The Realist Movement began in France in the 1850s. Realists rebelled against both Neoclassicism and Romanticism. They attempted to portray subjects true-to-life and free from idealization. At the core, Realists believed that truth or objective reality could be discovered through one's senses. As such, they sought to depict subjects as they existed in the third person, as accurate objective truths without embellishment or interpretation, without the artist's own beliefs and practices coloring his or her perception of them.



Realists were against historical and mythological themes, Renaissance themes, and themes promoted by the Roman Catholic Church. They favored landscapes, people at work, and the commonplace and demanded that artists experience events and subjects firsthand and not paint what they simply heard about or imagined. Artist and leader of the Realist movement, Gustave Courbet, once said, "Show me an angel and I will paint her." Realists rejected the primary colors and rationalism of Neoclassicism and the high-keyed, intense color and emotionalism of Romanticism. Instead, they attempted to use colors true to the subject. Colors were either bright or drab depending on the subject and were often muted and earthy. As earlier artists had done, Realists used black. (It would not be until Impressionism that artists would experiment with removing black from their pallet.) At times, themes of ugly and sordid subjects were portrayed.

With the introduction of photography in the 1800s, the demand for representations that looked "objectively real" grew, and Realist works gained in popularity. However, when modernism emerged in Europe toward the end of the nineteenth century, artists would increasingly seek new approaches to the visual arts. After all, if one wanted a true-to-life rendition of something, one could always take a photograph of it. Over time, photography would gain acceptance as a fine art in its own right through the celebrated works of Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen and others.

Object: The tragic toll of human life and devastation of the American Civil War led many Americans to seek escape into the nostalgia of childhood. Homer's paintings of the 1870s seem to meet this demand. Painted the year before Mark Twain published his novel *Tom Sawyer*, this work too seems to be a fond memory of idyllic days gone by, when perhaps the only struggle lay with an unruly calf.

Style characteristics: Although not an example of the female figure in art, the work is included because it is a fairly good example of Realism. This is a typical 19<sup>th</sup> century farm scene with fields, haystacks and farm animals. Homer shed both the primary color and heroic drama of Neoclassicism and the heightened color and emotional drama of Romanticism. In their place he has given the viewer the commonplace, a glimpse into the everyday, of something seen first hand. The only struggle going on is between the boy in the foreground, who is struggling to wean a calf from its mother's milk, and the calf, who is about to tear the rope and stubbornly foil the boy's plans. Tension between the boy pulling the reluctant calf away from its mother is a study in arrested motion. The cow, at right, looks back and appears to bellow for her calf. The huge haystacks behind the boys provide a strong contrast to the flat horizon. Bright colors of chickens and the farmer's shirt help to move the viewer's eye across the canvas.

Similar to Homer's other paintings, in which children read stories in the grass and play games outside the schoolhouse, the work is about children enjoying childhood. It is also about children coming of age. The role of the African American boy in tatters who struggles with the stubborn calf while two boys stand by can be read as a comment on the uncertain future of African Americans during the period of Reconstruction. However, perhaps Homer, whilst satisfying a need to shed the horrors of the Civil War, was simply offering the viewer a non-idealized, realistic view of a boy similar to Twain's character Huckleberry Finn, in which Twain used realistic language (colloquial speech) to describe a character and his adventures.

While Homer's work is realistic, it can also be compared to that of the Impressionists working contemporaneously in France. Spots of broken color energize the composition, and light seems to lie with an almost tangible quality on the figures of the boys in the middle ground. Indeed, the sunlight and shadow as they reveal both color and form seem to offer the viewer what the Impressionists were seeking—optical truth.

Notes: Jean Baptiste Camille Corot, Jean-Francois Millet, Honore Daumier and Gustave Courbet led the Realist movement in France. Millet and other members of the Barbizon School worked together in the small village of

Barbizon, near the Forest of Fontainebleau, and painted landscapes outdoors on site, rather than in the studio. Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer, both of whom visited France in the 1860s, brought back the influences of Corot and Courbet to the United States.

## Impressionism

(20) *The Garden Parasol*, Frederick Carl Frieseke, American, circa 1910  
(oil on canvas)

Impressionism—c. 1870-1888

History: Impressionism was a style of art that originated with a group of Paris-based artists, including Claude Monet, Edouard Manet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, and Camille Pissarro. Differing greatly from the accepted salon (Neoclassical) French academic art that continued to be popular and following Realism's lead, Impressionism disregarded traditional Neoclassical subjects as well as the Romantic idea of art conveying emotion. Instead, like Realism that attempted to record with accuracy the appearance of the physical world, Impressionism attempted to record sensory perceptions and visual impressions objectively, without the artist's own beliefs and practices coloring his or her interpretation of them. However, Impressionists took this line of inquiry even further when they sought to record representations of light. Realists painted what they saw. Impressionists painted what they saw but added transience, atmosphere, the ephemeral!



Object: A generation of American painters fell in love with Impressionism. Many of them would continue to paint in the style long after it fell out of favor in Europe. This work is one such example. It was painted in 1910, long after modern styles such as Post Impressionism had developed in Europe and at a time when Cubism was emerging. The American artist who painted this work, Frederick Carl Frieseke, is one such artist. He arrived in Paris as a student in 1898 and remained abroad for most of his life. Mostly he painted women, dressed or nude. His style is one of rapturous color and vivacious brushwork. The work evokes a summer idyll. The setting is the artist's garden at his house in Giverny, where he spent many years as a neighbor of Monet's. The seated woman is Sadie, Frieseke's wife, who

modeled for him. A girl approaches Sadie from behind. Sadie and her female companion are shown as cultivated women of leisure. Sadie is enjoying herself in the garden. She is taking tea and reading underneath the shade of a large, fashionable Japanese parasol.

Style characteristics: An emphasis on light marks Frieseke as a follower of Impressionism. The light coming through the colored parasol spreads a kaleidoscope of color across Sadie's white dress. Indeed, reflections of light shatter color everywhere, even in the darkest of shadows. The broken brushstrokes that make up the flowers in the background are the part of the picture painted mostly in the style of Impressionism. Instead of mixing complementary colors together (red with green, blue with orange, yellow with violet), Frieseke applied complementary colors in thick dabs right next to one another. As a result, the colors smooth out and mix in one's eye, not on the canvas. The complementary colors energize the scene. Indeed, the petals appear to vibrate under the intense heat of the sun. The swirling colors of the large Japanese parasol that fill the upper left-hand quarter of the canvas are closer to a style called Fauvism, a style that originated in Paris sometime after 1900.

Notes: Influences on Impressionism include (1) photography, which led to unexpected views of people and places, often with asymmetrical compositions with no central focus and flattened forms as well as figures and objects cut off at the edges; and (2) Japanese woodblock prints, which led to an interest in flat, unmodeled color areas and unusual spatial organization, in which modern diagonals were used to create depth (instead of the Renaissance "window-view" with its central vanishing point).

The American artists James McNeill Whistler, who lived and worked in England, and Mary Cassatt, who lived and worked in France, were influenced by the work of the Impressionists.

## Post-Impressionism

Post-Impressionism—c. 1880-1905

History: Post-Impressionism was not a unified movement. It describes artists working at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who were influenced by Impressionism but felt it was too limiting. Post-Impressionism followed two different paths. Much of 20<sup>th</sup> century art would develop out of these two approaches. Color was central to both. (1) First, there was an attempt to use color to build up the permanence of form, as seen in the work of Paul Cezanne and Georges Seurat. This approach would influence the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century styles such as Cubism, De Stijl, Abstraction,

and Hard-Edge. (2) Second, there was an attempt to use color expressively and symbolically, as seen in the work of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. This approach would influence 20<sup>th</sup> century styles such as Fauvism, Expressionism, and Surrealism.

Important artists in this period include the French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French artists Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon, French artist Henri Rousseau, Art Nouveau English artist Aubrey Beardsley, the Belgian artist James Ensor, and the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. A brief discussion of the major Post-Impressionist artists Cezanne, Seurat, van Gogh and Gauguin follows.

#### (1) Color as Permanent Form

- (a) Paul Cezanne is considered to be the father of modern art. He regarded form as essential, fundamental. He reduced form to three basic categories: the cone, the cylinder and the sphere. He built up form using color alone. He created depth via the psychological effect of “warm” colors (such as reds and oranges and yellows, which appear to come forward) and “cool” colors (such as dark blues and grays, which appear to recede). He kept the Impressionist palette and the Impressionists’ technique of applying strokes of colors, but used patches or patterns of color to construct rather than dissolve form.
- (b) Georges Seurat applied scientific color theories to his work. Essentially, he reduced the Impressionistic strokes of color to individual dots or patterns of pure color laid side by side. This technique has been called Optical Painting, Neo-Impressionism, Divisionism, and Pointilism. Seurat preferred the term Divisionism, a technique of separating colors, not merely a technique of painting tiny dots as in Pointilism. Seurat created the illusion of three-dimensional space in his works by the size and placement of objects and by diagonal groupings of objects.

#### (2) Color as Symbolic Expression

- (a) For Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh, color was symbolic. He used arbitrary color, not locally-true color, to express emotional states. His color pallet ranged from dark to light. His earliest works were done primarily in grays, greens, browns, and black. His later works were influenced by Impressionism and Japanese prints and were done in brighter colors. Van Gogh changed his style according to his mental state. When in a stable emotional state, he used clear colors, realistic perspective, and strong, straight strokes. When in a disturbed emotional state, he used dissonant colors, distorted perspective and swirling strokes. His thick brushstrokes were a tactile counterpoint to his intense colors.

- (b) Paul Gauguin rebelled against European civilization. He sought to renew western art by connecting it to primitive art. Accordingly, Gauguin traveled to traditional, less developed areas such as Brittany and Tahiti and depicted life there. He was influenced by Eastern art, Primitive art, and Medieval European stained glass. He used exaggerated color decoratively and to express emotion. He dispensed with perspective and modeling and created forms that were flat and simplified into patterns. His lines were rhythmic, decorative, distorted and emotive (expressive).

Notes: Starting with Giotto in the Renaissance, creating the illusion of three-dimensional space onto a flat canvas would become the primary goal of artists. As such, for centuries linear perspective and modeling would be used to hide the fact that the space was merely an illusion. By the time of Cezanne and other modern artists, however, color would play a key role in creating the illusion of space. The difference: these artists would openly remind the viewer that such space was merely that—an illusion. In short, the canvas was just a canvas. It was art, not life.

From the beginning, artists have asked viewers to experience works of art deeply and directly. At other times, artists have pushed back a curtain and allowed viewers a more detached look into a private space. With Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, artists like Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec would do the latter. Indeed, their art would open up to the viewer moments that are very personal.

### Impressionism/Expressionism

- (21) *Eve*, Auguste Rodin, French, modeled 1883, cast 1967 (bronze)

Rodin's Style—1860s-early 1900s

History: Although Rodin didn't start out to rebel against the past, he would come up against a long-standing sculptural tradition, in which figural works were expected to be decorative, formulaic or thematic. In part because Rodin would go beyond the factual in portraying historical events as well as mythological and biblical figures and at times would abandon themes all together, he is considered to be the father of modern sculpture.



Between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, Rodin studied at the traditional Petit Ecole, a school specializing in art and mathematics. He was never accepted into Paris's foremost school of art, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (Grand Ecole), even though he tried to gain acceptance several times. Perhaps because his early training took place in commercial studios rather than at the Grand Ecole, Rodin would be influenced less by traditional approaches to figural sculpture favored by the French establishment and would be more receptive to new ideas and practices. In any case, in his most celebrated works, Rodin would present the viewer with realistic models of the human body, in which through a mastery of form, light and shadow individual character, intense emotion and rough physicality would be celebrated. In this regard, Rodin followed Realism and Impressionism in that he dispensed with idealization and attempted to discover the visible "truths" of man and nature. However, he went beyond the surfaces of Realism and Impressionism and sought inner truths as well. Indeed, in Rodin's hands, complex, agitated, deeply pocketed surfaces offer the viewer a celebration of an expressionistic, emotional state of man's soul.

Rodin was greatly influenced by the work of Renaissance artist Michelangelo. Like Michelangelo, Rodin created figures that seem to emerge from the stone (and metal) and express themselves. Like the Impressionists, Rodin portrayed figures in "accidental" poses rather than in contrived poses and modeled the changing effects of light on form. However, like the Post-Impressionists (van Gogh and Gauguin) and the Expressionists, Rodin emphasized emotional impact as well. Indeed, Rodin used the human form to personify various emotions and ideas. One of Rodin's achievements was to pioneer the use of the fragment or partial figure as a complete or finished sculptural form. He would model his figures in clay, have his compositions remodeled in different sizes, and then have plaster molds made. After this, works would be cast in bronze or carved in marble by a stonecutter. Many of the bronzes that were made from Rodin's plaster molds were cast posthumously. His forms often combine smooth and rough textures and complete and unfinished sections.

Object: Rodin envisioned *Eve* as one half of a pair—the other half being a figure of *Adam*—intended to go on either side or on top of *The Gates of Hell*. *The Gates of Hell* was a commission that Rodin worked on for many years, which was meant to adorn a building for the decorative arts in Paris but was never built. Rodin worked on the project on and off for thirty seven years, until his death in 1917. Rodin's primary literary inspiration for the work was the early 14<sup>th</sup> century epic poem written by Dante Alighieri called the *Divine Comedy*, which describes the poet's travels through Hell,

Purgatory, and Heaven. On a deeper level, the poem is an allegory of the soul's journey to God. Rodin realized many independent works from the commission, including one of the most renowned works in the entire history of art—*The Thinker*.

Style characteristics: Sculptors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century typically represented Eve as unspoiled and beautiful and exhibiting both innocence and passion. Rodin chose instead to represent Eve's emotional turmoil in her role in the Fall. *Eve* is a masterful juxtaposition of form, light and shadow. Rodin depicts Eve's troubled, emotional state as she attempts to retreat into her body. Her arms act as a shield. Her one hand, palm facing outward, feebly pushes back the anger of God. Her other hand clutches her side. Her head sinks downward, weighed down by an unbearable guilt. As curator David Steel wrote in *Rodin*, "Every curve, joint, and muscle of her body expresses her despair and shame as she becomes aware of not only her sin but also her nakedness." At the time, Rodin's model for *Eve* was pregnant. At first, Rodin unknowingly modeled her figure as it changed before his eyes. Rodin later acknowledged that his model's condition was a fortunate coincidence for him as he worked to convey the first woman's intense emotions and palpable physicality.

### Non-western Art: African

(22) *Sande Society Helmet Mask*, Mende People, Sierra Leone, 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
(wood and metal)

Nonwestern Art: African—20th Century

History: Art is not just something that expresses beauty. Art can be functional as well. It can be used in some way. Much of traditional African art was meant to be used in ceremonies as well as to express beauty. For example, traditional African art is meant to be worn or used in ceremonies to honor family, to show status and power of leaders, or to insure fertility, a good harvest or a plentiful catch of fish. Traditional African art has a ritual context that expresses the spiritual, vital and moral.

Object: Designs in traditional African art are typically in animal and human form. This work is a helmet mask for a female dancer from a society of women in the Mende community. It is a tradition that is still vital today.



Helmets such as this one are used in an initiation ceremony as an induction into the society. Helmet masks were traditionally made by men; however, today some apprentices are women. Long ago, girls would undergo several years of study, in which they would learn cooking and child-care in order to be inducted into the society. Today, Mende girls go to school to learn subjects such as math and science. It is a great honor to be a part of this society in the Mende community.

Style characteristics: Designs in traditional African art are often stylized: forms are simplified and repetitive in a manner that is consistent with a group of artists over a period of time. Modern art, which was influenced by traditional African forms such as African masks like this one (discussed below), is often abstracted. Abstraction is to simplify or take away details in an individual manner. Traditional African artists could also abstract their forms, while Modern artists could belong to a larger stylistic group.

A girl would wear this wooden helmet mask over her face and heavy raffia in layers over her body, which would conceal her form. The mask and other clothing are symbolic. They exaggerate a girl's features and make her appear huge, an indication that she is well-nourished and, by extension, fertile. The eyes on helmet masks are either closed or downcast, which give the wearer a deferential look. The mouth is small, thus showing a girl who does not express her own opinions. (Menopausal Mende women achieve male status and can express their opinions widely and sit on councils.) Decorations on the top of helmet masks differ widely. For example, horns are used as containers for medicinal purposes and represent power.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Cubism

(23) *Blue Dancer*, Alexander Archipenko, Ukrainian, modeled 1913-18, cast after 1961  
(bronze with blue patina, marble base)

Cubism—early 1900s

History: Modernism came about from changes in Western society in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The development of modern industrial society and the rapid growth of cities, followed by the horrors of WWI, were among the factors that shaped Modernism. Like earlier Enlightenment thinkers, modernists believed in the power of man to reshape his environment through practical



experimentation, scientific knowledge and technology. However, unlike Enlightenment thought, Modernism rejected the certainty of reason as well as the idea of a merciful, all-powerful God. Moreover, the belief that history and civilization were progressive and that progress was always good came under scrutiny. By the time of WWI, the world would witness the destructive power of technology and many would condemn the modern state of man.

Not all modernists rejected religion or all aspects of Enlightenment thought. However, they did question the principles of the previous age such that traditional forms of art, literature, religious faith, social organization and daily life were rejected, and new economic, social and political beliefs and practices began to take root. In short, thought and action became revolutionary: it sought to overthrow rather than enlighten. Four of the most significant and influential thinkers of the period were naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882), philosopher Karl Marx (1818-1883), neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and theoretical physicist Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection undermined religious certainty and the idea of human uniqueness. Marx argued there were fundamental contradictions within the capitalist system and workers were anything but free. Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* (1905) and the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud would lead many to question the very nature of reality itself.

Object: Cubism is considered to be the most influential Modernist art movement of the 20th century. It evolved as a style in Paris by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque sometime after 1907. Cezanne's reductive analysis of the optical world into color planes was adopted by these artists in their use of simple forms of cylinders, spheres and cones. Cubism abandoned the five hundred-year-old system of linear perspective and modeling and regarded painting less as a window onto the world than a subjective response to the world. This was a process that began with the Post-Impressionists. The purpose of Cubism was to liberate form from natural appearances, reduce form to essential planes, and represent simultaneous views.

There are two types of Cubism: (1) Analytical Cubism of 1908-1911, in which forms were reduced to essential planes and simultaneous views were represented, and (2) Synthetic Cubism of 1912-1930, in which stenciling and lettering and vibrant color were added to create collage and then 3D assemblage. Picasso's famous painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* (1911) is considered a proto-Cubist work, in which the faces of the figures become

abstracted forms derived from non-Western sculpture, in this case, African masks.

Our Cubist-inspired work was modeled by Ukrainian artist Alexander Archipenko. When he was a child, Archipenko had an experience that one day would help him make a major contribution to art. He happened to look at two identical vases that were placed close together on a shelf and instantly he saw a third vase that was formed by the empty space in between the two vases. He would draw upon this experience and would use a hole or other empty space as an important part of his design as seen here.

Style characteristics: *Blue Dancer* is made of bronze and is covered with a blue patina. Archipenko made the surface of his dancer smooth, similar to ancient Greek and Roman sculpture. However, unlike Greek and Roman sculpture, Archipenko chose not to make the *Blue Dancer* look true-to-life. Instead of copying nature, Archipenko abstracted or simplified nature in an individual manner. The result is a Cubist-inspired work comprised of simplified geometric forms *alla Cezanne's* spheres, cones and cylinders. The dancer's breasts are conical. Her head is an oviform. Her elbows, knees and bent waist are composed of triangular shapes. There are geometries in the empty spaces as well. There is a triangle in the space between her legs. A trapezoid in the crook of her elbow.

The details on the dancer's face have been abstracted. Missing are her nose and mouth, while her eyes are implied by a simple outline. Her arms and legs are posed asymmetrically, which give the work a sense of mass in motion. Indeed, the figure appears to defy gravity and rotate on an axis and occupy the space above and behind and around and through her. There is both tension and release in the work. *Blue Dancer* is full of energy and action and is a paradigm of Modernism in that she reveals a new dynamic interplay between form and the space that she occupies and reaches out into.

Notes: Abstraction is the logical extension of ideas of Post-Impressionists at the end of the 19th century. Synonyms for abstract include nonobjective and nonrepresentational. To abstract is to simplify. An abstract image can be grounded in an actual object, or it can give visual form to something inherently non-visual like emotions. Red may represent anger, passion, the female. The idea that a visual or musical sensation has an equivalent in another medium of expression was a popular 19th century idea called synesthesia. Spiritual beliefs were central to the development of abstract art. Abstract art followed two separate paths: (1) the geometric, hard-edged structuralism of Cezanne and Seurat (from which Cubism evolved), and (2)

the floral, male/female, organic expressionism of van Gogh and Gauguin (from which Expressionism and Surrealism evolved).

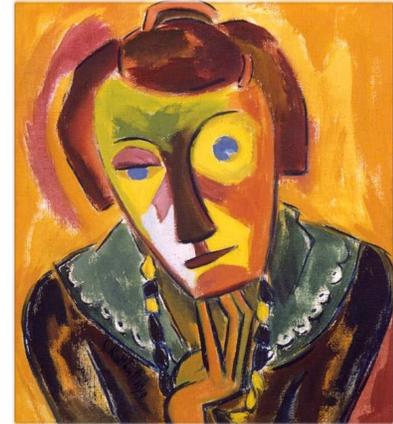
## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: German Expressionism

(24) *Portrait of Emy*, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, German, 1919

(oil on canvas)

German Expressionism—early 1900s

History: Expressionist artists communicate emotion by distorting color or shape or surface or space in a highly personal way. The opposite of Expressionism with its emphasis on capturing a subjective and internal psychological state is Impressionism with its emphasis on capturing an objective and non-personal view of the external world. One key art movement in the early 20th century related to Expressionism was Fauvism, a movement that lasted only a few years, but as a style began around 1900 and continued beyond 1910. The leaders of the movement were French artists Henri Matisse and Andre Derain. Fauvism as a style involved intense, clashing colors; distorted perspective and drawing; distorted natural appearances; and flat, decorative forms. The key Expressionist art movement of the early 20th century was German Expressionism, which some scholars claim grew out of works by 19th century Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh (discussed above) and works by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, in particular Munch's work *The Scream* (1893). Munch's style included emotional expression via strong arbitrary color and pattern; psychic anguish; themes of sex, death and loneliness; and ideas personified.



German Expressionism includes: (1) Die Brucke (“The Bridge”), formed in Dresden in 1905 by a group of all-German artists including Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (some members later relocated to Berlin); and (2) Der Blaue Reiter (“The Blue Rider”), formed in Munich in 1911 by an international group of artists including Wassily Kandinsky (Russian), Franz Marc (German) and Paul Klee (German-Swiss). Die Brucke critiqued the materialism of the urban environment. Their goal was to recapture a spirituality absent in modern life by creating a bridge between the natural world and man and a bridge between the past and the present. Landscapes, cityscapes, genre scenes, portraits and still life were

painted. Design elements include: harsh, clashing colors; aggressive, expressive brush strokes; and distorted and simplified forms. Der Blaue Reiter artists, on the other hand, placed less emphasis on oppressive psychological states. Instead, they abstracted form to emphasize the spiritual. Kandinsky in particular believed that color, line and shape embodied emotional states akin to musical phrasing. He argued that if a person can listen to music and enjoy the shaping of tone and be moved emotionally without narrative then an artist should be able to remove narrative from the purely visual. The rise of Hitler in Germany gave rise to an organized effort to rid society of all that in his view was degenerate. Many works of modern art, which included works by German Expressionists, such as those by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, were destroyed.

Object: This is a portrait of Emy Frisch, the artist's young wife.

Style characteristics: The coloring of Emy's face is dissonant and unnatural. Green and yellow tones juxtapose to black and pink. In addition, the form of Emy's face is heavily outlined and flattened and distorted. One can see the influence of Cubism and African masks and German wood-cuts. Schmidt-Rottluff has transformed his wife's face into a mask that is at once pensive yet serene, sad yet happy. Perhaps the artist created this duality by dividing her face into two distinct halves. Looking at Emy's face, the left side has a mouth that points downward and an eye that is half-closed, while the right side has an upturned mouth and wide-opened eye. Schmidt-Rottluff made a pendant portrait of himself in cool bluish tones. For many, the fiery colors of Emy represent the passionate nature of the female, while the calm blues of the artist represent male introspection.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Surrealism

(25) *Sunset (Medusa)*, Eugene Berman, American, 1945

(oil on canvas)

Surrealism—1920s (Paris-30s and 40s)

History: Surrealism developed out of Dada. Scholars claim that Dada was a movement that began in Zurich around 1915 and quickly spread to Berlin and New York and other cities. Dada artists protested WWI and the society that produced it. Reflecting the lack of meaning in modern society, they sought



to make art meaningless as well. They even rejected the Dada movement itself. Dada is a non-sensical sounding word with a variety of meanings in several languages perhaps stemming from “hobby-horse” in French or “yes, yes” in Romanian, after Romanian artists Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco’s frequent use of the words. Dada sprang up during WWI as a response to the tragic toll of human life. For many, the havoc that the new machine-age technology created far outweighed the material benefits it promised. Dada artists blamed society’s belief in progress and reason and its scientific and technological developments for the near destruction of civilization. Art, they insisted, had to replace the rational with the irrational. It had to become absurd and playful, confrontational and nihilistic, intuitive and emotive.

Dada is not a style, but a world-view. Art objects were made by unorthodox means. Dada exploited chance, the result of the accidental in which the placement of materials were determined, for example, by dropping threads onto a board and then pasting them to the spot where they fell. Kandinsky’s approach to painting anticipated and influenced Dada with its spontaneous, intuitive expression of the whimsical, fantastic, humorous, and the absurd. French-American artist Marcel Duchamp was one of the most important artist’s of the twentieth century. His work is associated with Dadaism, although he was not directly associated with Dada groups. Duchamp’s pursuits led to readymades, new objects made non-sensical by connecting disparate objects together. Duchamp’s *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) was the first of his readymades, in which he combined two ordinary, mass-produced objects and displaced them from their expected uses, in this case, by mounting a wheel atop a seat of an ordinary wooden stool.

Ready-made art is a precursor to Surrealism in its optical illusions and non-sensical objects. Automatism, which is a process of the artist yielding himself to instinctive actions, was another method that Dada artists and then Surrealist artists employed. Influenced by the dream analysis, free association and the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Jung, Dada and Surrealist artists sought to depict images from the subconscious mind. The work of one artist would greatly influence both Dada and Surrealism: the fantasy art of the Greco-Italian Giorgio de Chirico, who painted barren, eerie cityscapes. The disjunctive realities of his work would influence Dada artists, while the eerie mood and visionary qualities of his work would influence the Surrealists.

Surrealism was coined by the French poet, writer and art critic Apollinaire. Surrealism was an exploration of the subconscious. It sought to liberate art from reason and depict the imagery of dreams. It focused on themes of sex,

dreams and the unconscious. Surrealist artists produced illogical and startling effects in their work by placing elements not normally found together. Surrealists believed that the more apart the relationship between two juxtaposed realities were, the greater its emotional power.

There were two types of Surrealism: (1) the abstract Surrealism of Catalan Spanish artist Joan Miro with its hallucination of fanciful shapes in bright colors on various backgrounds, and (2) the image-based Surrealism of Spanish artist Salvador Dali with its dream-like, mysterious, lonely landscapes and absurd objects, such as limp watches and ghastly human fragments, rendered in a naturalistic style. Salvador Dali would say, "There is only one difference between a madman and me. I am not mad."

Object: Russian artist Eugene Berman fled Russia in 1918 to escape the Revolution. He would eventually flee unrest in Europe in 1935 and settle first in New York and then in southern California, where he would join a community of artists and actors and musicians, including expatriate composer Igor Stravinsky. Scholars describe Berman's work as one of tragic vision, in which he drew inspiration from the work of surrealist artists. Suspicious of the promise of progress and a better future, Berman painted mysterious and some say obsessive reveries on the passage of time and the transience of human existence. Our work is one in a series of paintings that Berman started in the 1940s, each one depicting a psychologically remote woman who appears to be suffering alone in a post-apocalyptic world.

Style characteristics: The woman in our work sits alone with her face hidden behind a flaming mass of red hair. She is removed from the viewer both visually and psychologically. Is she Medusa, the Gorgon monster from Greek mythology who is described as having the face of a hideous female with venomous snakes for hair? Or is she a setting sun, a moment in time when the optimism of the day has been squandered and all one has to look forward to is the darkness? A Surrealist work, the woman is dressed in an old-fashioned costume of velvet and lace and is kneeling on a shallow ledge before a wall that appears to be studded with bullet holes and covered in mould. The artist explains the wall is a metaphor not only of the desolation and destruction of war but of the moral and spiritual degeneration of mankind. The woman strikes a pose that makes her appear to be on the verge of madness. Or perhaps she is a ghost? A nightmare? The scene is not totally without promise, however. There is a small oval opening amongst the decay in which one can see a crescent moon. Is the shape of the moon symbolic of some hope for the future? A chance to recapture the innocence of our past? Perhaps. Perhaps not.

Notes: At various times, Surrealism aligned with communism and anarchism. Surrealism has its roots in Dada, Cubism, abstraction of Kandinsky, Expressionism, Post-Impressionism, works by the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century Early Netherlandish painter Hieronymus Bosch, and the so-called primitive and naive arts.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Abstract Expressionism (NY School)

(26) *Two Figures*, Robert Motherwell,  
American, 1960  
(oil and charcoal on canvas)

Expressionism (NY)—1940s-50s

History: The devastation of Europe during WWII shifted the center of western art to America. WWII artists who opposed Fascism and Nazism fled to the relative safety of the United States. Artists in New York City in particular were already contending with

Surrealist ideas, and several American artists including Motherwell closely aligned with the self-exiled Surrealist artists, although with some reservations. Out of this intermingling of artists during the 1940s and 1950s, the style of Abstract Expressionism was born. It was the first American movement to influence the art world internationally.

There are two types of Abstract Expressionist artists: (1) gestural or action painters called painterly abstractionists (for example, Jackson Pollock), who stressed the act of putting paint onto the canvas, and (2) colorists or color field painters called post painterly abstractionists (for example, Mark Rothko), who stressed soft-edged geometric shapes with luminous colors. All Abstract Expressionists believed that art making was a spiritual process. This approach can be traced back to Kandinsky's theories that art should bypass the intellectual. Abstract Expressionists sought to express pent-up emotions through the free application of paint and to assert their individual personalities, which they believed the modern mechanized world had stifled. The subject of their work was the act of painting itself. Their works were nonrepresentational and had the look of rough spontaneity and refreshing energy. Content was to be grasped intuitively by the viewer.



Abstract Expressionists continued to use oil on canvas but also used enamels, house paints and metallic paints. Instead of stretchers and easels, at times they would tack the canvas directly onto the wall (Franz Kline) or would roll it out on the floor (Jackson Pollock). Instead of being brushed, paint would be dripped or thrown onto canvas (Jackson Pollock) or would be scraped off until the surface was textured and sculptural (de Kooning).

Object: Motherwell was both a gestural and color-field abstractionist. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, he used groupings of black shapes to explore complex relationships that directly address the horrors and loss and violence of war. The abstractions he explored in the figural pair here may address this universal sense of loss or perhaps one that is more personal.

Style characteristics: This work can barely contain a pair of massive black shapes. Although the piece is abstract, the viewer can't help but compare the two silhouetted forms by tracing their outlines. How do the forms relate to each other? Are they opposites? The straighter outline of the form on the left contrasts with the swelling curves of the form on the right. Do they reference the male and female form? The conscious and unconscious? A delicate tension of attraction and repulsion? The artist's spontaneous method of painting can be seen in his loose brushstrokes. Motherwell often laid down passages quickly without any deliberate planning. However, upon reflection, he would alter his compositions. The drips that fall toward the top of the canvas and over the frame tell us the composition was originally oriented upside down, with the larger form on the left. Motherwell reconsidered the composition and began working on the painting again, this time with the larger figure to the right.

Notes: Earlier, at the start of the twentieth century, American art lagged far behind that of European art. A few American artists rebelled against the norm and worked in the Realist and Impressionist styles. However, by that time, European artists had already embraced newer more modern styles. American artists would eventually move toward modernism due to: (1) travel in France and Germany by young American artists; (2) Alfred Stieglitz' 291 Gallery (opened in 1905 at 291 Fifth Avenue, New York), where the work of European pioneers was shown and American artists were encouraged to experiment stylistically; and (3) the 1913 Armory Show launched first in New York City, where works by modern artists were shown including the work of Picasso and Duchamp.

Early American Modernists include Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Edward Hopper. Abstraction was not universally accepted. Some American artists preferred to paint representational works in naturalistic or

Realistic styles. Andrew Wyeth, who painted rural life in a realistic style, is one such artist.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Pop Art

(27) *Six Women*, Alex Katz, American, 1975

(oil on canvas)

Pop Art—1950s & 1960s

History: Pop art began in England in the mid-1950s. It was taken up by painters in the United States, where it flourished in the 1960s. Pop artists explored themes of celebrity culture and advertisement. The goal of Pop artists was to depict familiar objects of everyday life and popular culture from a position of cool acceptance, not satire. Everyday objects and images from advertising media, public figures, movie stars and cultural heroes were portrayed in absurd combinations. One example is Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* (1962), in which the Hollywood star takes her proper place as a modern day Venus.

Object: Katz worked in a style that celebrates the cool detachment of Pop Art. His work portrays a gathering of friends at his studio loft in Manhattan. The scene was carefully staged.

Style characteristics: Resembling an advertising billboard, this large canvas portrays six women who are as emotionally detached from one another as they are from the viewer. Katz achieves this by contrasting the absurd size and closeup of the women's heads with a space that is flattened and casually cropped. There is a lack of contact, a vacuum if you will, between the figures. One woman has her back to the viewer and is completely remote. Another has her arms folded across her chest as if retreating into an empty shell. Others obliquely stare off into space. The women are young and beautiful and well-groomed, yes, but they look past one another and are islands of isolation unto themselves. Katz strips his figures of any individual qualities by simplifying and idealizing their features. Indeed, very little besides hairstyle and clothes and age differentiates one figure from any other. In short, Katz has objectified his women. Each one seems to be the same person or at least more of the same. The figures are like a series of pop objects on display. However, Katz does not satirize them. He



simply asks the viewer to coolly observe their disconnected state of existence.

Notes: During this period, multiple imagery intended to be viewed as a series was developed by Andy Warhol. The work of Warhol and fellow Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein is characterized by precise technique and has the look of commercial illustration. In contrast, the work of Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg is characterized by thick impasto, smeary brushwork and imprecise technique. Rauschenberg made “combines” (paintings combined with newsprint and photographs). Warhol and Rauschenberg also made serigraphy (silkscreen stencils printed onto paper or canvas with paint films). Acrylic paints, characterized by bright colors, rapid drying, and non-yellowing properties, were used by some Pop artists instead of oils.

Another style of painting in this period is Hard Edge, in which colors are separated with precise edges often with a machine-like perfection. Frank Stella is most closely associated with this style as is the later works of Ellsworth Kelly. Hard Edge painting is a form of Minimalism, which is a style of geometric abstraction that developed in sculpture as well and was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism. Ronald Bladen and Joel Shapiro are two sculptors who worked in this style.

### Contemporary

(28) *Mother and Child*, Daisy Youngblood, American, 1987  
(low-fire clay and wood)

Contemporary—1970s to the Present

History: Styles become outdated very quickly. Artists struggle to stay current and also to compete with television and other forms of popular culture for an audience. It is not surprising that new styles and new artists are constantly emerging. In general, this period is a working away from the Modernism of the first half of the twentieth century and its rejection of Renaissance pictorial space, in which depth was conveyed via linear perspective and modeling. “Time” now becomes an element of the visual arts. For more than a century, photography was an inspiration for photomontage and moving pictures. Video and computer graphics are now popular forms of expression in the visual arts. New ways of ordering and



viewing the world are being developed. Environmental concerns are central. Many contemporary artists address themes of recycling and renewal and decay in their work.

Object: The artist is a native of Asheville, North Carolina. Working primarily in clay but also in wood and bronze, Youngblood creates intimate portraits of family and friends, and exquisitely crafted animals, including horses and birds and elephants.

Style characteristics: We end our tour where we began—with a piece of sculpture. Here we have a mother and child, whose materials and form give them a universal, timeless quality. At first look, the mother appears to be vulnerable. She has a wooden stick for an arm and a naked body made of clay that is cut off below the knees. The unglazed, scorched clay adds to her vulnerability. She looks to be a fragile prehistoric artifact unearthed from an archeological dig. However, she exudes a power as well—a power that belies her small, sixteen-inch size. She lovingly cradles her child in her arm and looks out forthrightly into the distance. What is she looking at? An uncertain future? As is recounted in the *Handbook of the Collections*, Youngblood commented on this work as follows: “I had seen a photograph of an Amazonian woman holding her child. Her world, her jungle, was being destroyed, but she stood there holding such life, standing firm in the presence of awesome fear and love.”