

# LIVES IN PAINTING

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# INTRODUCTION

## Human history as cultural history

We need to reform our teaching of history so that the emphasis will be placed on the gradual growth of human culture and knowledge, a growth to which all nations and ethnic groups have contributed.

This book is part of a series on cultural history. Here is a list of the other books in the series that have, until now, been completed:

- Lives in Engineering
- Lives in Astronomy
- Lives in Chemistry
- Lives in Medicine
- Lives in Ecology
- Lives in Physics
- Lives in Economics
- Lives in the Peace Movement

The pdf files of these books may be freely downloaded and circulated from the following web addresses:

<http://eacpe.org/about-john-scales-avery/>

<https://wsimag.com/authors/716-john-scales-avery>

## Culture is cooperative, not competitive.

Cultural evolution depends on the non-genetic storage, transmission, diffusion and utilization of information. The development of human speech, the invention of writing, the development of paper and printing, and finally, in modern times, mass media, computers and the Internet: all these have been crucial steps in society's explosive accumulation of information and knowledge. Human cultural evolution proceeds at a constantly-accelerating speed, so great in fact that it threatens to shake society to pieces.

In many respects, our cultural evolution can be regarded as an enormous success. However, at the start of the 21st century, most thoughtful observers agree that civilization is entering a period of crisis. As all curves move exponentially upward, population, production, consumption, rates of scientific

discovery, and so on, one can observe signs of increasing environmental stress, while the continued existence and spread of nuclear weapons threaten civilization with destruction. Thus, while the explosive growth of knowledge has brought many benefits, the problem of achieving a stable, peaceful and sustainable world remains serious, challenging and unsolved.

Our modern civilization has been built up by means of a worldwide exchange of ideas and inventions. It is built on the achievements of many ancient cultures. China, Japan, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, the Islamic world, Christian Europe, and the Jewish intellectual traditions, all have contributed. Potatoes, corn, squash, vanilla, chocolate, chili peppers, and quinine are gifts from the American Indians.

The sharing of scientific and technological knowledge is essential to modern civilization. The great power of science is derived from an enormous concentration of attention and resources on the understanding of a tiny fragment of nature. It would make no sense to proceed in this way if knowledge were not permanent, and if it were not shared by the entire world.

Science is not competitive. It is cooperative. It is a great monument built by many thousands of hands, each adding a stone to the cairn. This is true not only of scientific knowledge but also of every aspect of our culture, history, art and literature, as well as the skills that produce everyday objects upon which our lives depend. Civilization is cooperative. It is not competitive.

Our cultural heritage is not only immensely valuable; it is also so great that no individual comprehends all of it. We are all specialists, who understand only a tiny fragment of the enormous edifice. No scientist understands all of science. Perhaps Leonardo da Vinci could come close in his day, but today it is impossible. Nor do the vast majority people who use cell phones, personal computers and television sets every day understand in detail how they work. Our health is preserved by medicines, which are made by processes that most of us do not understand, and we travel to work in automobiles and buses that we would be completely unable to construct.

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Human society is a superorganism, far greater than any individual in history or in the present. The human superorganism has a supermind, a collective consciousness far greater than the consciousness of individuals. Each individual contributes a stone to the cairn of civilization, but our astonishing understanding of the universe is a collective achievement.

Science derives its great power from the concentration of enormous resources on a tiny fragment of reality. It would make no sense to proceed in

this way if knowledge were not permanent and if information were not shared globally. But scientists of all nations pool their knowledge at international conferences and through international publications. Scientists stand on each other's shoulders. Their shared knowledge is far greater than the fragments that each contributes.

Other aspects of culture are also cooperative and global. For example, Japanese woodblock printers influenced the French Impressionists. The non-violent tradition of Shelly, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela is international. Culture is cooperative. It is not competitive. Global cultural cooperation can lead us to a sustainable and peaceful society. Our almost miraculous modern communications media, if properly used, can give us a stable, prosperous and cooperative future society.

I hope that you will enjoy this story of the lives and work of some of the world's great painters, from earliest times to the present.



# Chapter 1

## PREHISTORIC PAINTING

### 1.1 Out of Africa

There is strong evidence, based on both linguistic analysis and on modern techniques of genetic analysis, that a small group of fully modern humans emerged from Africa between 80,000 and 70,000 years before the present. They interbred with the Neanderthals who had left Africa previously, and co-existed with the Neanderthals in Europe until comparatively recent times. Another group reached Australia about 50,000 years ago, after interbreeding with the Denisovans, who were eastern cousins of the Neanderthals. Finally, about 22,000 years ago, during an ice age, when the Bering Strait could be crossed on land, humans crossed into North America. They made their way southward along the coast, finally reaching South America. Cave paintings testify to the fact that all these early humans were talented artists. They combined decorative and representational elements in their paintings in a manner that modern artists might envy.

### 1.2 Cave painting

#### Lascaux

The prehistoric paintings from the Lascaux cave in southern France shown below depict the animals which were hunted by the artists. This suggests that paintings may have been made in the belief that they would help the success of the hunt.

#### Northern Africa

The climate in northern Africa was once much wetter and cooler than it now is. The existence of numerous rock paintings in northern Africa testifies to the fact that a large population was once able to inhabit an area that now is a desert.



Figure 1.1: Cave painting from the cave of Lascaux, France. The painting shows aurochs, horses and deer, and is estimated to be around 17,000 years old. Over 600 paintings cover the interior of the cave.

## Australia

Aboriginal rock paintings in Australia are closely connected with the history of the community and with religion.



Figure 1.2: Another painting from Lascaux, showing a horse.





Figure 1.3: A third painting from Lascaux: Megaloceros with a line of dots.



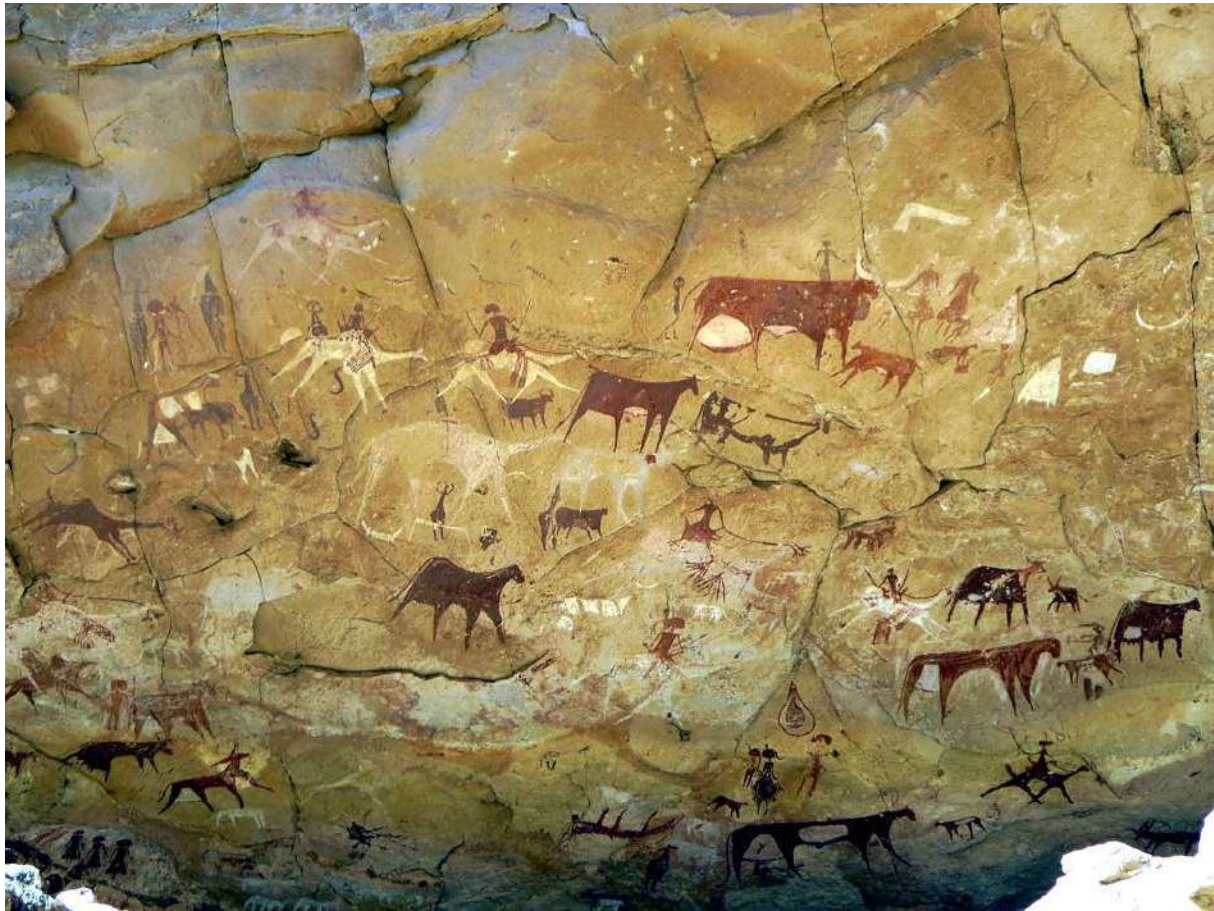


Figure 1.4: Prehistoric rock paintings in Manda Guéli Cave in the Ennedi Mountains, Chad, Central Africa. Camels have been painted over earlier images of cattle, perhaps reflecting climatic changes.



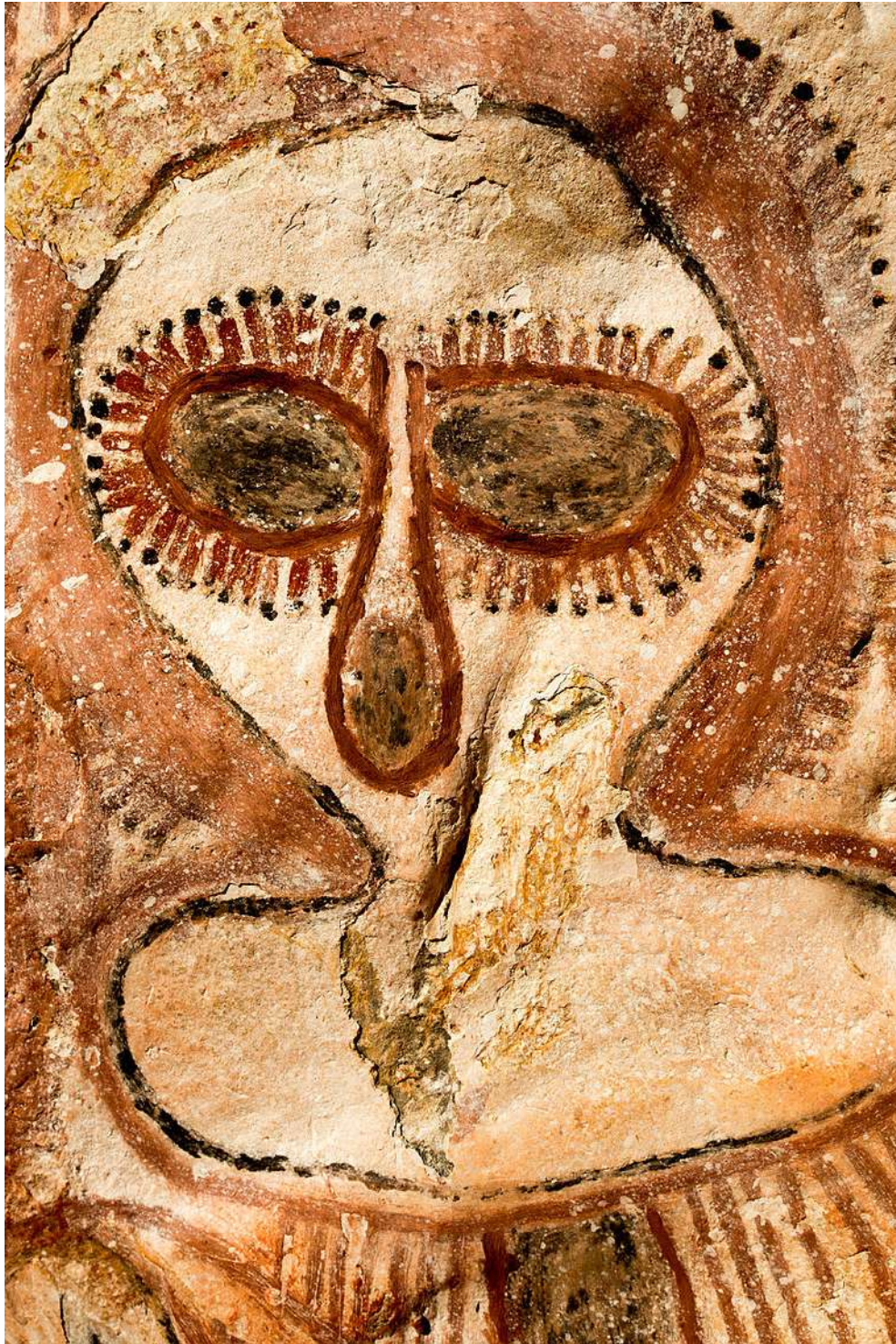


Figure 1.5: Wondjina, an Australian aboriginal painting, approximately 4,000 years old, from the Barnett River, Mount Elizabeth Station. Wondjina are the cloud and rain spirits from Australian Aboriginal mythology.

**Suggestions for further reading**

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## Chapter 2

# PAINTING IN ANCIENT EGYPT

### 2.1 The religion of ancient Egypt

In the religion of ancient Egypt, the distinction between the gods and the pharaohs was never very clear. Living pharaohs were considered to be gods, and they traced their ancestry back to the sun-god, Ra. Since all of the pharaohs were thought to be gods, and since, before the unification of Egypt, there were very many local gods, the Egyptian religion was excessively complicated. A list of gods found in the tomb of Thuthmosis III enumerates no fewer than seven hundred and forty! The extreme conservatism of Egyptian art (which maintained a consistent style for several thousand years) derives from the religious function played by painting and sculpture.

The famous gods, Osiris, Isis, Horus and Set probably began their existence as real people, and their story, which we know both from hieroglyphic texts and from Pliny, depicts an actual historical event - the first unification of Egypt: Osiris, the good ruler of the lower Nile, was murdered and cut to pieces by his jealous brother Set; but the pieces of Osiris' body were collected by his faithful wife Isis, who performed the first mummification and thus made Osiris immortal. Then Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, like an Egyptian Hamlet, avenged the murder of his father by tracking down his wicked uncle Set, who attempted to escape by turning into various animals. However, in the end Horus killed Set, and thus Horus became the ruler of all of Egypt, both the lower Nile and the upper Nile.

This first prehistoric unification of Egypt left such a strong impression on the national consciousness that when a later pharaoh named Menes reunified Egypt in 3,200 B.C., he did so in the name of Horus. Like the Mesopotamian story of the flood, and like the epics of Homer, the story of the unification of Egypt by Horus probably contains a core of historical fact, blended with imaginative poetry. At certain points in the story, the characters seem to be real historical people - for example, when Osiris is described as being "handsome, dark-skinned and taller than other men". At other times, imagination seems to predominate. For example, the goddess Nut, who was the mother of Osiris, was thought to be the sky, while her husband Geb was the earth. The long curved body of Nut was imagined to be

arched over the world so that only the tips of her toes and fingers touched the earth, while the stars and moon moved across her belly. Meanwhile her husband Geb lay prostrate, with all the vegetation of the earth growing out of his back.

The idea of the resurrection and immortality of Osiris had a strong hold on the ancient Egyptian imagination. At first only the pharaohs were allowed to imitate Osiris and become immortal like him through a magical ceremony of mummification and entombment. As part of the ceremony, the following words were spoken: "Horus opens the mouth and eyes of the deceased, as he opened the mouth and eyes of his father. He walks! He speaks! He has become immortal! ... As Osiris lives, the king lives; as he does not die, the king does not die; as he does not perish, the king does not perish!" Later the policy became more democratic, and ordinary citizens were allowed mummification.

The Egyptian hieroglyphic (priest writing) system began its development in about 4,000 B.C.. At that time, it was pictorial rather than phonetic. However, the Egyptians were in contact with the Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia, and when the Sumerians developed a phonetic system of writing in about 3,100 B.C., the Egyptians were quick to adopt the idea. In the cuneiform writing of the Sumerians, a character stood for a syllable. In the Egyptian adaptation of this idea, most of the symbols stood for combinations of two consonants, and there were no symbols for vowels. However, a few symbols were purely alphabetic, i.e. they stood for sounds which we would now represent by a single letter. This was important from the standpoint of cultural history, since it suggested to the Phoenicians the idea of an alphabet of the modern type.

In Sumer, the pictorial quality of the symbols was lost at a very early stage, so that in the cuneiform script the symbols are completely abstract. By contrast, the Egyptian system of writing was designed to decorate monuments and to be impressive even to an illiterate viewer; and this purpose was best served by retaining the elaborate pictographic form of the symbols.

The hieroglyphic system of writing was deciphered as the result of the discovery of the Rosetta Stone during the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt. It was a large stone whose face had been carved with the same message in three languages, ancient Greek, hieroglyphics and an old form of Coptic. The French linguist Jean-Francois Champoleon (1790-1832) recognized the third language as being a form of Coptic, a language in which he was fluent, and thus he was able to decipher the hieroglyphic script. He went on to found the science of Egyptology.

## 2.2 Some examples of ancient Egyptian painting

Because of its close connection with religion, the style of Egyptian painting remained constant over a long period of time. In the background of the paintings shown below, we can see hieroglyphic writing. Beautiful paintings decorated the tombs of the pharaohs, and their wives, even the tombs of government officials and important builders.



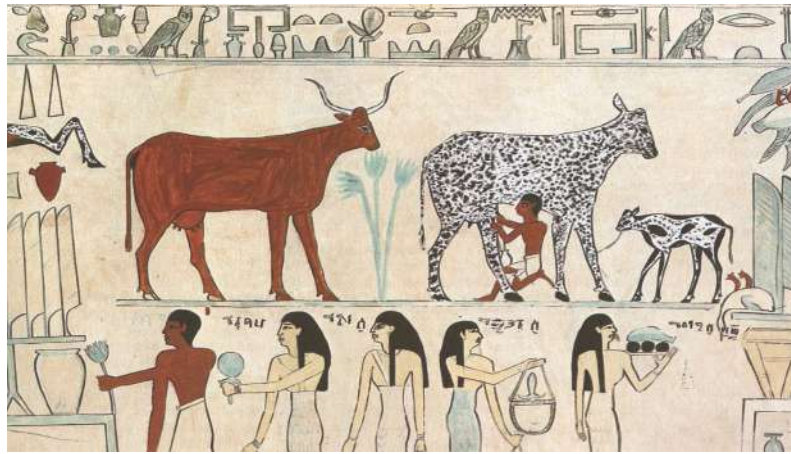


Figure 2.1: Old Egyptian hieroglyphic painting showing an early instance of a domesticated animal (cow being milked).

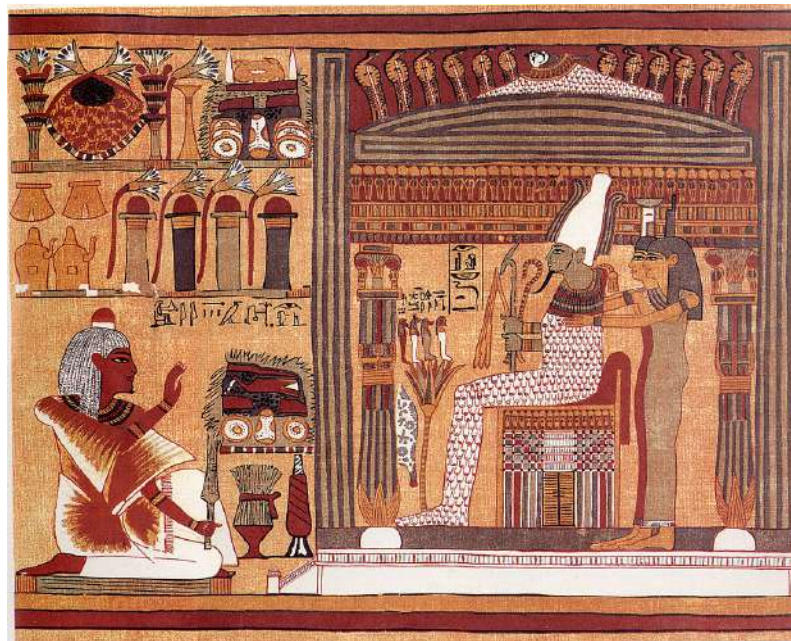


Figure 2.2: Facsimile of a vignette from the Book of the Dead of Ani. The deceased Ani kneels before Osiris, judge of the dead. Behind Osiris stand his sisters Isis and Nephthys, and in front of him is a lotus on which stand the four sons of Horus.



Figure 2.3: A view of the well preserved and beautifully painted Tomb TT3 from Deir el-Medina on the West Bank of Luxor. This scene depicts the god Osiris with the Mountains of the West behind him. It belonged to Pashedu who served as an Ancient Egyptian artist and foreman at Deir el-Medina under pharaoh Seti I. Notice the hieroglyphic script in the background.

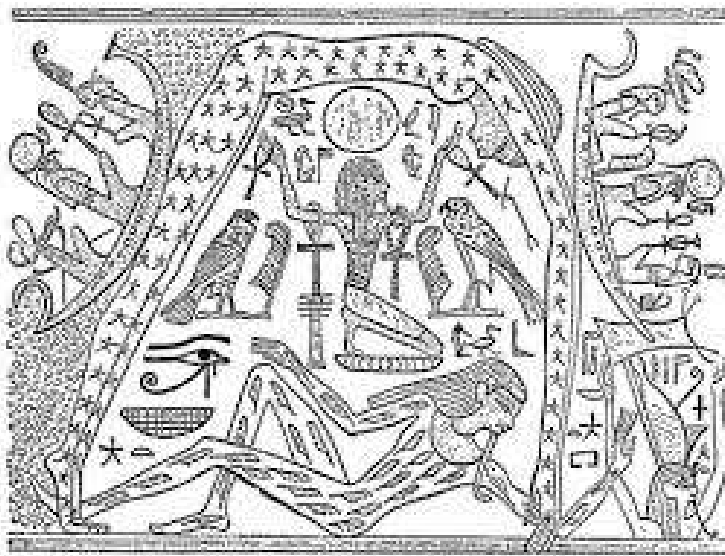


Figure 2.4: In the imagery of the ancient Egyptians, the goddess Nut represented the sky, while her husband, Geb, was the earth.



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## Chapter 3

# PAINTING IN ANCIENT ROME

### 3.1 Pompeii

Pompeii was a flourishing Roman town of about 15,000 people at the foot of Mount Vesuvius on the bay of Naples. Its prosperity was due to the rich agricultural soil, made fertile by minerals in ash from volcano. However, in October of November of the year 79 AD, tragedy struck the town. Vesuvius erupted and a pyroclastic flow engulfed the town. Its citizens had no time to flee, and were killed instantly by the heat. Pliny the Younger described the tragic event in a letter to a friend. His uncle, Pliny the Elder had died attempting to rescue people from nearby towns.

The eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD did not completely cover the tops of Pompeii's buildings, so robbers knew where to dig to find valuables, such as marble statues, and there is evidence of looting. Nevertheless, after a few centuries, the location and the name of the town were forgotten.

In 1592, workers digging an underground channel to divert the River Sarno uncovered ancient walls covered with paintings and inscriptions, but nothing came of this discovery and the existence of the ancient town was again forgotten, until rediscovered two centuries later.

A systematic excavation of Pompeii was conducted during the period when the French occupied Naples. The land on which the town lies was expropriated by the government, and 700 workers were employed to clear away the volcanic ash.

Because Pompeii was deeply buried in volcanic ash, everything in the town, including frescos on the walls of villas, have been perfectly preserved. The town offers us a glimpse of what life was like at that time, and today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, now that the ash has been cleared away, dampness is threatening to destroy the frescos. Excessive tourism is also a danger, and is now being restricted. Many of the artifacts from Pompeii can be seen today at a museum in the city of Naples.

### 3.2 Frescos and portraits



Figure 3.1: *Fresco from the Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii, 80 BC.*



Figure 3.2: *Meniad in a Silk Dress*, Pompeii, first century AD.





Figure 3.3: *Heracles and Omphale*, Roman fresco Pompeian Fourth Style, 45-79 AD, National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Italy.



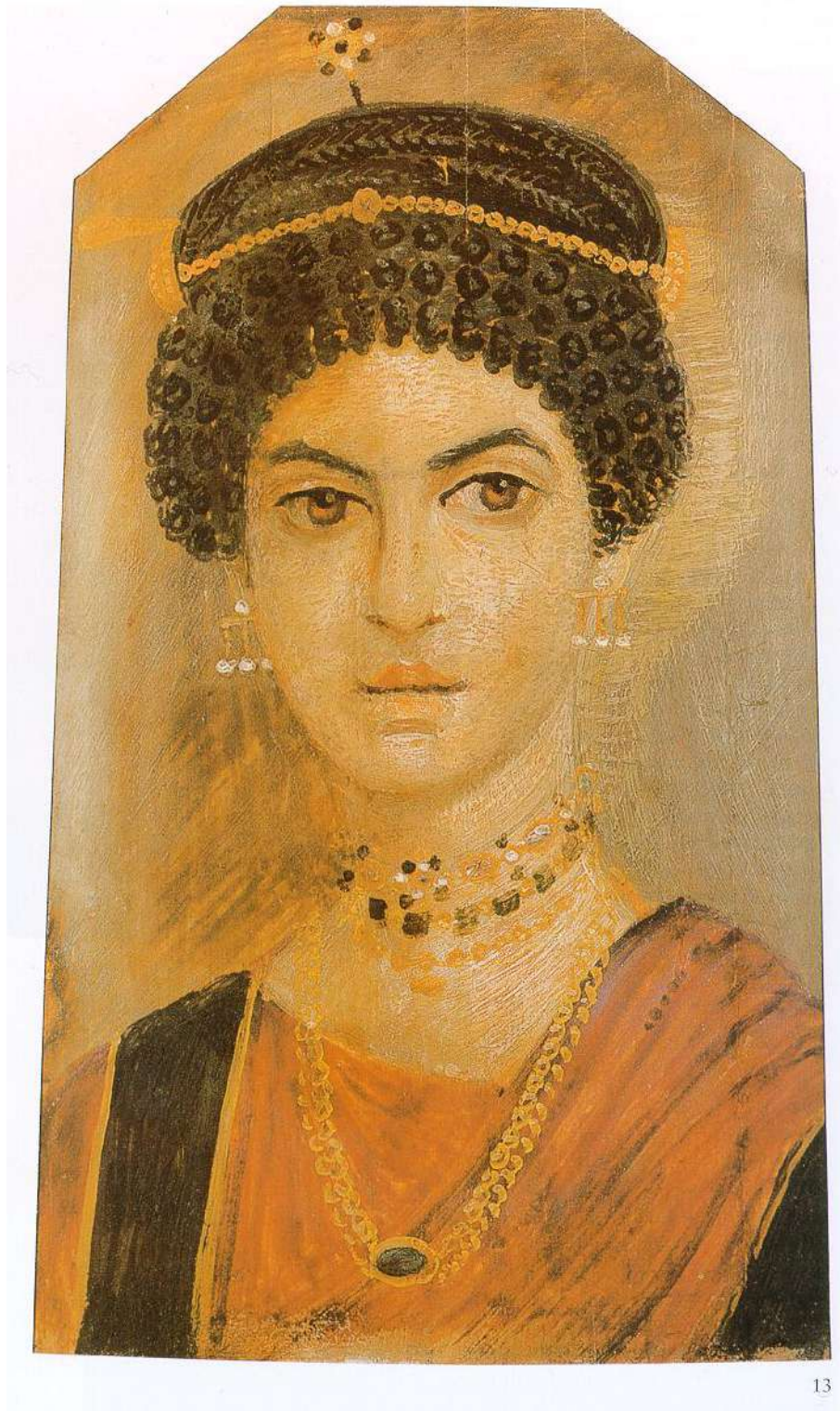


Figure 3.4: *Fayum mummy portrait of a woman from Roman Egypt with a ringlet hairstyle*, mummy portrait, tempera on wood, Royal Museum of Scotland.

### Suggestions for further reading

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# Chapter 4

## CHINESE LANDSCAPE PAINTING

### 4.1 Some examples of traditional Chinese painting

Traditional Chinese painting is an extremely old tradition, one of the oldest in the world. Oils are not used. Instead the paintings are made on silk or paper, using a brush dipped in ink. Wikipedia lists two main techniques:

- Gongbi, meaning “meticulous”, uses highly detailed brushstrokes that delimit details very precisely. It is often highly coloured and usually depicts figural or narrative subjects. It is often practised by artists working for the royal court or in independent workshops.
- Ink and wash painting... (“water and ink”) also loosely termed water-colour or brush painting, and also known as “literati painting”, as it was one of the “Four Arts” of the Chinese Scholar-official class. In theory this was an art practiced by gentlemen, a distinction that begins to be made in writings on art from the Song dynasty, though in fact the careers of leading exponents could benefit considerably.[2] This style is also referred to as “xieyi” or freehand style.

Landscape painting was regarded as the highest form of Chinese painting, and generally still is. The time from the Five Dynasties period to the Northern Song period (907-1127) is known as the “Great age of Chinese landscape”. In the north, artists such as Jing Hao, Li Cheng, Fan Kuan, and Guo Xi painted pictures of towering mountains, using strong black lines, ink wash, and sharp, dotted brushstrokes to suggest rough stone. In the south, Dong Yuan, Juran, and other artists painted the rolling hills and rivers of their native countryside in peaceful scenes done with softer, rubbed brushwork. These two kinds of scenes and techniques became the classical styles of Chinese landscape painting.



Figure 4.1: *Quietly Listening to Wind in the Pines*, by Ma Lin (1180-1256), National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.



Figure 4.2: *Loquats and Mountain Bird*, painting, album leaf, colors on silk, Chinese Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), Collection of the National Palace Museum, Beijing.





Figure 4.3: *Buddhist Temple in the Mountains*, 11th century, ink on silk, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.



## 4.2 Calligraphy as an art-form

Calligraphy, literally "beautiful writing," has been appreciated as an art form in many different cultures throughout the world, but the stature of calligraphy in Chinese culture is unmatched.

### Xi'an's Forest of Stelae

Xi'an is a city in northwest China, at the eastern end of the Silk Road. It was once the capital of China, and at that time, together with Rome, it was one of the world's two largest cities. Near to Xi'an, is the recently-discovered Terraotta Army.

Among the many interesting things to see in Xi'an is the Museum of the Stele Forest, which houses about 3,000 high stone slabs or stelae, engraved with the calligraphy of "famous scholars and emperors". The stelae often stand on the backs of large carved stone turtles. What had presumably happened was that the famous scholars and emperors were invited to write several characters with a brush on the smooth surface of a stele. Workmen then came and carved the image of the character into the stone, so that it formed an indentation below the smooth stone surface.

When I was lecturing at Northwestern University in Xi'an for several months in 1986, I visited the Forest of Stelae, and saw many people making inked copies of the engraved calligraphy, on specially moistened paper. Black ink was rolled onto the surface of the stone, and then the paper was applied smoothly so that the parts in contact with the stone were blackened, while the parts above the indentations in the stone remained white.

### The invention of printing

It was a moving experience to see people copying calligraphy at the Forest of Stelae museum because the practice is so closely connected with a truly great Chinese invention - the invention Printing was invented in China in the 8th or 9th century A.D., probably by Buddhist monks who were interested in producing many copies of the sacred texts which they had translated from Sanscrit. The act of reproducing prayers was also considered to be meritorious by the Buddhists.

The Chinese had for a long time followed the custom of brushing engraved official seals with ink and using them to stamp documents. The type of ink which they used was made from lamp-black, water and binder. In fact, it was what we now call "India ink". However, in spite of its name, India ink is a Chinese invention, which later spread to India, and from there to Europe.

Paper of the type which we now use was invented in China in the first century A.D.. Thus, the Buddhist monks of China had all the elements which they needed to make printing practical: They had good ink, cheap, smooth paper, and the tradition of stamping documents with ink-covered engraved seals. The first block prints which they produced date from the 8th century A.D.. They were made by carving a block of wood the size of a

printed page so that raised characters remained, brushing ink onto the block, and pressing this onto a sheet of paper. of printing.

The oldest known printed book, the “Diamond Sutra”, is dated 868 A.D., and it consists of only six printed pages. It was discovered in 1907 by an English scholar who obtained permission from Buddhist monks in Chinese Turkistan to open some walled-up monastery rooms, which were said to have been sealed for 900 years. The rooms were found to contain a library of about 15,000 manuscripts, among which was the Diamond Sutra.

Block printing spread quickly throughout China, and also reached Japan, where wood-block printing ultimately reached great heights in the work of such artists as Hiroshige and Hokusai. The Chinese made some early experiments with movable type, but movable type never became popular in China, because the Chinese written language contains 10,000 characters. However, printing with movable type was highly successful in Korea as early as the 15th century A.D..

The unsuitability of the Chinese written language for the use of movable type was the greatest tragedy of the Chinese civilization. Writing had been developed at a very early stage in Chinese history, but the system remained a pictographic system, with a different character for each word. A phonetic system of writing was never developed.

The failure to develop a phonetic system of writing had its roots in the Chinese imperial system of government. The Chinese empire formed a vast area in which many different languages were spoken. It was necessary to have a universal language of some kind in order to govern such an empire. The Chinese written language solved this problem admirably.

Suppose that the emperor sent identical letters to two officials in different districts. Reading the letters aloud, the officials might use entirely different words, although the characters in the letters were the same. Thus the Chinese written language was a sort of “Esperanto” which allowed communication between various language groups, and its usefulness as such prevented its replacement by a phonetic system.

The disadvantages of the Chinese system of writing were twofold: First, it was difficult to learn to read and write; and therefore literacy was confined to a small social class whose members could afford a prolonged education. The system of civil-service examinations made participation in the government dependant on a high degree of literacy; and hence the old, established scholar-gentry families maintained a long-term monopoly on power, wealth and education. Social mobility was possible in theory, since the civil service examinations were open to all, but in practice, it was nearly unattainable.

The second great disadvantage of the Chinese system of writing was that it was unsuitable for printing with movable type. An “information explosion” occurred in the west following the introduction of printing with movable type, but this never occurred in China. It is ironical that although both paper and printing were invented by the Chinese, the full effect of these immensely important inventions bypassed China and instead revolutionized the west.

**Suggestions for further reading**

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# Chapter 5

## PERSIAN AND MUGHAL PAINTING

### 5.1 Persian miniatures

#### **Parallels with European manuscript illumination**

Persian miniature painting is in many ways similar to the tradition of illuminating manuscripts which flourished in Europe during the Middle Ages. Although, strictly speaking, Islam forbids the depiction of the human form, the Persian miniatures circumvented this prohibition since they were intended for private owners, rather than for public exhibition.

#### **Chinese influences**

During the period 1190-1220 AD, the Khwarezmid Empire of Persia was very much larger than present-day Iran, and it extended far into eastern Asia. However, in 1221 a short-lived peace treaty broke down, and the Mongols under Genghis Khan invaded and conquered the Khwarezmid Empire. Through this invasion, Chinese traditions of art came to influence Persian painting.

#### **Matisse inspired by Persian miniatures**

Henri Matisse visited an exhibition of Persian miniatures in Munich in 1910, and he found them very inspiring. He later wrote: “The Persian miniatures showed me the possibility of my sensations. That art had devices to suggest a greater space, a really plastic space. It helped me to get away from intimate painting.”

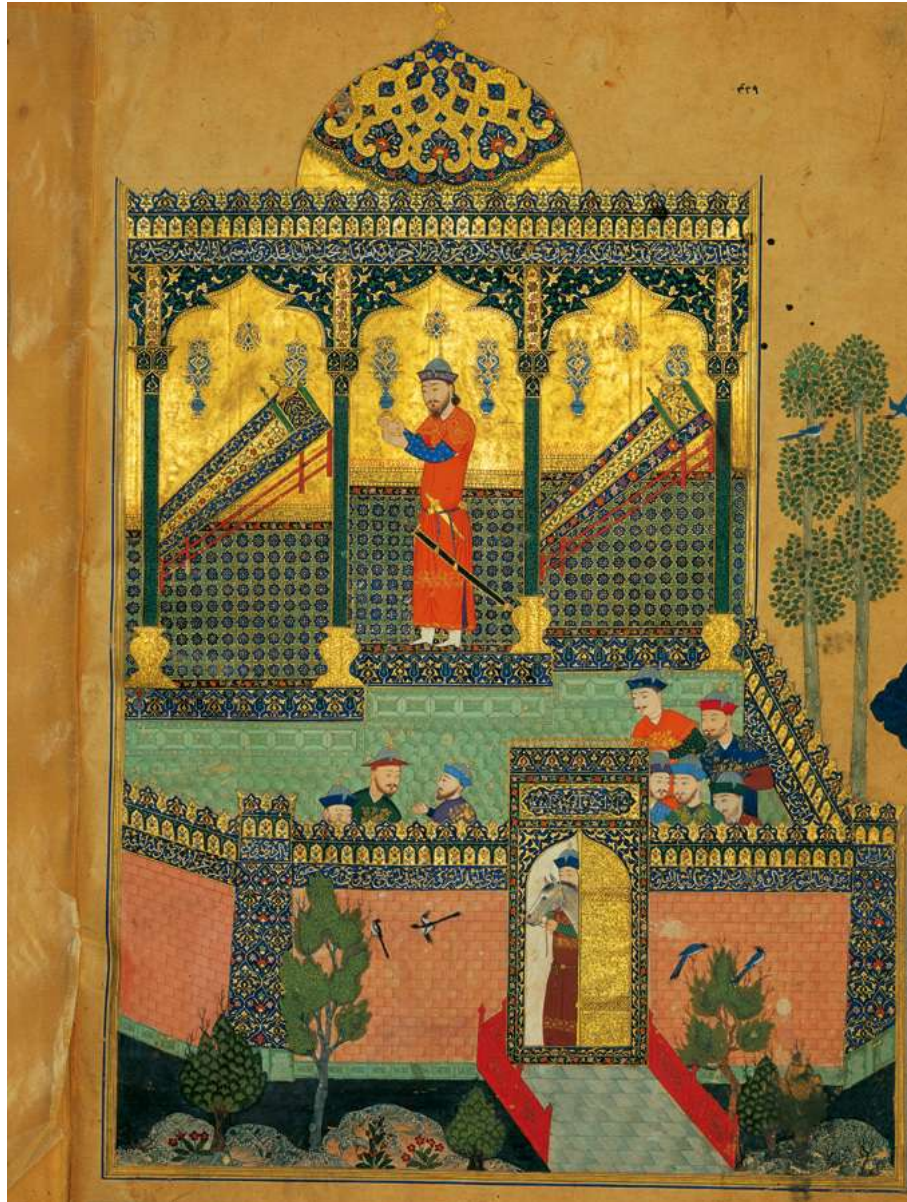


Figure 5.1: *Baysonghor Shahnameh*, 1430. Baysonghor Shahnameh was an important patron of the Herat painters.



Figure 5.2: *Khusraw discovers Shirin bathing in a pool*, 1548.





Figure 5.3: *Mi'raj of the Prophet by Sultan Muhammad, 1539-1543*. We can see here a Chinese influence in the representation of clouds and angels.



## 5.2 The Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire was founded by Babur (1483-1530), who was descended from Genghis Khan on his mother's side, and from Timurlane on his father's side. The word "Mughal" is a corruption of "Mongol", but the empire founded by Babur was strongly tied to Persian culture.

Babur was born in present-day Uzbekistan. He became the ruler of Fergana in its capital Akhsikent in 1494 at the age of twelve and faced rebellion. He conquered Samarkand two years later, only to lose Fergana soon after. Turning his attention to the south, Babur first established control over Kabul, Afghanistan, and then, with his army, pushed southward through the Khyber Pass to India.

Babur succeeded in conquering India, and, while he and his descendants respected local religions and traditions, they brought with them Persian traditions which influenced Indian art and architecture. The Taj Mahal was built by Babur's descendant Shah Jehan to honour the memory of his wife. Today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site considered to be "the jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage", attracting 7-8 million unique visitors a year.

## 5.3 Mughal painting

Wikipedia states that:

Mughal painting is a particular style of South Asian painting confined to miniatures either as book illustrations or as single works to be kept in albums (*muraqqa*). It emerged from Persian miniature painting (itself partly of Chinese origin) and developed in the court of the Mughal Empire of the 16th to 18th centuries. The Mughal emperors were Muslims and they are credited with consolidating Islam in South Asia, and spreading Muslim (and particularly Persian) arts and culture as well as the faith.

Mughal painting immediately took a much greater interest in realistic portraiture than was typical of Persian miniatures. Animals and plants were the main subject of many miniatures for albums, and were more realistically depicted. Although many classic works of Persian literature continued to be illustrated, as well as Indian works, the taste of the Mughal emperors for writing memoirs or diaries, begun by Babur, provided some of the most lavishly decorated texts, such as the *Padshahnama* genre of official histories. Subjects are rich in variety and include portraits, events and scenes from court life, wild life and hunting scenes, and illustrations of battles. The Persian tradition of richly decorated borders framing the central image was continued, as was a modified form of the Persian convention of an elevated viewpoint.

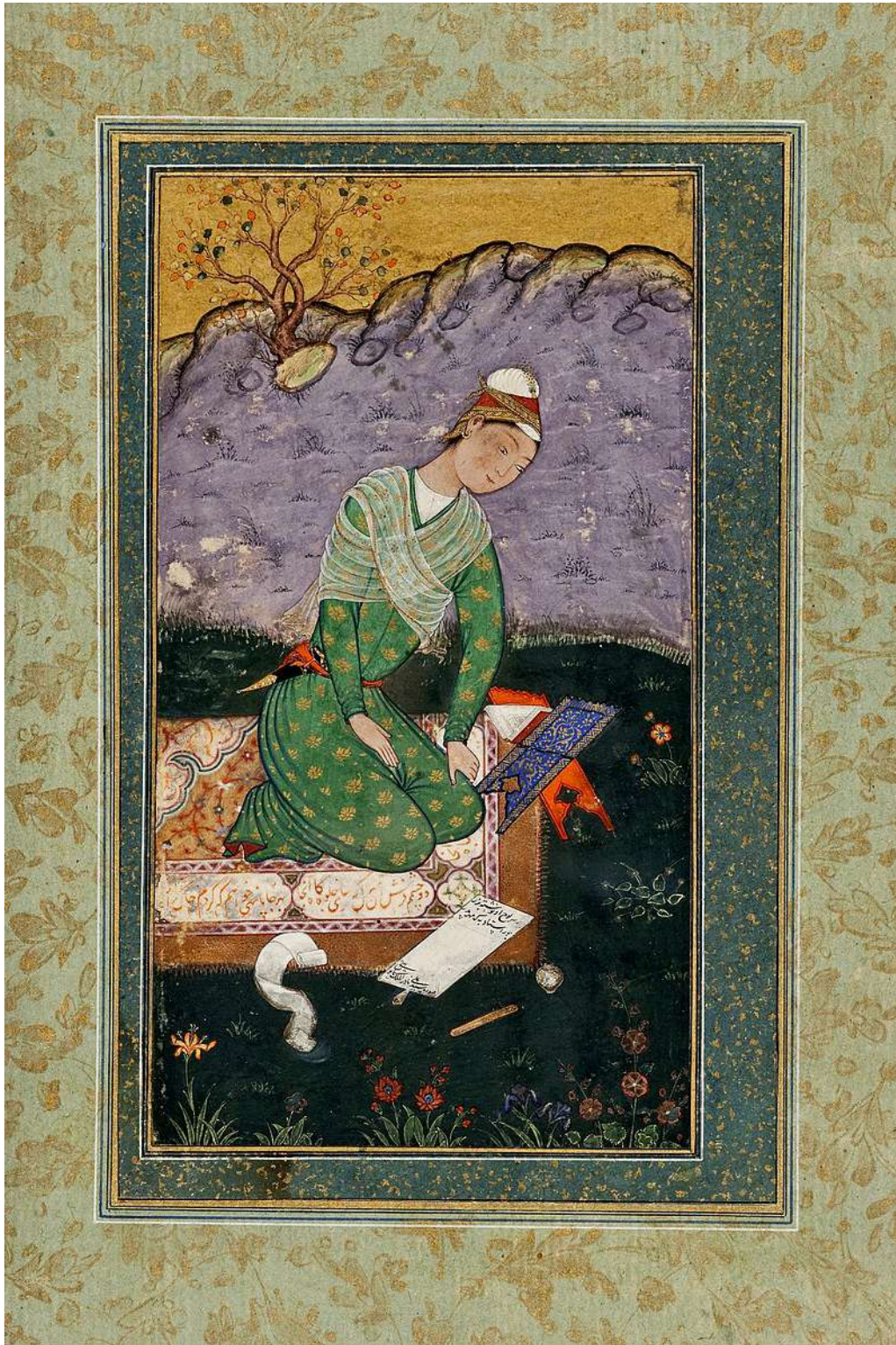


Figure 5.4: *Portrait of a Young Indian Scholar*, c. 1550, Mughal miniature by Mir Sayyid Ali, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, USA.





Figure 5.5: *Emperor Jahangir weighs Prince Khurram* by Manohar Das, 1610-1615. British Museum.



Figure 5.6: *Portrait of the Mughal Empress Nur Jahan (1577-1645)*, c. 1725, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, made in: India, Rajasthan, Kishangarh.

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# Chapter 6

## RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS ART

### 6.1 Saint Andrei Rublev

#### Student of Theophantes the Greek

Theophantes the Greek (c.1340-c.1410) brought the traditions of Byzantine art to Russia. He was a famous painter of frescos and icons in his own right, but he is also remembered as the teacher and mentor of an even greater Russian artist, Saint Andrei Rublev (c.1360-c.1428).

Little is known about Andrei Rublev's early life. It is not even known where he was born, but it is thought that he lived in the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius monastery, about 70 km to the north-east of Moscow. After studying with Theophantes the Greek, Rublev helped to decorate many churches, including, between 1425 and 1427, the Trinity Cathedral in his own monastery.

#### Canonization

In 1988, the Russian Orthodox Church canonized Andrei Rublev. His feast day is celebrated on the 29th of January each year, and/or on the 4th of July. In the United States the Episcopal Church remembers Andrei Rublev on the 29th of January.

#### A film based on Andrei Rublev's life

In 1969 the Soviet Union produced a film entitled *Andrei Rublev*, based on the life of the great Russian painter. Although only loosely based on Rublev's life, the film gives an accurate portrayal of life in 15th century Russia. In particular, it shows Christianity as an integral part of Russia's historical identity. Although plagued by censorship and cuts, the film, when restored to its original version, has been rated by critics as one of the greatest films of all time.



Figure 6.1: *Annunciation*, c. 1405, by Andrei Rublev, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.





Figure 6.2: *Nativity of Jesus*, c. 1405, by Andrei Rublev, Cathedral of the Annunciation, Moscow.





Figure 6.3: *Holy Trinity Hospitality of Abraham*, c. 1411, by Andrei Rublev, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

## 6.2 Russian icons

Wikipedia states that:

The use and making of icons entered Kievan Rus' following its conversion to Orthodox Christianity in AD 988. As a general rule, these icons strictly followed models and formulas hallowed by Byzantine art, led from the capital in Constantinople. As time passed, the Russians widened the vocabulary of types and styles far beyond anything found elsewhere in the Orthodox world.

The personal, innovative and creative traditions of Western European religious art were largely lacking in Russia before the 17th century, when Russian icon painting became strongly influenced by religious paintings and engravings from both Protestant and Catholic Europe. In the mid-17th-century changes in liturgy and practice instituted by Patriarch Nikon resulted in a split in the Russian Orthodox Church. The traditionalists, the persecuted "Old Ritualists" or "Old Believers", continued the traditional stylization of icons, while the State Church modified its practice. From that time icons began to be painted not only in the traditional stylized and non-realistic mode, but also in a mixture of Russian stylization and Western European realism, and in a Western European manner very much like that of Catholic religious art of the time. These types of icons, while found in Russian Orthodox churches, are also sometimes found in various *sui juris* rites of the Catholic Church.

Russian icons are typically paintings on wood, often small, though some in churches and monasteries may be much larger. Some Russian icons were made of copper. Many religious homes in Russia have icons hanging on the wall in the *krasny ugol*, the "red" or "beautiful" corner.

There is a rich history and elaborate religious symbolism associated with icons. In Russian churches, the nave is typically separated from the sanctuary by an iconostasis, or icon-screen, a wall of icons with double doors in the centre.

Russians sometimes speak of an icon as having been "written", because in the Russian language (like Greek, but unlike English) the same word (*pisat'*, in Russian) means both to paint and to write. Icons are considered to be the Gospel in paint, and therefore careful attention is paid to ensure that the Gospel is faithfully and accurately conveyed...

Many Russian icons were destroyed, or sold abroad, by agents of the Soviet government; some were hidden to avoid destruction, or were smuggled out of the country. Since the fall of communism, numbers of icon painting studios have again opened and are painting in a variety of styles for the local and international market. Many older, hidden icons have also been retrieved from hiding, or brought back from overseas.

The demand for Russian icons by collectors in the west is very great today, but Russian law forbids the export of icons over 100 years in age.





Figure 6.4: *Christ Pantocrator*, with enamelled riza, and jewelled halo (venets) and collar (tsata), Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery.





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# Chapter 7

## THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

### 7.1 Giotto

#### Giotto painted from living models

Giotto de Bondonne (c.1267-1337) was an Italian painter who broke with the traditions of the Middle ages, and began to paint figures of humans from life, rather than from previous paintings. This paved the way for the realistic paintings of the Italian Renaissance. Giotto was also a renowned architect.

#### Giotto's life

Very little is known about Giotto's early life. It is not even known for certain where he was born. There is a legend that as a boy, Giotto was working as a shepherd, and made strikingly realistic drawings of his sheep on a rock. According to the legend, the drawings were noticed by the painter Cimabue (c.1240-1302), who then made Giotto one of his apprentices. However, truth of the legend is disputed. It is certain, however, that Giotto was recognized as a great painter during his own lifetime.

#### The Scrovegni Chapel

The frescos decorating the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, which Giotto began to paint in 1305, are his most famous and influential works. They depict *The Life of Christ*, and *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, and their general theme is Salvation. Another theme is the Annunciation. On the western wall of the chapel, Giotto painted *The Last Judgement*.

Giotto's figures are three-dimensional, and they sometimes are shown with their backs turned to the viewer, creating an illusion of space. Their clothes are not stylized, but hang naturally, and their faces show real emotion. For example, the face of the soldier who drags a baby from its mother's arms in *The Massacre of the Innocents* is averted and shows his shame at the act. This depiction of emotions sets Giotto apart from his contemporaries.



Figure 7.1: Details of figures from the *Raising of Drusiana*, by Giotto de Bondone, Peruzzi Chapel, Florence, Italy.





Figure 7.2: *Lamentation of Christ*, c. 1305, by Giotto de Bondonne, fresco from the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy.



## 7.2 Botticelli

### The Medicis and humanism

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Florence was ruled by a syndicate of wealthy merchant families, the greatest of whom were the Medicis. Cosimo de' Medici, the unofficial ruler of Florence from 1429 to 1464, was a banker whose personal wealth exceeded that of most contemporary kings. In spite of his great fortune, Cosimo lived in a relatively modest style, not wishing to attract attention or envy; and in general, the Medici influence tended to make life in Florence more modest than life in Venice.

Cosimo de' Medici is important in the history of ideas as one of the greatest patrons of the revival of Greek learning. In 1439, the Greek Patriarch and the Emperor John Palaeologus attended in Florence a council for the reunification of the Greek and Latin churches. The Greek-speaking Byzantine scholars who accompanied the Patriarch brought with them a number of books by Plato which excited the intense interest and admiration of Cosimo de' Medici. Cosimo immediately set up a Platonic Academy in Florence, and chose a young man named Marsilio Ficino as its director.

Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, continued his grandfather's policy of reviving classical Greek learning, and he became to the golden age of Florence what Pericles had been to the golden age of Athens. Among the artists whom Lorenzo sponsored were Michelangelo, Botticelli and Donatello. Lorenzo established a system of bursaries and prizes for the support of students.

### Sandro Botticelli studies with Fra Filippo Lippi

Sandro Botticelli (c.1445-1510) was born in Florence and he spent almost his entire life there, never moving more than a few minutes walk from the street of his birth. Botticelli was originally trained as a goldsmith, but in about 1461, at the age of 16, he was apprenticed to the painter Fra Filippo Lippi, who was one of the top painters of the day, often patronized by the Medicis. Lippi was rather conservative, but he gave Botticelli a solid training in technique.

### Botticelli's paintings based on classical mythology

Botticelli's two masterpieces, *Primavera* (c.1482) and *The Birth of Venus* (c.1485) are among the most famous paintings in the world. These iconic paintings, both of which are now at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, come to mind whenever we think of the Italian Renaissance.

The visual appeal of the two paintings, and their portrayal of the joy of life, account for their enormous popularity. Their subjects were influenced by the neo-Platonism introduced in Florence by the Medici family.



Figure 7.3: *Primavera*, c. 1482, by Sandro Botticelli, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



Figure 7.4: *The Birth of Venus*, c. 1485, by Sandro Botticelli, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



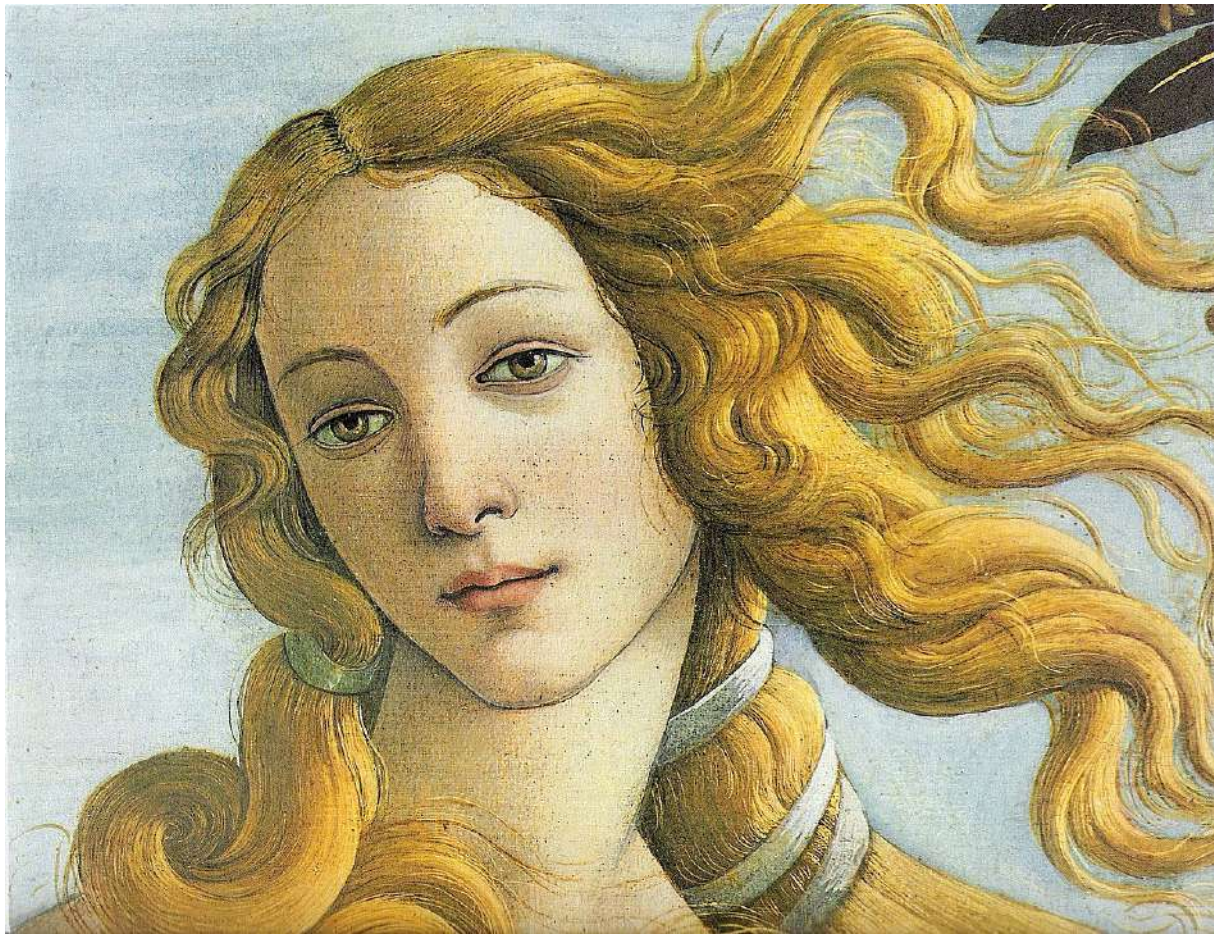


Figure 7.5: Detail from *The Birth of Venus*, c. 1485, by Sandro Botticelli, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

## 7.3 Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was an astonishing universal genius. His range of interest and work, which has perhaps never been matched before or since, included invention, drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, science, music, mathematics, engineering, literature, anatomy, geology, astronomy, botany, paleontology, and cartography. Although only 13 of his paintings have survived, Leonardo is generally considered to be one of the greatest painters of all time.

Leonardo was the illegitimate son of a notary, Piero da Vinci and a peasant girl. At an early age, he was apprenticed to the important Florentine painter Andrea del Verrocchio.

### Leonardo and Lorenzo the Magnificent

It may seem strange that Lorenzo the Magnificent did not form a closer relationship with his contemporary, Leonardo da Vinci, the most talented student of Verrocchio's school in Florence. One might have expected a close friendship between the two men, since Lorenzo, only four years older than Leonardo, was always quick to recognize exceptional ability.

Lorenzo the Magnificent finally did help Leonardo in a backhanded way: In 1481, when Leonardo was 29 years old, Lorenzo sent him as an emissary with a gift to the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza. Although Milan was far less culturally developed than Florence, Leonardo stayed there for eighteen years under the patronage of Sforza. He seemed to work better in isolation, without the competition and criticism of the Florentine intellectuals.

Both in painting and in science, Leonardo looked directly to nature for guidance, rather than to previous masters. He wrote:

“The painter will produce pictures of small merit if he takes as his standard the pictures of others; but if he will study from natural objects, he will produce good fruits... And I would say about these mathematical studies, that those who study the authorities and not the works of nature are descendents but not sons of nature.”

### Leonardo's paintings

Wikipedia states that:

Leonardo is renowned primarily as a painter. The Mona Lisa is the most famous of his works and the most popular portrait ever made. The Last Supper is the most reproduced religious painting of all time, and his Vitruvian Man drawing is regarded as a cultural icon as well. Salvator Mundi was sold for a world record \$450.3 million at a Christie's auction in New York, 15 November 2017, the highest price ever paid for a work of art. Leonardo's paintings and preparatory drawings - together with his notebooks, which contain sketches, scientific diagrams, and his thoughts on the nature of painting - compose a contribution to later generations of artists rivalled only by that of his contemporary Michelangelo.



Figure 7.6: Leonardo's portrait of a lady with an ermine, painted in 1489-1490. The painting is now at the National Museum in Krakow, Poland.





Figure 7.7: Head of a Woman, a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci.



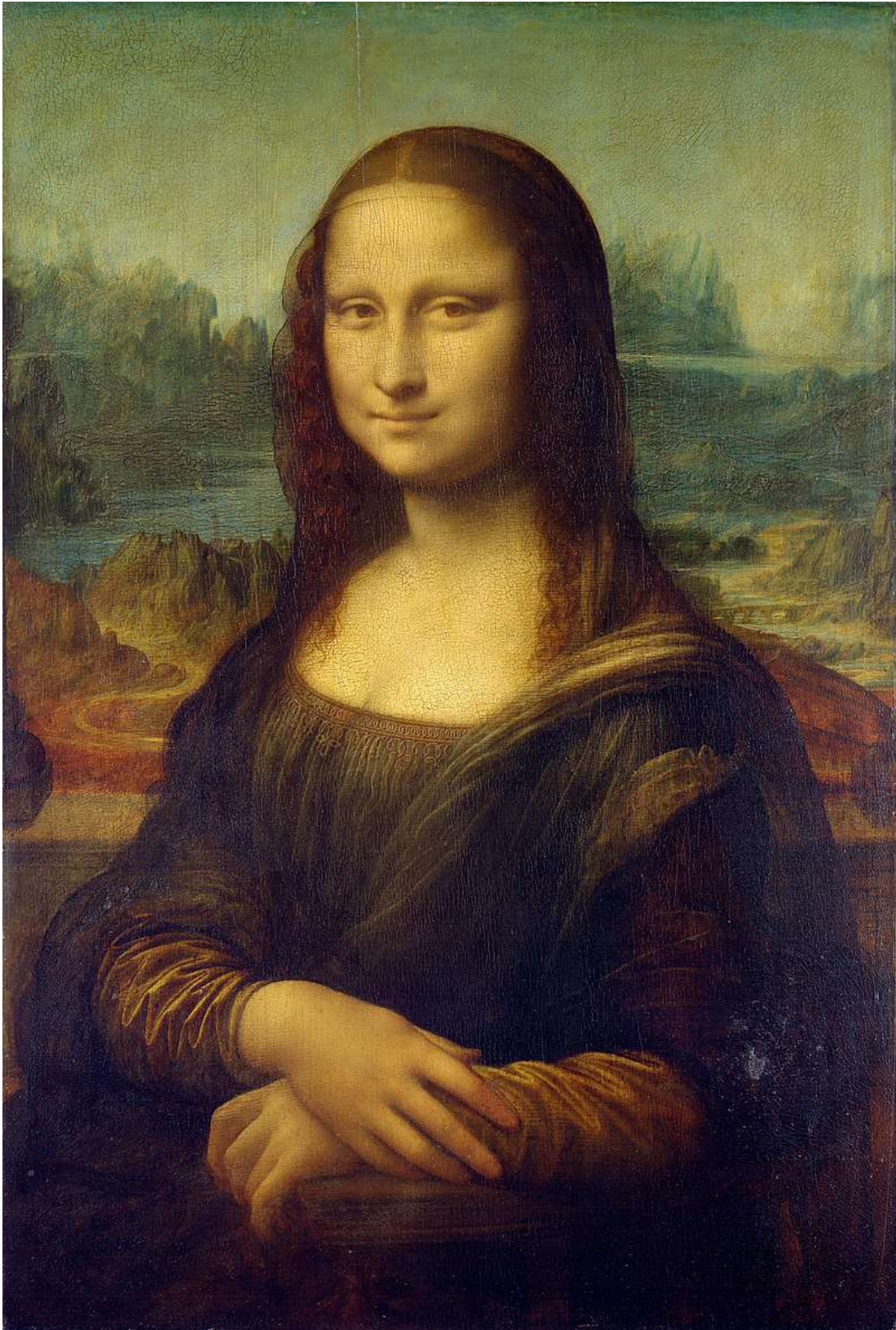


Figure 7.8: *Mona Lisa*, 1503-1507, by Leonardo da Vinci, Louvre, Paris.

## 7.4 Michelangelo

### Sculptor, painter, architect and poet

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475-1564), who is known today simply as Michelangelo, was truly a Renaissance man. He was not only a painter of genius, but a sculptor, architect and poet, excelling in all four fields. He is certainly one of the greatest artists of all time. Michelangelo was born in the Republic of Florence, in the town of Caprese, where his father was a local administrator. Michelangelo's mother died when he was only six years old, and he was brought up by a nanny whose husband was a stonecutter. Michelangelo wrote later, "Along with the milk of my nurse I received the knack of handling chisel and hammer, with which I make my figures." As an adult, Michelangelo was so devoted to his work that he neglected his appearance. It was said of him that he was indifferent to food and drink, eating "more out of necessity than of pleasure", and that he "often slept in his clothes and ... boots." His biographer Paolo Giovio wrote that, "His nature was so rough and uncouth that his domestic habits were incredibly squalid, and deprived posterity of any pupils who might have followed him."

### Helped by the Medicis

Michelangelo was one of the artists who were greatly helped by members of the Medeci family. The Medeci's were the de facto rulers of Florence, and also members of the family became popes. Together, they commissioned Michelangelo's great works of painting, sculpture and architecture, for example, the statue *Pietà* (1498-99), the statue of *David*, completed in 1504, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, (1508-1512), the statue of *Moses* for the tomb of Pope Julius II, and *St Peter's Basilica*, (1546-1564).

In 1494, the Medicis were expelled from Florence by a rebellion incited by the puritanical Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), who believed that works of art and literature were "vanities" that distracted attention from pure religion. Under Savonarola, there occurred a "bonfire of vanities", during which paintings and books were burned. The situation was complicated by a French invasion of Italy. Savonarola sided with the French, while the pope called on Christians in Italy to oppose them. In 1497, the pope excommunicated Savonarola. Finally, Savonarola was overthrown and hanged, and his body burned in the main square of Florence. The Medicis then returned to the city, where they continued their patronage of Michelangelo.

During his own lifetime Michelangelo was called *Il Divino* ("The Devine One"). He inspired a sense of awe in those who saw his works. Two biographies of Michelangelo were published while he was still alive.

Raphael was directly influenced by Michelangelo, for example in Raphael's fresco, *The School of Athens*. However, the two artist were bitter rivals, and their personalities were very different. Michelangelo was aloof and refrained from social contacts, while the younger Raphael was sociable and gregarious.



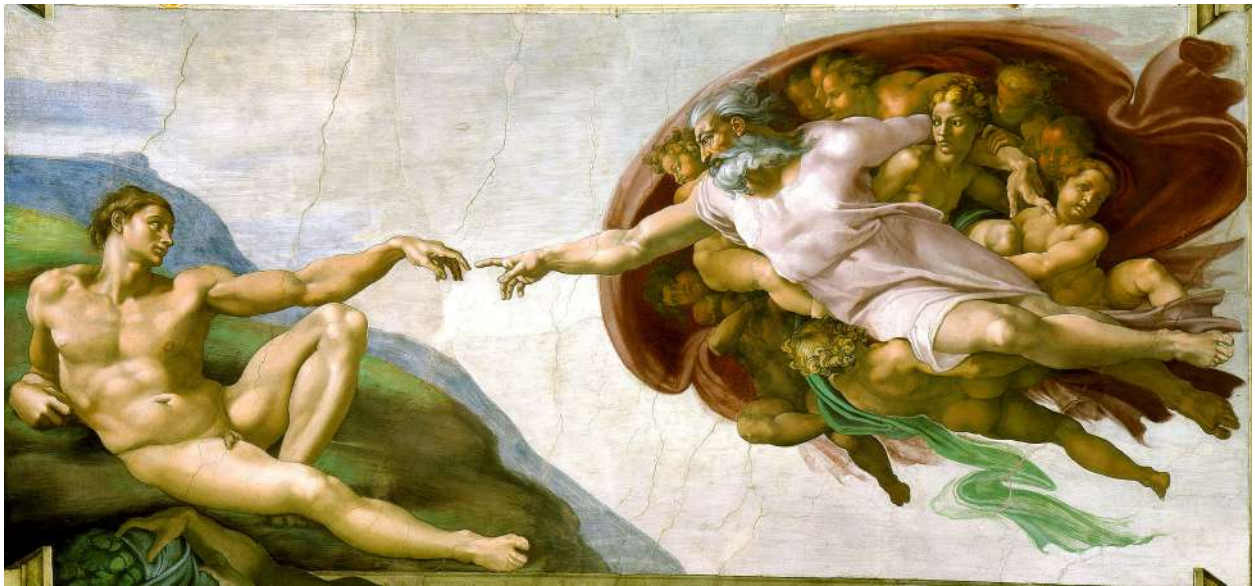


Figure 7.9: *The Creation of Adam*, 1510, by Michelangelo, St. Peter's Cathedral, Vatican, Rome.



Figure 7.10: *The Libyan Sibyl*, 1511, by Michelangelo, St. Peter's Cathedral, Vatican, Rome.

## 7.5 Raphael

### Student of the Umbrian master, Pietro Perugino

Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483-1520), known as Raphael, was the son of the Umbrian painter and poet Giovanni Santi, court painter to the Duke of Urbino. Raphael grew up in the court, and acquired the easy manners that allowed him to move easily in the highest circles later in life.

Raphael showed his great talent as a very young boy. According to one account, he was apprenticed to the pioneering Umbrian painter Pietro Perugino at the age of eight, “despite the tears of his mother”. What is known for certain is that Raphael was a student of Perugino, and was greatly influenced by the master’s innovations, such as the scientific use of perspective.

Perugia is the capital of Umbria. This ancient Etruscan city is built on a hill, and at the top of the hill, there is a wide and very long open space called the “Corso Vannucci”, where people go to walk in the evenings. (Today they eat ice cream.) The famous painter Pietro Vannucci, nicknamed Pietro Perugino, painted a series of frescos, and his paintings can also be seen on the Corso Vannucci. Raphael produced eight of his early paintings in Perugia. He also began a fresco in a chapel at the end of the Corso, but before he had finished it, he had become so famous that he was called to Rome by the pope, and the fresco had to be finished by painters in Raphael’s workshop. Raphael also spent some time in Florence, and was influenced by Leonardo da Vinci’s dynamic treatment of figures, and pyramidal style of composition, which can be seen in such paintings as the *Mona Lisa*. Raphael acknowledged his debt to Leonardo by giving the figure of Plato in his *School of Athens* a face that resembled Leonardo’s.

### Raphael’s rooms at the Vatican

In 1508, Raphael was called to Rome by Pope Julius II, who immediately commissioned him to paint frescos in rooms that were intended to become the pope’s private apartments at the Vatican. The “Stanze” or “Raphael Rooms”, are among the most famous of Raphael’s works. After Raphael’s early death at the age of 37, the project rooms were finished by his assistants. The Raphael Rooms, now a museum, are as follows:

1. Sala di Constantino, containing The Vision of the Cross, The Battle of Milvian Bridge, The Baptism of Constantine and The Donation of Constantine.
2. Stanza di Eliodoro, containing The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple, The Mass at Bolsena, The Meeting of Leo the Great and Attila and Deliverance of Saint Peter.
3. Stanza della Segnatura, containing Disputation of the Holy Sacrament, The Parnassus, The School of Athens and The Cardinal Virtues.
4. Stanza dell’incendio del Borgo, containing The Oath of Leo III, The Coronation of Charlemagne, Fire in the Borgo and The Battle of Ostia.

Together with Leonardo and Michelangelo, Raphael was one of the three greatest painters of the Italian Renaissance.





Figure 7.11: *Self-portrait of Raphael, aged approximately 23, 1503.*



Figure 7.12: *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, 1515, by Raphael, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.





Figure 7.13: Detail from Raphael's *The School of Athens* showing Plato (on the left) and Aristotle. Plato's features resemble those of Leonardo da Vinci.



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# Chapter 8

## THE NORTHERN EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE

### 8.1 Dürer

#### Dürer's early life

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) was born in Nuremberg in the Holy Roman Empire. His father was a prosperous goldsmith, who wanted his son to become a goldsmith too. However, Albrecht showed an amazing talent for drawing, and instead became an artist, printmaker and theoretician. His work influenced the entire Northern Renaissance.

Wikipedia says of him: **“Dürer’s vast body of work includes engravings, his preferred technique in his later prints, altarpieces, portraits and self-portraits, watercolours and books. The woodcuts, such as the Apocalypse series (1498), are more Gothic than the rest of his work. His well-known engravings include the Knight, Death and the Devil (1513), Saint Jerome in his Study (1514) and Melencolia I (1514), which has been the subject of extensive analysis and interpretation. His watercolours also mark him as one of the first European landscape artists, while his ambitious woodcuts revolutionized the potential of that medium.”**

Nuremberg was the center of the new printing industry that revolutionized Europe, and Dürer's prints and books were produced in many copies, spreading his influence very widely. In making woodblock prints, Dürer either drew directly on the block, or else pasted a drawing onto the block. Afterwards, an assistant did the actual cutting.

#### Inspiration from Italy

Dürer communicated with the major Italian artists of his time. These included Raphael, Giovanni Bellini and Leonardo da Vinci. He also traveled to Venice, and was greatly inspired by the paintings that he saw there. However, although influenced by Italian Renaissance painters, he developed his own unique style.





Figure 8.1: *Selfportrait at the Age of 26*, by Albrecht Dürer, Prado, Madrid.





Figure 8.2: *Portrait of Maximilian I*, 1519 by Albrecht Dürer, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. From 1512 onwards, Dürer was patronized by Emperor Maximilian.





Figure 8.3: *Great Piece of Turf*, 1507, by Albrecht Dürer, watercolor, pen and ink, Albertina Museum, Vienna.





Figure 8.4: *Praying Hands*, 1508, by Albrecht Dürer, pen and ink drawing.

## 8.2 Bruegel, father and son

### Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1527-1569) was one of the most important and influential painters and printmakers of the Dutch and Flemish Renaissance. Little is known for certain about the exact date and place of his birth, or the circumstances of his family. Earlier it was thought that he was of peasant origin, but modern researchers now believe that he was a townsman, and moved in intellectual humanist circles.

During his short life, Pieter Bruegel the Elder began by producing large numbers of prints. Later, he turned to painting. His paintings, often showing scenes of peasant life, were extremely popular and were collected by wealthy patrons. He also painted portraits. Thus, he abandoned religious subjects, which had until then, been the main themes in painting.

In 1551, Pieter Bruegel the Elder set off for Italy, probably by way of France. He traveled the entire length of Italy, sketching on the way, and even reached Sicily.

Returning from Italy, he was married in 1563 in Brussels, and he spent the remainder of his short life in that city. Two of his sons from this marriage became well-known painters: Pieter Bruegel the Younger, and Jan Bruegel the Elder. Before his death, Bruegel asked his wife to burn a number of his unpublished prints. This seems to have been because they so satirical as to have been dangerous, and he wished to protect his wife from retribution.

### Pieter Bruegel the Younger

Pieter Bruegel the Younger (1564-1638) was orphaned by the early death of his father, and the death of his mother in 1578. Together with his brother, Jan Bruegel the Elder and his sister Marie, he went to live with his grandmother, Myjen Verhulst. The grandmother was the widow of a well-known painter, Pieter Coecke van Aelst, and she was also an accomplished artist in her own right. It is probable that her two orphaned grandsons received their first instruction in painting from her.

Because of the enormous popularity of his father's paintings, Pieter Bruegel the Younger set up a workshop which made copies of them for both local and foreign markets. This was remunerative work, but he nevertheless had financial troubles, probably because of his excessive entertaining and drinking.

Besides copying his father's works, he also made many original paintings. Wikipedia says of him: **"Pieter Bruegel the Younger created original works largely in the idiom of his father which are energetic, bold and bright and adapted to the 17th-century style. One of the artist's most successful original designs was the painting of The Village Lawyer (sometimes also called the Tax Collector's Office, the Payment of the Tithe, the Lawyer of Bad Cases"**

He was married and had a number of children, among whom, Pieter Bruegel III was also a painter.



Figure 8.5: *The Peasant Wedding*, 1566-1569, by Pieter Bruegel the Elder.





Figure 8.6: *The Peasant Dance*, 1568, by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 8.7: *Winter Landscape With A Bird Trap*, copied by Pieter Bruegel the Younger from his father's original painting.

## 8.3 Holbein

### Early life

Hans Holbein the Younger (c.1497-1543) is considered to be one of the greatest portrait painters of the 16th century. He was born in Ausberg, Germany, and was the son of an accomplished painter, Hans Holbein the Elder, from whom he undoubtedly received his first instruction in painting. As a young artist, Holbein worked mainly in Basil, where he painted murals, designed stained glass windows, and printed books. When the Reformation reached Basil, Holbein painted for both Protestant and Catholic clients, and the effort to please both resulted in a unique style.

### Holbein's career in England

Holbein first achieved fame with his portrait of the humanist philosopher, Erasmus of Rotterdam. He traveled to England in 1526, carrying with him a recommendation from Erasmus, and as a result of this recommendation he was welcomed warmly into the humanist circle of Sir Thomas More. There he quickly built a high reputation as a portrait painter. Holbein's portraits were famous for their exact likeness to the people whom they represent; but he also somehow managed to communicate the character of the portrayed person as well.

In 1528, Holbein returned to Basil, in order to maintain his citizenship, since he had only been granted a two-year leave of absence. Enriched by his financial success in England, he bought a second house in the city. At this time, he painted an emotionally moving portrait of his wife and two children.

During the period 1532-1540, Holbein returned to England, where the Protestant Reformation was reaching a new stage. Henry VIII was on the verge of repudiating his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, in order to marry Anne Boleyn. Since the political situation was now changed, Holbein changed with the times. He distanced himself from his former patron, Sir Thomas More, who steadfastly opposed Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn. Sir Thomas More was soon to be executed because of this opposition. Holbein now found a new patrons in Anne Boleyn's family and Thomas Cromwell, the powerful Chancellor of England. By 1536, Holbein was employed as the King's Painter on a steady salary. Besides painting members of the court, he also painted merchants of the Hanseatic League, who had rooms at the steelyards near London's docks.

No Holbein portraits of Anne Boleyn survive. Perhaps they were destroyed after her famous execution at the order of Henry VIII. Holbein traveled to Denmark to paint the recently-widowed Christina of Denmark, whom Henry was considering as a possible new wife. He also made a portrait of Anne of Cleves, another possible choice to be Henry's new wife. Henry married Anne of Cleves, but was enraged when he found that her beauty was much less than he had expected. Henry's rage fell on Thomas Cromwell, who then fell from power. The loss of Cromwell's patronage greatly damaged Holbein's prospects in England. He died in Aldgate in 1543, at the age of 45.





Figure 8.8: *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1523. by Hans Holbein the Younger.



Figure 8.9: *Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, 1527. by Hans Holbein the Younger, Frick Collection, New York.





Figure 8.10: *Portrait Henry VIII*, 1536. by Hans Holbein the Younger, Tyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid.



## 8.4 Rubens

### Rubens' early life

Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) was born in the German Westphalian town of Siegen, where his parents had fled to avoid religious persecution. His father was a prominent lawyer, Jan Rubens, and his mother, Maria Pypelinckx, an author. Jan Rubens had been the legal advisor to Anna of Saxony, with whom he had an affair and an illegitimate daughter. Anna was the second wife of William the Silent of Holland. As a result of the scandal, Jan Rubens was locked up in Dillenburg Castle, where he feared he would be executed. However his wife, Maria, pleaded for his life, and he was released, following payment of a large bail, on the condition that he should not leave Siegen. Thus Peter Paul Rubens was born in the town.

Following the death of his father in 1587, Peter Paul Rubens and his mother moved to Antwerp, where he was raised as a devout Catholic. Here he received a humanist education, studying classical literature in Latin. At the age of 14 he began his training as an artist, as an apprentice with Tobias Verhaech.

### Diplomat and artist

Wikipedia says of Rubens, **“He is considered the most influential artist of Flemish Baroque tradition. Ruben’s highly charged compositions reference erudite aspects of classical and Christian history. His unique and immensely popular Baroque style emphasized movement, colour, and sensuality, which followed the immediate, dramatic artistic style promoted in the Counter-Reformation. Rubens specialized in making altarpieces, portraits, landscapes, and history paintings of mythological and allegorical subjects.**

**“In addition to running a large studio in Antwerp that produced paintings popular with nobility and art collectors throughout Europe, Rubens was a classically educated humanist scholar and diplomat who was knighted by both Philip IV of Spain and Charles I of England. Rubens was a prolific artist. The catalogue of his works by Michael Jaffé lists 1,403 pieces, excluding numerous copies made in his workshop.”**

Rubens spent the years 1600-1608 in Italy, where he was very much influenced by great painters of the Italian Renaissance, especially by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael. He also studied Roman and Greek art, and was especially influenced by the dramatic statue of *Lacoön and His Sons*. On a visit to Venice, he saw paintings by Titian, Veronese and Tintorino. At the end of this period Rubens received news that his mother was very ill. He hurried back to Antwerp, only to find that his mother had died before his arrival.

Rubens was now so financially successful that in 1635 he was able to buy an estate with castle, Chateau de Steen, where he spent the last five years of his life.

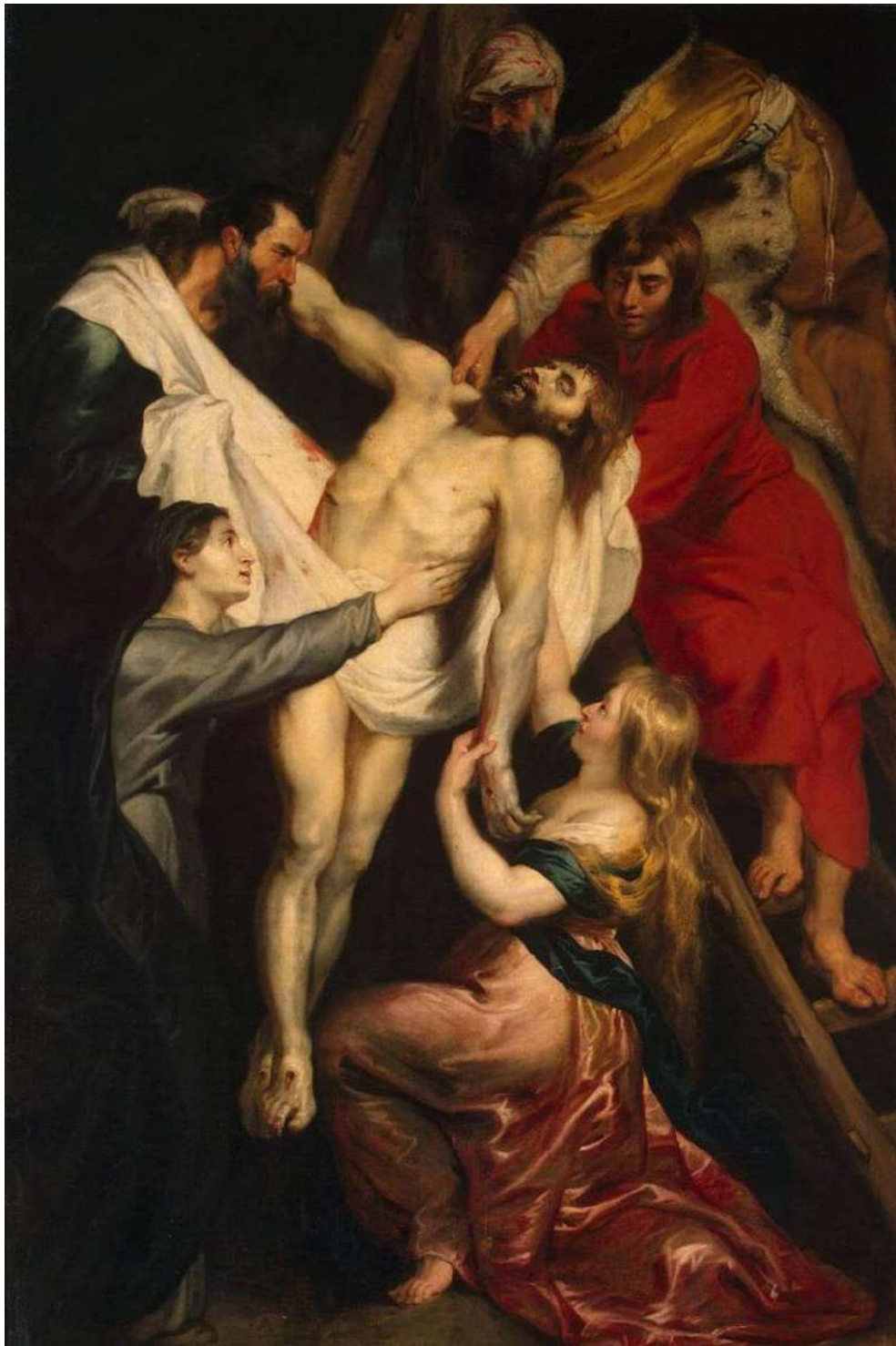


Figure 8.11: *Descent from the Cross*, 1618, by Peter Paul Rubens, Hermitage Museum.



Figure 8.12: *Portrait of Anna of Austria, Queen of France*, c. 1622, by Peter Paul Rubens.





Figure 8.13: *Portrait of the Artist*, 1623, by Peter Paul Rubens, Picture Gallery, Buckingham Palace.

## 8.5 Vermeer

### Artist, art dealer, father and innkeeper in Delft

Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) was a Dutch painter who lived his entire life in Delft. He is today renowned for his masterly treatment of light and color, and for his portrayal of intimate domestic scenes. He worked very slowly and carefully, and partly for that reason produced very few paintings, only about 66, and of these only 34 survive today. Besides his very slow and careful way of working, the other reason why Vermeer produced so few paintings was that his life was full of many other activities. He was the father of 13 children, of whom 10 survived infancy. He was also an innkeeper and an art dealer.

Vermeer's father, Reijnier Vermeer, was a middle-class dealer in silk and wool, who also owned a large inn. When he died in 1652, his son, Johannes Vermeer took over both businesses. In 1653, he married a Catholic girl, Catherina Bolenes, and converted to Catholicism. His new mother-in-law was much wealthier than he, and as a consequence, the young couple moved into her house.

Vermeer had meanwhile finished his apprenticeship in painting, and had become a highly respected figure within the art world of Delft. His paintings were much sought after by the collectors of the city, who are thought to have supplied him with the very expensive pigments that he used. The fact that all of his paintings were bought by local collectors prevented his reputation from spreading beyond Delft.

The year 1672 was known as the "year of disaster for Holland. In that year, Holland was invaded by the French army of Louis XIV, and as a result there was a severe economic downturn. Vermeer found himself unable to sell not only his own paintings, but also the paintings of others that he had in his collection. As a result, he became desperate and depressed, and he died in 1675 after a short illness. His wife described his death in the following words: "...during the ruinous war with France he not only was unable to sell any of his art but also, to his great detriment, was left sitting with the paintings of other masters that he was dealing in. As a result and owing to the great burden of his children having no means of his own, he lapsed into such decay and decadence, which he had so taken to heart that, as if he had fallen into a frenzy, in a day and a half he went from being healthy to being dead."

### Overlooked for two centuries, then rediscovered

Vermeer's work was overlooked by art historians for two centuries after his death, probably because his high reputation was confined to the city of Delft. He was unknown elsewhere. However, in the 1860's he was rediscovered. Wikipedia writes about this event: **"The Delft master's modern rediscovery began about 1860, when German museum director Gustav Waagen saw The Art of Painting in the Czernin gallery in Vienna and recognized the work as a Vermeer, though it was attributed to Pieter de Hooch at that time."**

Vermeer is now famous throughout the world.



Figure 8.14: *The Milkmaid*, 1658. by Johannes Vermeer.





Figure 8.15: *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, 1665. by Johannes Vermeer.



Figure 8.16: *The Geographer*, 1669, by Johannes Vermeer.

## 8.6 Rembrandt

### Early success

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669) was born in Leiden, in the Dutch Republic. After briefly attending the University of Leiden, he was apprenticed to the Dutch historical painter, Jacob van Swanenburg, and afterwards Pieter Lastman in Amsterdam. He then started his own workshop. In 1631, Rembrandt began to practice as a portrait painter in Amsterdam. He achieved great popularity and his financial success allowed him to marry Saskia van Uylenburgh, whose father had been a lawyer and mayor of the city of Leeuwarden.

### Overspending and personal tragedy

In 1639, Rembrandt and Saskia bought a very large house in Amsterdam (now a Rembrandt museum). To make this purchase, Rembrandt borrowed a large amount of money. He could easily have paid off his debt from his earnings, but instead he bought many works by other painters, and he may have made unsuccessful investments.

The family was then struck by tragedy. Three of their children died shortly after birth. Their fourth child, Titus, survived to become an adult, but in 1642, Saskia died, probably from tuberculosis.

In the late 1640's, Rembrandt began a relationship with a much younger woman, Hendrickje Stoffels. She became his long-time partner, and they had a daughter together, but Rembrandt was unable to marry her because of financial conditions related to his inheritance from Saskia.

Rembrandt continued to overspend and became bankrupt. According to the law, he was no longer allowed to deal in art. To get around this regulation a company was set up, "Hendrickje and Titus", with Rembrandt as an employee.

### Rembrandt's legacy

Wikipedia says of Rembrandt: **"His reputation as the greatest etcher in the history of the medium was established in his lifetime and never questioned since... Because of his empathy for the human condition, he has been called 'one of the great prophets of civilization'. The French sculptor Auguste Rodin said, 'Compare me with Rembrandt! What sacrilege! With Rembrandt, the colossus of Art! We should prostrate ourselves before Rembrandt and never compare anyone with him!' Vincent van Gogh wrote, 'Rembrandt goes so deep into the mysterious that he says things for which there are no words in any language. It is with justice that they call Rembrandt - magician - that's no easy occupation.'"**





Figure 8.17: *Self-Portrait*, by Rembrandt van Rijn.



Figure 8.18: *The Prodigal Son in a Tavern*, 1635, self-portrait with Saskia, by Rembrandt van Rijn, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.





Figure 8.19: *The Night Watch or The Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq*, 1642, by Rembrandt van Rijn, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.





Figure 8.20: *Rembrandt's Son Titus as a Monk*, 1660, by Rembrandt van Rijn, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

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## Chapter 9

# JAPANESE WOODBLOCK PRINTS

### 9.1 Hiroshige and Hokusai

During the 18th and 19th centuries, artists in Japan developed highly sophisticated techniques for woodblock printing. Among the greatest of these artists were Hiroshige and Hokusai.

#### Hiroshige

Ando Hiroshige (1787-1858) is best known for his landscape series *The Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido* and for vertical format landscape series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*.

Hiroshige was born into a family with a samurai background, and some of his ancestors had held positions of power in Japan. His father was the fire warden at Edo Castle, and after his father's death, these duties fell to the young Hiroshige. However, the duties were not heavy, and they left Hiroshige much leisure for painting. He started painting at the age of 14.

Hiroshige's early paintings were of female beauties and kabuki actors. However, influenced by the publication of Hokusai's popular series of woodblock prints, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, he changed to landscapes.

#### Hokusai

Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) created his famous series of woodblock prints, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* in response to a domestic travel boom, accompanied by public interest in picturesque places; but he also had a personal obsession with Mount Fuji. The art historian Richard Lane remarked, "Indeed, if there is one work that made Hokusai's name, both in Japan and abroad, it must be this monumental print-series". The series includes his iconic print, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*.



Figure 9.1: Ando Hiroshige, *The Plum Garden in Kameido*, 1857, woodblock print from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*.





Figure 9.2: Ando Hiroshige, *The Iris Garden*, ca. 1833-1834, woodblock print from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*.





Figure 9.3: Katsushika Hokusai, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, ca. 1829-1833.



Figure 9.4: Katsushika Hokusai, *Barrier Town on the Sumida River*, ca. 1829-1833. Like *The Great Wave*, this print is part of Hokusai's series, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*.

## 9.2 Influence on French painting

Vincent van Gogh made meticulous copies of Hiroshige's prints, and in general the innovative boldness of the Japanese compositions greatly influenced French painting.

Wikipedia states that:

**Hiroshige's The Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido (1833-1834) and One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (1856-1858) greatly influenced French Impressionists such as Monet. Vincent van Gogh copied two of the One Hundred Famous Views of Edo which were among his collection of ukiyo-e prints. Hiroshige's style also influenced the Mir iskusstva, a 20th-century Russian art movement in which Ivan Bilibin was a major artist. Cézanne and Whistler were also amongst those under Hiroshige's influence. Hiroshige was regarded by Louise Gonse, director of the influential Gazette des Beaux-Arts and author of the two volume L'Art Japonais in 1883, as the greatest painter of landscapes of the 19th century.**

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# Chapter 10

## IMPRESSIONISM

### 10.1 Manet

#### Born into a wealthy and influential family

Édouard Manet (1832-1883) was a French painter whose pioneering work shocked the world of art and proved to be a turning point. Young painters rallied around his revolutionary work, and this led to the beginning of the Impressionist movement.

Manet was born into a wealthy and well-connected family. His mother, Eugénie-Desirée Fournier, was the god-daughter of the Swedish crown prince, Charles Bernadotte, from whom the Swedish royal family is descended. His father, Auguste Monet was a judge, and he expected his son Édouard to follow a career in law. However, Édouard Manet's uncle, Edmond Fournier, encouraged his nephew's wish to become a painter. On his uncle's advice, Manet enrolled in a special course in drawing, where he met the future French Minister of Fine Arts, Antonin Proust, who was destined to become his lifelong friend.

#### Pioneer of modernism: *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* and *Olympia*

One of Manet's major early paintings was entitled *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, or in English, *The Luncheon on the Grass*. He submitted this painting to the official French Salon in 1863, but it was rejected. Manet then decided to exhibit it in the "Salon des Refusés", an exhibition hall that had been instituted by Napoleon III because an excessive number of paintings were being rejected by the official Salon. Here the painting attracted great attention, and also dismay. Viewers were shocked by both the subject matter and sketch-like painterly style, where the brushwork was not hidden. On the other hand, young artists recognized the painting's revolutionary qualities, and rallied behind Manet.

Another painting by Manet, *Olympia*, was accepted by the Salon in 1865, where it created a similar scandal. Like *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, *Olympia* was hailed by young artists as a breakthrough.



Figure 10.1: *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863, by Édouard Manet, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Wikipedia comments: "Despite the mundane subject, Manet deliberately chose a large canvas size, measuring 81.9 x 104.1 in (208 by 264.5 cm), normally reserved for historical, religious, and mythological subjects. The style of the painting breaks with the academic traditions of the time. He did not try to hide the brush strokes; the painting even looks unfinished in some parts of the scene. The nude is also starkly different from the smooth, flawless figures of Cabanel or Ingres. A nude woman casually lunching with fully dressed men was an affront to audiences' sense of propriety, though Émile Zola, a contemporary of Manet's, argued that this was not uncommon in paintings found in the Louvre."



Figure 10.2: *Olympia*, 1863, by Édouard Manet, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Wikipedia comments: "What shocked contemporary audiences was not Olympia's nudity, nor the presence of her fully clothed maid, but her confrontational gaze and a number of details identifying her as a demi-mondaine or prostitute. These include the orchid in her hair, her bracelet, pearl earrings and the oriental shawl on which she lies, symbols of wealth and sensuality. The black ribbon around her neck, in stark contrast with her pale flesh, and her cast-off slipper underline the voluptuous atmosphere. 'Olympia' was a name associated with prostitutes in 1860s Paris."





Figure 10.3: *A Bar At The Follies Bergère*, 1862, by Edouard Manet, Courtauld Gallery, London.



Figure 10.4: *The Fifer*, 1866, by Edouard Manet, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

## 10.2 Monet

### Monet's early life

Claude Monet (1840-1926) was born in Paris, but his family soon moved to Le Havre in Normandy, where the family had a business supplying ships with supplies, and a grocery business. As a young boy, Claude Monet showed an early talent for drawing. He made charcoal caricatures of local people, and sold these for 10 or 20 francs. Monet's father wanted him to go into the family business, but his mother, who was a singer, encouraged him to follow his desire to become an artist. When Monet was 16, he met the painter Eugène Boudin, who became his mentor. Boudin taught Monet to use oil paints, and encouraged him to work on scenes in the open air.

### The father of Impressionism

By 1865, Monet was studying painting in Paris, but he became disillusioned with the traditional schools, and instead joined the more interesting studio of Charles Gleyre. Here he met Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Frédéric Bazille and Alfred Sisley. Together, they began to paint in a new way, painting outdoor scenes using bright colors mixed with white, and rapid, visible brush-strokes. Their aim was to capture the fleeting effects of light, shade and color.

In 1874, these artists and their other like-minded colleagues, finding their paintings largely rejected by the official Salon, organized their own independent exhibition. Thirty artist, led by Monet, Degas, Pissaro, Renoir and Sisley exhibited over 300 paintings, and these were seen by about 4,000 people. In his review of the exhibition, the art critic Louis Leroy referred disparagingly to Monet's painting, *Impression, Sunrise*, and called the exhibition "L'Exposition des Impressionnistes". Although the term "Impressionist" was intended as a sarcasm by Leroy, the young artists participating in the 1874 exhibition adopted it proudly as the name of their movement.

### Old age, prosperity and fame

Claude Monet lived long enough to see Impressionism accepted and celebrated. Purchases of his own paintings also made him wealthy enough to first rent and then in 1890 to buy a large house and gardens in the village of Gerveny, about 80 kilometers from Paris. He moved there with his second wife, Alice Hoschedé, and their large family. Alice had six children from her first marriage, while Monet had two sons. One of Monet's sons married one of Alice's daughters.

At Gerveny, Monet meticulously constructed the extensive gardens that he wished to paint. In the midst of these gardens, there was a pond full of water-lilies and crossed by a Japanese bridge. Monet's very large paintings of this scene are among his most famous. The house and gardens and the Impressionist Museum now located at Gerveny are now major tourist attractions.





Figure 10.5: *Impression, Sunrise*, 1872, by Claude Monet, Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris. This famous painting gave its name to the movement that aimed at capturing fleeting effects of light and color in outdoor scenes. Claude Monet, who painted it, became the most consistent practitioner of the Impressionist philosophy. He lived long enough to experience the acceptance and celebration of Impressionism.



Figure 10.6: *Houses of Parliament, stormy sky*, 1904, by Claude Monet, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, Lille, France.



Figure 10.7: *Wheatstacks (End of Summer)*, 1890-1891, by Claude Monet, Art Institute of Chicago.





Figure 10.8: *The Four Trees*, 1891, by Claude Monet, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## 10.3 Renoir

### Painting pretty girls on teapots

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) was born into a family of such modest means that he had to leave school at the age of 13 and become an apprentice at a porcelain factory, where he became adept at painting heartbreakingly beautiful images of Marie Antoinette onto teapots. Often, when tired by this work, he would go to the Louvre to be inspired by the paintings there. The owners of the factory recognized Renoir's unusual talent and communicated it to his parents. This ended with the young Pierre-Auguste taking lessons to prepare for entry into the *École des Beaux Artes*. In 1862, Renoir began to study under Charles Gleyre in Paris, where, as mentioned above, he met Alfred Sisley, Frédéric Bazille, and Claude Monet. Together, they began to paint open-air scenes in a new style, later to be called Impressionism.

### Renoir exhibits with the Impressionists

Renoir did much of the work in organizing the First Impressionist Exhibition in 1874. Wikipedia comments about his participation in later exhibitions of the group: **“Hoping to secure a livelihood by attracting portrait commissions, Renoir displayed mostly portraits at the second Impressionist exhibition in 1876. He contributed a more diverse range of paintings the next year when the group presented its third exhibition; they included *Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette* and *The Swing*. Renoir did not exhibit in the fourth or fifth Impressionist exhibitions, and instead resumed submitting his works to the Salon. By the end of the 1870s, particularly after the success of his painting *Mme Charpentier and her Children* (1878) at the Salon of 1879, Renoir was a successful and fashionable painter.”**

### Painting with crippled hands

Renoir continued to paint during the last twenty years of his life, even though his hands were painfully crippled by arthritis. His hands were wrapped in bandages to prevent irritation. Then, when an assistant placed a brush in his hands, he was still able to grasp it and to paint. He continued heroically in this way until his death in 1919.

Throughout his life, Renoir was a very thin man, in surprising contrast to the buxom girls in his paintings.

Renoir's sons continued his creative tradition. They included the actor Pierre Renoir (1885-1952), filmmaker Jean Renoir (1894-1979) and ceramic artist Claude Renoir (1901-1969). Renoir's grandson was the filmmaker Claude Renoir (1913-1993), son of Pierre.



Figure 10.9: *The Theatre Box*, 1874, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Courtauld Gallery, London.





Figure 10.10: *Danseuse*, 1874, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 10.11: *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, 1881, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

## 10.4 Degas

### The early life of Edgar Degas

Hilaire-Germain-Edgar De Gas (1834-1917), now known simply as Edgar Degas, was born into a well-off family in Paris. His father, Augustin De Gas was a banker, while his mother was a Creole from New Orleans, Louisiana.

Degas began to paint early in life. He wished to be an historical painter. By the time he was 18, he had turned a room in his large home into a studio. However, his father wished him to study law, and he dutifully enrolled for law studies at the University of Paris; but his heart was not in his legal studies. It was in his painting and drawing at the Louvre. In 1855 he met the famous classical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, who gave him advice that he never forgot: “Draw lines, young man, and still more lines, both from life and from memory, and you will become a good artist”. In April of the same year, Degas dropped his law studies and entered the *École des Beaux-Arts*.

### Was Degas an Impressionist?

Degas himself said, “You know what I think of people who work out in the open. If I were the government I would have a special brigade of gendarmes to keep an eye on artists who paint landscapes from nature. Oh, I don’t mean to kill anyone; just a little dose of bird-shot now and then as a warning” He also said, “No art was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and of the study of the great masters; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament, I know nothing.” Nevertheless, he was closer to the Impressionists than to any other group. Like them, his method of composition was influenced by the bold innovative style of Japanese woodblock prints. The paintings of Degas also capture fleeting moments, as do those of the Impressionists.

### Working in many media

Degas is famous for his many paintings of ballerina. He specialized in portraying movement and horse-racing is another subject in which he excelled. Besides paintings, he also produced many drawings and prints, as well as pastels and bronze sculptures. Wikipedia says of him: “**Degas was a superb draftsman, and particularly masterly in depicting movement, as can be seen in his rendition of dancers and bathing female nudes. In addition to ballet dancers and bathing women, Degas painted race horses and racing jockeys, as well as portraits. His portraits are notable for their psychological complexity and for their portrayal of human isolation.**”





Figure 10.12: *The Dancing Class*, 1870, by Edgar Degas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.



Figure 10.13: *Waiting*, 1880-1882, by Edgar Degas, Paul Getty Museum, Pasadena, Los Angeles.



Figure 10.14: *Before the Race*, 1882-1884, by Edgar Degas, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.



## 10.5 Morisot

### Birthe Morisot's early life

Berthe Marie Pauline Morisot (1841-1895) was born into an eminent family. She was the daughter of an important government official, the senior administrator of the departement (district) of Cher, and great-niece of the famous artist, Jean-Honoré Fragonard.

At that time, it was usual for the daughters of well-to-do families to receive lessons in painting, and so both Birthe Morisot and her sisters Yves and Edma received instruction. The sisters planned that each of them should make a drawing for their father's birthday.

Birthe Morisot continued her painting lessons at the Louvre, where she met some of the important artists of the time, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. Corot encouraged Birthe Morisot to work on open-air subjects.

Wikipedia says of Birthe Morisot's connection with the Impressionists: **"Morisot's first appearance in the Salon de Paris came at the age of twenty-three in 1864, with the acceptance of two landscape paintings. She continued to show regularly in the Salon, to generally favorable reviews, until 1873, the year before the first Impressionist exhibition. She exhibited with the Impressionists from 1874 onwards, only missing the exhibition in 1878 when her daughter was born."**

Birthe's two sisters gave up painting after their marriages, but they continued to long for it. Edma wrote to Birthe, "... I am often with you in thought, dear Berthe. I'm in your studio and I like to slip away, if only for a quarter of an hour, to breathe that atmosphere that we shared for many years..."

Édouard Manet painted a portrait of the other sister, Yves, entitled *Mrs Theodore Gobillard*. It is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

### Marriage to Édouard Manet's brother

Birthe Morisot met Édouard Manet in 1868, and this led to a longtime friendship. Manet painted many portraits of her. Their correspondence over many years shows the great warmth of their friendship. Wikipedia writes: **"By the introduction of Manet, Morisot was married to Édouard's brother, Eugène Manet in 1874. On November 14, 1878, she gave birth to her only child, Julie, who posed frequently for her mother and other Impressionist artists, including Renoir and her uncle Édouard."**

**"Correspondence between Morisot and Édouard Manet shows warm affection, and Manet gave her an easel as a Christmas present. Morisot often posed for Manet and there are several portrait painting of Morisot such as *Repose* (*Portrait of Berthe Morisot*) and *Berthe Morisot with a Bouquet*."**

Birthe Morisot died of pneumonia in 1895 while attending to her daughter Julie who was suffering from the same illness. She is remembered, along with Marie Cassatt and Marie Bracquemond, as one of the three great ladies of the Impressionist movement.



Figure 10.15: *The Cradle*, 1872, by Berthe Morisot, Musée d'Orsay.



Figure 10.16: *Reading*, 1873, by Berthe Morisot, Cleveland Museum of Art.

### Suggestions for further reading

1. Baumann, Felix Andreas, Marianne Karabelnik-Matta, Jean Sutherland Boggs, and Tobia Bezzola (1994). *Degas Portraits*. London: Merrell Holberton.
2. Bomford, David, Jo Kirby, John Leighton, Ashok Roy, and Raymond White (1990). *Impressionism*. London: National Gallery.
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8. Jensen, Robert (1994). *Marketing modernism in fin-de-siècle Europe*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
9. Moskowitz, Ira; Sérullaz, Maurice (1962). *French Impressionists: A Selection of Drawings of the French 19th Century*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.
10. Rewald, John (1973). *The History of Impressionism (4th, Revised Ed.)*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.



11. Richardson, John (1976). *Manet (3rd Ed.)*. Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd.
12. Rosenblum, Robert (1989). *Paintings in the Musée d'Orsay*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang.
13. Moffett, Charles S. (1986). *The New Painting, Impressionism 1874-1886*. Geneva: Richard Burton SA.

# Chapter 11

## POST-IMPRESSIONISTS, FAUVES AND CUBISTS

### 11.1 Gauguin

#### The Bishop of Orléans' catechism

When he was between the ages of 11 and 16, Paul Gauguin<sup>1</sup> attended a Catholic boarding school in France. At the school, the Bishop Dupanloup of Orléans himself taught the class in liturgy. The bishop had devised a catechism in which three main questions were asked: “Where does humanity come from? Where is it going? How do we proceed?”

#### Gauguin's painting and attempted suicide

It is possible that these questions influenced Gauguin when, many years later, he began an enormous painting whose title asked very similar questions. By this time Gauguin had become an influential post-impressionist artist, the leader of the symbolist movement. Gauguin was admired by a small circle of artists but, like his close friend Vincent van Gogh, he was unrecognized by the larger public until after his death.<sup>2</sup>

In 1891, when he began the the huge painting, Gauguin was living on the island of Tahiti, where he had gone in search of a society free from European prejudices. Dogged by failing health and financial worries, he planned to commit suicide after finishing what he regarded as his best painting. He did, indeed, attempt suicide by taking an overdose of arsenic, but the attempt failed, and he lived until 1903.

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<sup>1</sup>(1848-1903)

<sup>2</sup>Gauguin's prices reached a new peak in February 2015 when the New York Times revealed that his *Nafea Faa Ipoipo* (Quand te maries-tu ?) had been acquired in a private deal for \$300 million. At the time, the painting was part of a Paul Gauguin retrospective at the Beyeler Foundation. Sold by the artist for FF 500 in 1895, the painting suddenly became the most expensive artwork in the world!



Figure 11.1: **Where do we come from?**



Figure 11.2: **What are we?**





Figure 11.3: **Where are we going?**



Figure 11.4: **Both religion and science have attempted to answer these questions.**

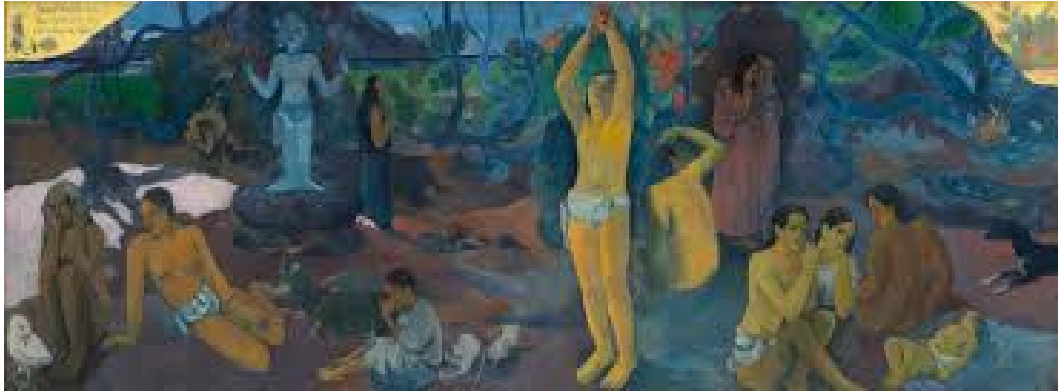


Figure 11.5: *D'où Venons Nous - Que Sommes Nous - Où Allons Nous*.



Figure 11.6: A self-portrait by Gauguin with his painting, *The Yellow Christ*.

## 11.2 Van Gogh

Wikipedia says of him:

Vincent Willem van Gogh... 30 March 1853 - 29 July 1890) was a Dutch post-impressionist painter who is among the most famous and influential figures in the history of Western art. In just over a decade, he created about 2,100 artworks, including around 860 oil paintings, most of which date from the last two years of his life. They include landscapes, still lifes, portraits and self-portraits, and are characterized by bold colors and dramatic, impulsive and expressive brushwork that contributed to the foundations of modern art. He was not commercially successful, and his suicide at 37 came after years of mental illness and poverty.

Born into an upper-middle-class family, Van Gogh drew as a child and was serious, quiet, and thoughtful. As a young man he worked as an art dealer, often travelling, but became depressed after he was transferred to London. He turned to religion and spent time as a Protestant missionary in southern Belgium. He drifted in ill health and solitude before taking up painting in 1881, having moved back home with his parents. His younger brother Theo supported him financially, and the two kept up a long correspondence by letter. His early works, mostly still lifes and depictions of peasant laborers, contain few signs of the vivid color that distinguished his later work. In 1886, he moved to Paris, where he met members of the avant-garde, including Émile Bernard and Paul Gauguin, who were reacting against the Impressionist sensibility. As his work developed he created a new approach to still lifes and local landscapes. His paintings grew brighter in color as he developed a style that became fully realized during his stay in Arles in the south of France in 1888. During this period he broadened his subject matter to include series of olive trees, wheat fields and sunflowers.

As mentioned by Wikipedia, Vincent van Gogh's painting was supported both morally and financially by his younger brother Theo, who was an art dealer. Their letters to each other, published in 1914, as a moving testimony to Theo's devoted support for his older brother, and the letters also serve as Vincent's autobiography. Theo died soon after his brother, but his widow, Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, out of loyalty to Theo, took up the cause of bringing Vincent's paintings to the world. It was she who translated and published the letters between the two brothers, and it was she who worked tirelessly to make the world of art aware of Vincent's innovative genius as a painter.





Figure 11.7: *Self-Portrait*, by Vincent van Gogh, 1887, Art Institute of Chicago.



Figure 11.8: *Sorrow*, 1882, a drawing in chalk by van Gogh, the Garman Ryan Collection, at The New Art Gallery Walsall.



Figure 11.9: *Miners' Wives Carrying Sacks of Coal*, painted by Vincent van Gogh in 1882.



Figure 11.10: *The Potato Eaters*, painted by van Gogh in 1885, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.





Figure 11.11: *Sunflowers* (4th version), painted by van Gogh in 1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.



Figure 11.12: *Bedroom in Arles* (1st version), painted by van Gogh in 1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.



Figure 11.13: *The Starry Night*, painted by van Gogh in 1889, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.





Figure 11.14: *Portrait of Dr. Gachet*, painted by van Gogh in 1890, private collection.

## 11.3 Cézanne

### Son of a banker

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) was the son of a French banker. Encouraged by his close friend, the writer Émile Zola, and against his father's wishes, Paul Cézanne became a painter. Eventually his father was reconciled to this decision, and he gave his son financial support. Later, after his father's death, Cézanne inherited a large fortune. Thus, unlike many artists, he never had financial worries. This was lucky, because during his lifetime, Cézanne's paintings were rejected by both the public and the critics.

### Father of Cubism

Today, however, he is recognized as a transitional figure between Impressionism and Cubism. Both Matisse and Picasso said of him, "Cezanne is the father of us all." In 2011 Cézanne's painting *The Card Players* was sold to the Royal Family of Qatar for an estimated \$250 million, which was, at that time the highest price ever paid for a painting.

In his painting, Cézanne tried to find the geometrical structure of the subject, and to reduce it to planes, spheres, cylinders and cones. These characteristics formed the basis of Cubism.

Wikipedia says of him:

Along with the work of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, the work of Cézanne, with its sense of immediacy and incompleteness, critically influenced Matisse and others prior to Fauvism and Expressionism. After Cézanne died in 1906, his paintings were exhibited in a large museum-like retrospective in Paris, September 1907. The 1907 Cézanne retrospective at the Salon d'Automne greatly affected the direction that the avant-garde in Paris took, lending credence to his position as one of the most influential artists of the 19th century and to the advent of Cubism...

Cézanne's explorations of geometric simplification and optical phenomena inspired Picasso, Braque, Metzinger, Gleizes, Gris and others to experiment with ever more complex views of the same subject and eventually to the fracturing of form. Cézanne thus sparked one of the most revolutionary areas of artistic enquiry of the 20th century, one which was to affect profoundly the development of modern art. Picasso referred to Cézanne as "the father of us all" and claimed him as "my one and only master!" Other painters such as Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul Gauguin, Kasimir Malevich, Georges Rouault, Paul Klee, and Henri Matisse acknowledged Cézanne's genius.



Figure 11.15: Cézanne's *Rideau, Cruchon et Compotier*, 1893-1894, private collection.



Figure 11.16: Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Bellevue*, 1895, Barnes Foundation, Pennsylvania.





Figure 11.17: Cézanne's *The Card Players*, 1894-1895, Royal Family of Qatar.



Figure 11.18: *The Bathers*, 1898-1905, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, United States.

## 11.4 Matisse

Henri Matisse (1869-1954) together with Pablo Picasso, is generally regarded as one of the most important artists to revolutionize painting during the early years of the 20th century. He was the oldest son of a wealthy French grain merchant. Following his father's wishes, he studied law, and after qualifying, he worked as a court administrator in Le Cateau-Cambrésis. In 1889, when he was 20 years old, while Henri Matisse was recovering from an attack of appendicitis, his mother bought him some painting materials. He later described the experience of his first efforts in painting as the discovery of "a kind of paradise". To his father's deep disappointment, he soon decided to become an artist. In 1891 he enrolled at the Académie Julian in Paris.

At first Matisse painted landscapes in a conventional style. However, in 1896 he visited the Australian painter John Russell on the island of Belle Ile off the coast of Brittany. Russell introduced Matisse to the bright colour spectrum of the Impressionists, and to the works of Vincent van Gogh, who had been a friend of Russell, even giving Matisse one of van Gogh's drawings. As a result of Russell's influence, Matisse changed his style of painting completely, abandoning the earth colours that he had previously used for a bright spectrum of bold primary colours. He later said, "Russell was my teacher, and Russell explained colour theory to me."

In 1905, Matisse exhibited with a group of artists who came to be known as the "Fauves" or "Wild Beasts" at the Salon d'Automne. The group used strong colours to express strong emotion, with little regard for realism. The name given to the group came from a newspaper reviewer who noticed a conventional stature among the paintings and commented "Donatello chez les fauves" (Donatello among the wild beasts). Another reviewer characterized the exhibition as "A pot of paint thrown in the face of the public". The painting, *Woman With a Hat* by Matisse, was singled out by the reviewers for special condemnation. However this painting was bought by Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo, wealthy Americans living in Paris, who had begun to collect the work of avant-garde artists. Their purchases also included the works of Picasso.

Wikipedia states that

**The decline of the Fauvist movement after 1906 did not affect the career of Matisse; many of his finest works were created between 1906 and 1917, when he was an active part of the great gathering of artistic talent in Montparnasse, even though he did not quite fit in, with his conservative appearance and strict bourgeois work habits. He continued to absorb new influences. He travelled to Algeria in 1906 studying African art and Primitivism. After viewing a large exhibition of Islamic art in Munich in 1910, he spent two months in Spain studying Moorish art. He visited Morocco in 1912 and again in 1913 and while painting in Tangier he made several changes to his work, including his use of black as a colour. The effect on Matisse's art was a new boldness in the use of intense, unmodulated colour, as in *L'Atelier Rouge* (1911).**



Figure 11.19: *Woman with a Hat*, 1905, by Henri Matisse, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.





Figure 11.20: *The Joy of Life*, 1905-1906, by Henri Matisse, Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Figure 11.21: *Harmony in Red*, 1908, by Henri Matisse. Commissioned by the Russian collector Sergei Shchukin, the painting is now at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.



Figure 11.22: *Dance*, 1910, by Henri Matisse, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.



Figure 11.23: *Blue Nude*, 1952, collage by Henri Matisse. In his old age, Matisse was confined to a wheel-chair after a cancer operation; but with the help of assistants, he created an impressive body of work using the technique of collage.

## 11.5 Toulouse-Lautrec

### Born into an aristocratic but inbred family

Henri Marie Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa (1864-1901) was the son of Alphonse Charles Comte de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa. Had he outlived his father, Henri would have been doubly a count, both of the region of Lautrec and of Monfa. As a young boy, Lautrec showed great ability as an artist, and he was given lessons in painting by one of his father's friends.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's parents were first cousins, and this inbreeding seems to have resulted in genetic weakness of his bones. At the age of 13, he broke his right femur, and at 14 his left femur. The fractures did not heal properly, and as he grew to adulthood, his torso became that of a full-grown man, but his legs remained those of a child.

### Painter of decadent life in Montmartre

In 1882, at the age of 18, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec moved to Paris to study painting under Léon Bonnat. While studying in Paris, Toulouse-Lautrec was attracted to Montmartre, the center of entertainment and night life in Paris. He was destined to become a legendary portrayer of the decadent life in Montmartre.

Wikipedia says of Toulouse-Lautrec and the ladies of Montmartre: **"The girls in the brothels inspired Toulouse-Lautrec. He would frequently visit one located in Rue d'Amboise, where he had a favorite called Mireille. He created about a hundred drawings and fifty paintings inspired by the life of these women. In 1892 and 1893, he created a series of two women kissing called *Le Lit*, and in 1894 painted *Salón de la Rue des Moulins* from memory in his studio..."**

He was well appreciated by the ladies, saying, 'I have found girls of my own size! Nowhere else do I feel so much at home'."

### Alcoholism

Life on Montmartre took its toll. Mocked for his physical appearance, Toulouse-Lautrec turned to alcohol for comfort, at first beer and wine, but later a potent mixture of absinthe and cognac. He walked with the aid of a cane, and this was hollowed out and filled with alcohol, so that he would never be without it.

In February, 1899, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec collapsed from exhaustion and from the effects of his alcoholism. His family then had him committed to a sanatorium. While there, he produced a series of 36 circus paintings.

After Toulouse-Lautrec's early death in 1901 at the age of 35, his mother set up a museum to exhibit his works.





Figure 11.24: *The Laundress*, 1884-1888, by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, private collection.



Figure 11.25: *At the Moulin-Rouge, The Dance*, 1890, by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Figure 11.26: *Jean Avril*, 1893, lithograph poster by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.



Figure 11.27: *Divan Japonaise*, 1894, by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, crayon, brush, spatter and transferred screen lithograph, printed in 4 color-layers.



## 11.6 Picasso

Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973) was one of the most influential artists of the 20th century. He was enormously talented and prolific, and over his long career he explored and invented many different styles and techniques. Besides being a painter, Picasso was also a sculptor, ceramicist, print-maker, stage designer, poet and playwright.

Picasso's father was, for most of his life, professor of art at the School of Crafts and curator of a local museum in the city of Málaga in the Andalusian region of Spain. Picasso showed extraordinary artistic ability as a child. According to his mother, his first words were "piz, piz", a shortening of *lápiz*, the Spanish word for "pencil".

At the age of 16, after studying with his father, Picasso was sent to Madrid to enroll in the Real Academia de Belles Artes de San Fernando, the country's foremost art school. Although he disliked the formal instruction, and attended few classes, Picasso was inspired by the painters whose work he saw in Madrid's museums - Diego Velázquez, Francisco Goya, and Francisco Zurbarán. Picasso especially admired the works of El Greco.

In 1900, Picasso moved to Paris, the art capital of Europe, where he shared an apartment with the journalist and poet Max Jakob. Max slept during the night, while Picasso worked by night and slept during the day. Jakob also helped Picasso to learn the French language. This was a time of poverty and desperation for Picasso. However, the situation soon changed. By 1905, Picasso had become the favorite of Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo, wealthy Americans living in Paris, who also purchased the paintings of Henri Matisse.

Regarding Picasso's legacy, Wikipedia says of him:

**Picasso's influence was and remains immense and widely acknowledged by his admirers and detractors alike. On the occasion of his 1939 retrospective at MoMA, Life magazine wrote: "During the 25 years he has dominated modern European art, his enemies say he has been a corrupting influence. With equal violence, his friends say he is the greatest artist alive." In 1998, Robert Hughes wrote of him: "To say that Pablo Picasso dominated Western art in the 20th century is, by now, the merest commonplace. ... No painter or sculptor, not even Michelangelo, had been as famous as this in his own lifetime"...**

Throughout his life Picasso maintained several mistresses in addition to his wife or primary partner. Picasso was married twice and had four children by three women:

- Paulo (4 February 1921 - 5 June 1975, Paul Joseph Picasso) - with Olga Khokhlova
- Maya (born 5 September 1935, Maria de la Concepcion Picasso) - with Marie-Thérèse Walter
- Claude (born 15 May 1947, Claude Pierre Pablo Picasso) - with Françoise Gilot
- Paloma (born 19 April 1949, Anne Paloma Picasso) - with Françoise Gilot



Figure 11.28: Picasso's *Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C..



Figure 11.29: Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)*, 1935, Museum of Modern Art, New York City. The faces reflect Picasso's interest in African art. The painting is Proto-Cubist in style.

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Figure 11.30: *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler*, by Pablo Picasso, 1910, Art Institute of Chicago. This Cubist painting is almost completely non-representational, but Picasso challenges the viewer to find Kahnweiler. With a little effort, we can find his hair, two eyes, nose, mouth, and crossed hands.





Figure 11.31: Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror*, 1932, Museum of Modern Art, New York City. In the girl's face, on the left-hand side of the painting, two perspectives appear simultaneously. The girl is seen both in profile, and from the front. The use of black lines, like lines of lead between coloured glass, gives the painting the luminous quality of a stained-glass window.



Figure 11.32: Picasso's *The Dream*, 1932, Private collection of Steven A. Cohen. Here again, two perspectives appear simultaneously. The girl is seen both in profile, and from the front.



Figure 11.33: *The Weeping Woman*, 1937, Tate Gallery, London. The woman is Picasso's mistress, Dora Marr. She is weeping because of his many infidelities. Dora Marr (1907-1997) was a very talented artist in her own right. A large retrospective exhibition of her work provoked a review with the title, *The Weeping Woman Gets The Last Laugh*.



Figure 11.34: *Guernica*, 1937, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain. This famous large painting represents Picasso's protest against the Fascist/Nazi terror-bombing of the civilian population of the Basque town of Guernica.

## 11.7 English Post-Impressionists

### The Bloomsbury Group

The famous Bloomsbury Group, about which so much has been written and so many films made, was an informal group of English writers, philosophers and artists during the early years of the 20th century. Most of the men in the group had studied at Cambridge University, so the group was, in a sense, "Cambridge in London". They were "united by their abiding belief in the importance of the arts", and they lived and studied together near the district of Bloomsbury, not far from the British Museum. Although many others drifted in and out of the group, the ten core members were:

- Clive Bell, art critic
- Vanessa Bell, post-impressionist painter
- E. M. Forster, fiction writer
- Roger Fry, art critic and post-impressionist painter
- Duncan Grant, post-impressionist painter
- John Maynard Keynes, economist
- Desmond MacCarthy, literary journalist
- Lytton Strachey, biographer
- Leonard Woolf, essayist and non-fiction writer
- Virginia Woolf, fiction writer and essayist



## Roger Fry

The English art critic and painter Roger Eliot Fry (1866-1934) was the first to use the term “Post-Impressionism”. He first coined the term in 1906, defining it as the development in French art between 1886, the last Impressionist exhibition, and the initiation of Fauvism in 1905.

In 1910, Fry organized an exhibition entitled *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* in London. It was the first time that the British public had seen the works of Gauguin, Matisse, and Van Gogh. The effect was enormous. The art historian Kenneth Clark said of him, “incomparably the greatest influence on taste since Ruskin ... In so far as taste can be changed by one man, it was changed by Roger Fry”. Fry’s influence was felt primarily by the Anglophone world.

Wikipedia states that:

Roger Fry joined the [Bloomsbury] group in 1910. His post-impressionist exhibitions of 1910 and 1912 involved Bloomsbury in a second revolution following on the Cambridge philosophical one. This time the Bloomsbury painters were much involved and influenced. Fry and other Bloomsbury artists rejected the traditional distinction between fine and decorative art.

These “Bloomsbury assumptions” are reflected in members’ criticisms of materialistic realism in painting and fiction, influenced above all by Clive Bell’s “concept of ‘Significant Form’, which separated and elevated the concept of form above content in works of art”: it has been suggested that, with their “focus on form ... Bell’s ideas have come to stand in for, perhaps too much so, the aesthetic principles of the Bloomsbury Group”.

The establishment’s hostility to post-impressionism made Bloomsbury controversial, and controversial they have remained. Clive Bell polemicized post-impressionism in his widely read book *Art* (1914), basing his aesthetics partly on Roger Fry’s art criticism and G. E. Moore’s moral philosophy; and as the war came he argued that “in these days of storm and darkness, it seemed right that at the shrine of civilization - in Bloomsbury, I mean - the lamp should be tended assiduously”.



Figure 11.35: *Interior With a Table* (1921), a painting by Virginia Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell (1879-1961).



Figure 11.36: *Self-Portrait* 1928, by Roger Fry.



Figure 11.37: Portrait of Dame Edith Sitwell, by Roger Fry, 1915.

**Suggestions for further reading**

1. Bowness, Alan, et al.: *Post-Impressionism. Cross-Currents in European Painting*, Royal Academy of Arts & Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1979.
2. *Manet and the Post-Impressionists (exh. cat. by R. Fry and D. MacCarthy*, London, Grafton Gals, 1910-11)
3. *The Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition (exh. cat. by R. Fry*, London, Grafton Gals, 1912)
4. J. Rewald. *Post-Impressionism: From Van Gogh to Gauguin*, (New York, 1956, rev. 3/1978)
5. F. Elgar. *The Post-Impressionists* (Oxford, 1977)
6. *Post-Impressionism: Cross-currents in European Painting (exh. cat., ed. J. House and M. A. Stevens*; London, RA, 1979-80)
7. B. Thomson. *The Post-Impressionists* (Oxford and New York, 1983, rev. 2/1990)
8. J. Rewald. *Studies in Post-Impressionism* (London, 1986)





# Chapter 12

## SCANDINAVIAN ARTISTS

### 12.1 The Skagen painters

Skagen was originally a fishing village on the north-eastern tip of Jutland, Denmark. Artists from Denmark, Norway and Sweden were attracted to the village because the light was so favorable for painting. They worked at roughly the same time as the Impressionists in France, and were influenced by the Impressionists, but they were also influenced by realist movements.

Among the the Skagen painters were Anne and Michael Ancher, Peder Severin Krøyer, Holger Drachmann, Karl Madsen, Laurits Tuxen, Marie Krøyer, Carl Locher, Viggo Johansen and Thorvald Niss from Denmark, Oscar Björck and Johan Krouthén from Sweden, and Christian Krohg and Eilif Peterssen from Norway. Anne Ancher, whose father owned Brøndem's Hotel, where the group regularly met, was the only member of the group who was born in Skagen.

#### P.S. Krøyer and his wife Marie

Peter Severin Krøyer (1851-1909) was the most famous and brilliant member of the group. He was born in Norway, but his mother was judged unfit to care for him, and he was raised by his mother's sister and her husband in Copenhagen. Krøyer's outstanding artistic abilities were clear from an early age, and he began to study painting at the age of 9. By the time Krøyer was 19 he had completed his studies at the Danish Royal Academy of Art. At about this time, in 1873, he also won a gold medal for his work.

While studying in Paris, Krøyer met an extremely beautiful fellow artist, Marie Martha Mathilde Triepcke, with whom he immediately fell deeply in love. After a whirlwind romance, they were married in 1889. Marie Krøyer became a member of the Skagen group, and often featured in Krøyer's paintings. Sadly, Krøyer became mentally ill, and after a lengthy separation, the couple were divorced in 1905. The 2012 film, *The Passion of Marie*, directed by Bille August, follows the relationship of Peter and Marie Krøyer. Another film about the Skagen group was the 1987 film *Hip, Hip, Hurrah!*, directed by Kjell Grede. Although increasingly blind, Krøyer continued painting until the end of his life.



Figure 12.1: Anne Ancher (1859-1935) often painted interior scenes. She belonged to a group of artists who worked together in Skagen, a peninsula in Northern Jutland, Denmark.



Figure 12.2: Another interior scene by Anne Ancher. She was married to Michael Ancher, who was also an excellent painter. Anne Ancher modestly kept in the shadow of her husband, but today, most critics consider her paintings to be even better than his, because of her skilful observation of light and colors.





Figure 12.3: *Will He Round the Point?*, c. 1880, by Michael Ancher. An earlier version of the painting belongs to the Danish Royal Family. The local fishermen were a frequent theme of the Skagen painters.



Figure 12.4: *Hip Hip Hurrah*, a painting by P.S. Krøyer, shows the group of Skagen artists, with Anne Ancher and her daughter in white dresses in the right-hand foreground.





Figure 12.5: *Artists at Lunch*, 1883, by P.S. Krøyer, Skagens Museum, Skagen, Denmark. The man standing at the left of the painting is Michael Ancher.



Figure 12.6: *Summer Evening at Skagen Beach - The Artist and his Wife*, 1899, by P.S. Krøyer, Hirschprung Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark.



## 12.2 Edvard Munch

Edvard Munch (1863-1844) was Norway's greatest painter. He was extremely prolific: The Munch Museum in Oslo contains approximately 1,100 of his paintings, 4,500 of his drawings, and 18,000 prints, so many that only a small fraction can be exhibited at one time.

Munch's childhood was overshadowed by the illness and death of family members, and by his dread of inheriting the mental illness that ran in the family. He began studying painting at the Royal School of Art and Design, and during this period he was influenced by the Norwegian writer and philosopher Hans Jæger, who urged him to express his own emotions in his painting.

Later, on study trips to Paris, Munch was influenced by the works of Gauguin, van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec, especially in their use of colour. However, he developed his own distinctive expressionist style, and was able to convey strong emotions through his paintings, drawings and prints.

Munch met the Swedish dramatist August Strindberg in Berlin and his conversations with Strindberg helped to inspire Munch's epic mural painting, *The Frieze of Life*, which expresses deeply-felt emotions, such as love, anxiety and jealousy.

Edvard Munch stated that the idea for his famous painting *The Scream* came to him as he was walking in Kristiania (today called Oslo). As he was walking at sunset he "heard the enormous, infinite scream of nature". Between 1893 and 1910 he produced two painted versions, two pastels and a number of prints expressing this idea.

Munch experienced periods of mental illness and heavy drinking which ended in stays in mental hospitals. Finally, towards the end of his life, increasing sale of his work gave him the financial means to purchase an estate in Ekely, at Skøyen, Oslo, and he retired there for two decades of solitary painting. Wikipedia states that:

Many of his late paintings celebrate farm life, including several in which he used his work horse "Rousseau" as a model. Without any effort, Munch attracted a steady stream of female models, whom he painted as the subjects of numerous nude paintings. He likely had sexual relationships with some of them. Munch occasionally left his home to paint murals on commission, including those done for the Freia chocolate factory.

To the end of his life, Munch continued to paint unsparing self-portraits, adding to his self-searching cycle of his life and his unflinching series of takes on his emotional and physical states...

In October 2006, the color woodcut *Two people. The lonely* (To mennesker. De ensomme) set a new record for his prints when it was sold at an auction in Oslo for 8.1 million kroner (US\$1.27 million equivalent to \$1,600,000 in 2019). It also set a record for the highest price paid in auction in Norway. On 3 November 2008, the painting *Vampire* set a new record for his paintings when it was sold for US\$38,162,000 (equivalent to \$45,300,000 in 2019) at Sotheby's New York.



Figure 12.7: *The Scream*, 1893, by Edvard Munch, Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway.



Figure 12.8: *Madona*, 1894-1895, by Edvard Munch, National Gallery of Norway, Oslo.



Figure 12.9: *Love and Pain*, 1895, by Edvard Munch, Munch Museum, Oslo.





Figure 12.10: *The Dance of Life*, 1899-1900, by Edvard Munch, National Gallery of Norway, Oslo.



Figure 12.11: *Red and White*, 1899-1900, by Edvard Munch, Munch Museum, Oslo.



Figure 12.12: *The Sick Child*, 1907, by Edvard Munch, Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway.

## 12.3 Vilhelm Hammershøi

Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916) was the son of a wealthy Copenhagen merchant, and thus, from a financial standpoint, his life was a secure one.

He began private drawing lessons at the age of eight with Niels Christian Kierkegaard and Holger Grønvold, and also studied painting with Vilhelm Kuhn. He later entered the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. During the years 1883-1885, he studied with Peder Severin Krøyer at the Independent Study Schools. In 1885, Hammershøi made his artistic debut with a portrait of his sister Anna, a painting which was admired by Pierre-August Renoir.

In 1891, Hammershøi married Ida Ilsted, and Ida appears in many of his later paintings. The couple moved into a 17th century apartment on Strandgade 25, in the Christiania district of Copenhagen. This apartment, and a nearby one into which Vilhelm and Ida later moved, form the backgrounds for most of Hammershøi's interior scenes.

The quietness and modesty of Vilhelm Hammershøi's life is reflected in his paintings. His range of colours is extremely subdued, and in fact it consists mostly of slightly modified shades of grey. This gives his paintings not only unity, but also a mysterious quality.

### Michael Palin's BBC documentary

Besides painting interiors, Hammershøi also painted landscapes and architecture. In his paintings of buildings, there are no people, a feature that adds to the paintings' mysterious quality. Hammershøi traveled widely in Europe, and he found London, with its fogs, an especially fine subject for painting. His London studies of buildings were seen by the famous British comedian and travel show presenter, Sir Michael Palin, and excited Palin's admiration and curiosity. He traveled to Copenhagen to uncover the psychological background of Hammershøi's unique and unusual artistic style. (Interestingly, my daughter Julie, who is in charge of public relations at the Royal Archives, met Sir Michael on this visit, and she helped him to try to find answers.) The result of this research was the BBC documentary, broadcast in 2005, entitled *Michael Palin and the Mystery of Hammershøi*.

### Recent interest and exhibitions

- Vilhelm Hammershøi: The Poetry of Silence, Royal Academy, Sackler Wing of Galleries, London, UK, 28 June-7 September 2008
- Vilhelm Hammershøi: The Poetry of Silence, The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, Japan ( - 7 November 2008)
- Vilhelm Hammershøi's Paintings at Scandinavia House, Scandinavia House, New York
- Painting Tranquility: Masterworks by Vilhelm Hammershøi, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada, 16 April-3 July 2016





Figure 12.13: *Interior With Young Man Reading*, 1902, by Vilhelm Hammershøi.



Figure 12.14: *Interior With Young Woman Seen From The Back*, 1903-1904, by Vilhelm Hammershøi, Randers Museum of Art, Denmark.



Figure 12.15: *Dust Motes Dancing in a Sunbeam*, by Vilhelm Hammershøi.

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# Chapter 13

## THE AMERICAS

### 13.1 American primitive painters

#### Museums exhibiting American folk-art

- American Folk Art Museum is an art museum in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, at 2, Lincoln Square, Columbus Avenue at 66th Street. Its collection holds over 8,000 objects from the 18th century to the present.
- Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC, is part of the Smithsonian Institution. More than 7,000 artists are represented in the collection.
- Folk Art Center and Guild, Asheville NC. The museum features the work of over 300 Appalachian artists.
- Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, NM. The museum's holdings represent diverse cultures and constitute the largest collection of international folk art in the world. The core collection donated by museum founder Florence Dibell Bartlett and representing 34 countries has grown to a collection of over 130,000 objects from more than 100 countries.
- Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Museum Colonial Williamsburg Virginia is one of the largest collections of American folk art.
- Shelburne Museum Vermont. Shelburne Museum's world-renowned collections of art and Americana span four centuries and include some of the most outstanding examples anywhere of fine and decorative arts, folk art, circus collections, textiles, toys, carriages, decoys, and more.



Figure 13.1: *Girl With A Black And White Cat.*



Figure 13.2: *Winter Sheep*.



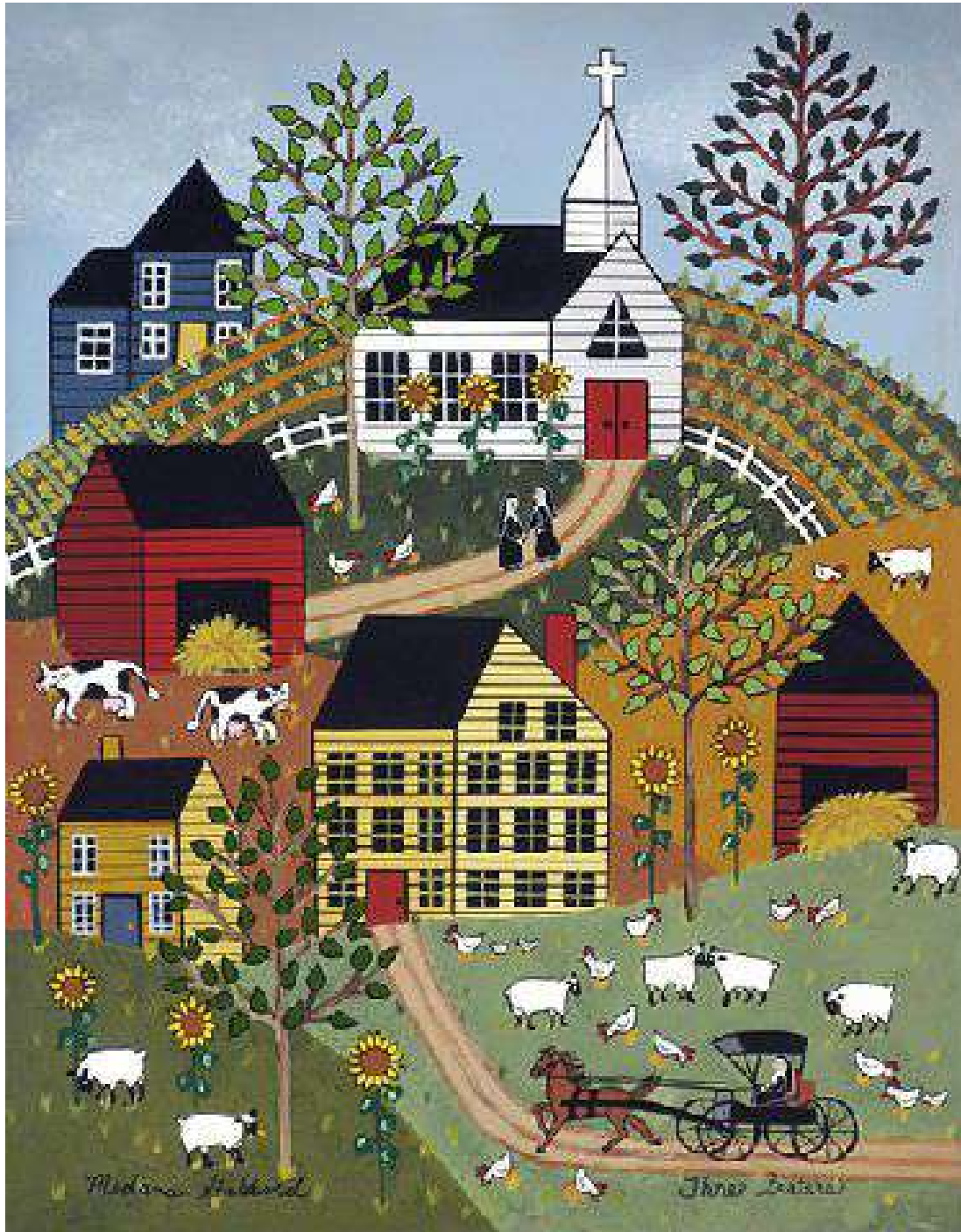


Figure 13.3: *Three Houses and a Church.*

## 13.2 Grant Wood and Edward Hopper

### Grant Wood

Grant Wood (1891-1942) was born in rural Iowa and studied at The Handicraft Guild, an art school run entirely by women. He later studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1932, Wood helped to found the Stone City Art Colony, to help his fellow artists to get through Great Depression. Grant was an advocate of regionalism in painting, a movement that emphasized the accurate portrayal of local rural themes. Wikipedia states that:

Wood's best known work is his 1930 painting *American Gothic*, which is also one of the most famous paintings in American art, and one of the few images to reach the status of widely recognised cultural icon, comparable to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

### Edward Hooper

Edward Hooper (1882-1967) was born into a wealthy New York family, but he had to endure years of struggle before his artistic breakthrough in 1923, shortly after his marriage to fellow-artist Josephine Nivison. Regarding Hooper's unusually quiet and shy personality, Josephine remarked, "Sometimes talking to Eddie is just like dropping a stone in a well, except that it doesn't thump when it hits bottom".

Wikipedia states that

Hopper fared better than many other artists during the Great Depression. His stature took a sharp rise in 1931 when major museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, paid thousands of dollars for his works. He sold 30 paintings that year, including 13 watercolors. The following year he participated in the first Whitney Annual, and he continued to exhibit in every annual at the museum for the rest of his life. In 1933, the Museum of Modern Art gave Hopper his first large-scale retrospective...

*Nighthawks* is a 1942 oil on canvas painting by Edward Hopper that portrays people in a downtown diner late at night as viewed through the diner's large glass window. Also portrayed are the exteriors of the urban structures across the street from the diner.

It has been described as Hopper's best-known work[1] and is one of the most recognizable paintings in American art. Within months of its completion, it was sold to the Art Institute of Chicago on May 13, 1942, for \$3,000.

After Hooper's death in 1967, his wife, Josephine, bequeathed their joint collection of more than three thousand works of art to the Whitney Museum of American Art.

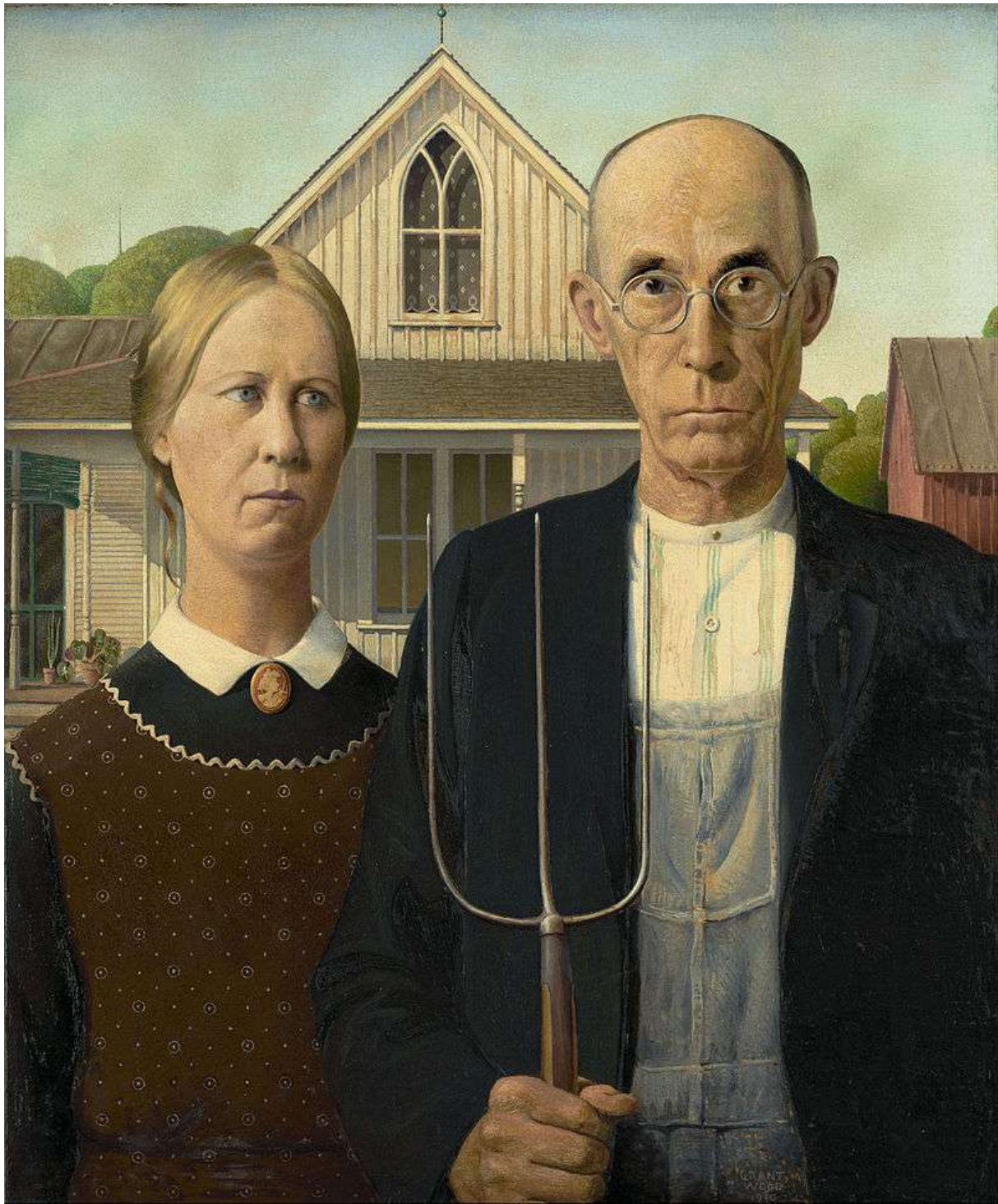


Figure 13.4: *American Gothic*, 1930, by Grant Wood, Art Institute of Chicago.





Figure 13.5: *Nighthawks*, 1942, by Edward Hopper, Art Institute of Chicago.

### 13.3 Georgia O'Keeff

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1985) was married to the photographer Joseph Stieglitz. Her work was honored with the National Medal of Arts, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Edward McDowell Medal. She holds the record (44.4 million dollars in 2014) for the highest price paid for a single painting by a woman.

Between 1905 and 1906, O'Keeff studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she was ranked at the top of her class. In 1907, she became a student at Art Students League in New York, where she came in contact with a number of young innovative artists, and where she won a prize for her still-life painting, *Dead Rabbit with Copper Pot*.

Her father's bankruptcy and her mother's serious illness almost put an end to Georgia O'Keeff's studies, since her parents could no longer help her with finances. She worked as a commercial artist, and also took a number of teaching jobs. However, in the summer of 1912, she took a class at the University of Virginia, where she learned of the innovative ideas of Arthur Wesley Dow, an approach to art influenced by the bold Japanese style of composition. This helped O'Keeff to develop her own personal style.

In 1918, Georgia O'Keeff became acquainted with her future husband, the photographer Joseph Steiglitz, who was a pioneer of photography as an art-form. Steiglitz, who was 24 years her senior, gave her financial support, and provided a place for her to work. Their relationship deepened, and before long they were in love. They were married in 1924.

The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum opened in Santa Fe in 1997. The assets included a large body of her work, photographs, archival materials, and her Abiquiú house and library.





Figure 13.6: *Blue and Green Music*, 1921, by Georgia O'Keeff, Art Institute of Chicago. The painting expresses the subjective feelings which music inspired in the artist.



Figure 13.7: Georgia O'Keeffe's *Bud* (1939), oil on canvas. The painting was commissioned by the Dole Pineapple Company of Hawaii, and shows the bud of a pineapple.

## 13.4 Frida Kahlo and Diego Riviera

Frida was born in Mexico to a German father and a part-indigenous mother. She suffered polio as a child and a serious traffic accident at the age of 18. The accident left her crippled and in pain for the rest of her life. Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderón (1907-1954) grew up in her family home, *La Casa Azul*, or *The Blue House*. She later lived there with her husband, Diego Riviera. After Frida's death in 1954, Diego Riviera donated the large house and its contents to the nation as a museum, and it is now one of Mexico's most popular attractions.

Frida originally intended to study medicine, but polio left her crippled. Later, at the age of 18, she suffered a very serious traffic accident which left her totally crippled and in pain for the rest of her life. While confined to bed, recovering from the accident, Frida began to paint, with a special easel above her in the bed, and a system of mirrors so which allowed her to see the subject of her paintings - often herself or friends.

Against all odds, Frida managed not only to have a successful artistic career, but also to marry the famous Mexican artist; Diego Riviera, who was twenty years her senior. Riviera had begun painting and drawing at the age of 3, initially drawing on the walls of the family home. Instead of rebuking him, Riviera's understanding parents had covered the walls with canvas and provided the 3-year-old with painting materials. From this early start, Diego Riviera became Mexico's most famous mural painter.

The marriage between Frida and Diego was characterized by mutual admiration and love, combined with frequent infidelities. Diego's fame attracted many female admirers, whom he did not turn away. For her part, Frida had an affair with Leon Trotsky, before his assassination (by means of an icepick plunged through his skull).

### Fridamania: Posthumous recognition

Wikipedia states that:

The Tate Modern considers Kahlo "one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century", while according to art historian Elizabeth Bakewell, she is "one of Mexico's most important twentieth-century figures". Kahlo's reputation as an artist developed late in her life and grew even further posthumously... She gradually gained more recognition in the late 1970s when feminist scholars began to question the exclusion of female and non-Western artists from the art historical canon and the Chicano Movement lifted her as one of their icons. The first two books about Kahlo were published in Mexico by Teresa del Conde and Raquel Tibol in 1976 and 1977, respectively...

[Mexico City] dedicated a park, Parque Frida Kahlo, to her in Coyoacán in 1985. The park features a bronze statue of Kahlo. In the United States, she became the first Hispanic woman to be honored with a U.S. postage stamp in 2001



Figure 13.8: A self-portrait by Frida Kahlo (1907-1954).



Figure 13.9: Another of Frida's self-portraits.





Figure 13.10: *Mural of exploitation of Mexico by Spanish conquistadors*, by Diego Rivera, Palacio Nacional, Mexico City.





Figure 13.11: *Mural showing Aztec production of gold*, by Diego Riviera, Palacio Nacional, Mexico City.

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# Chapter 14

## NON-REPRESENTATIONAL ART

### 14.1 Kandinsky. Mondrian and Rothko

#### Wassily Kandinsky

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was a pioneer of non-representational (abstract) art. He was born in Moscow, but spent his childhood in Ukraine. Kandinsky studied law and was offered a professorship in this field, but at the age of 30 he began painting and began to study art. After the Russian Revolution, he helped to establish Russia's Museum of Culture and Painting. However, he found the atmosphere in the Soviet Union uncongenial, and he spent the last part of his life in Germany (teaching at the Bauhaus), and in France.

#### Piet Mondrian

Wikipedia says of him: **Piet Mondrian (7 March 1892 - 1 February 1968) was a Dutch painter and theoretician who is regarded as one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. He is known for being one of the pioneers of 20th-century abstract art, as he changed his artistic direction from figurative painting to an increasingly abstract style, until he reached a point where his artistic vocabulary was reduced to simple geometric elements**

#### Mark Rothko

Markus Yakovlevich Rothkowitz (1903-1970), who later changed his name to Mark Rothko, was born in Latvia, then part of the Russian Empire. Fearing persecution because of their Jewish descent, the family emigrated to the United States. Although they were not financially well off, the family was highly literate and intellectual. Rothko became a painter, but it was not until the 1950's that he began to make non-representational paintings. These now sell for enormous prices.





Figure 14.1: *Study for Improvisation I*, 1910, by Wassily Kandinsky, Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

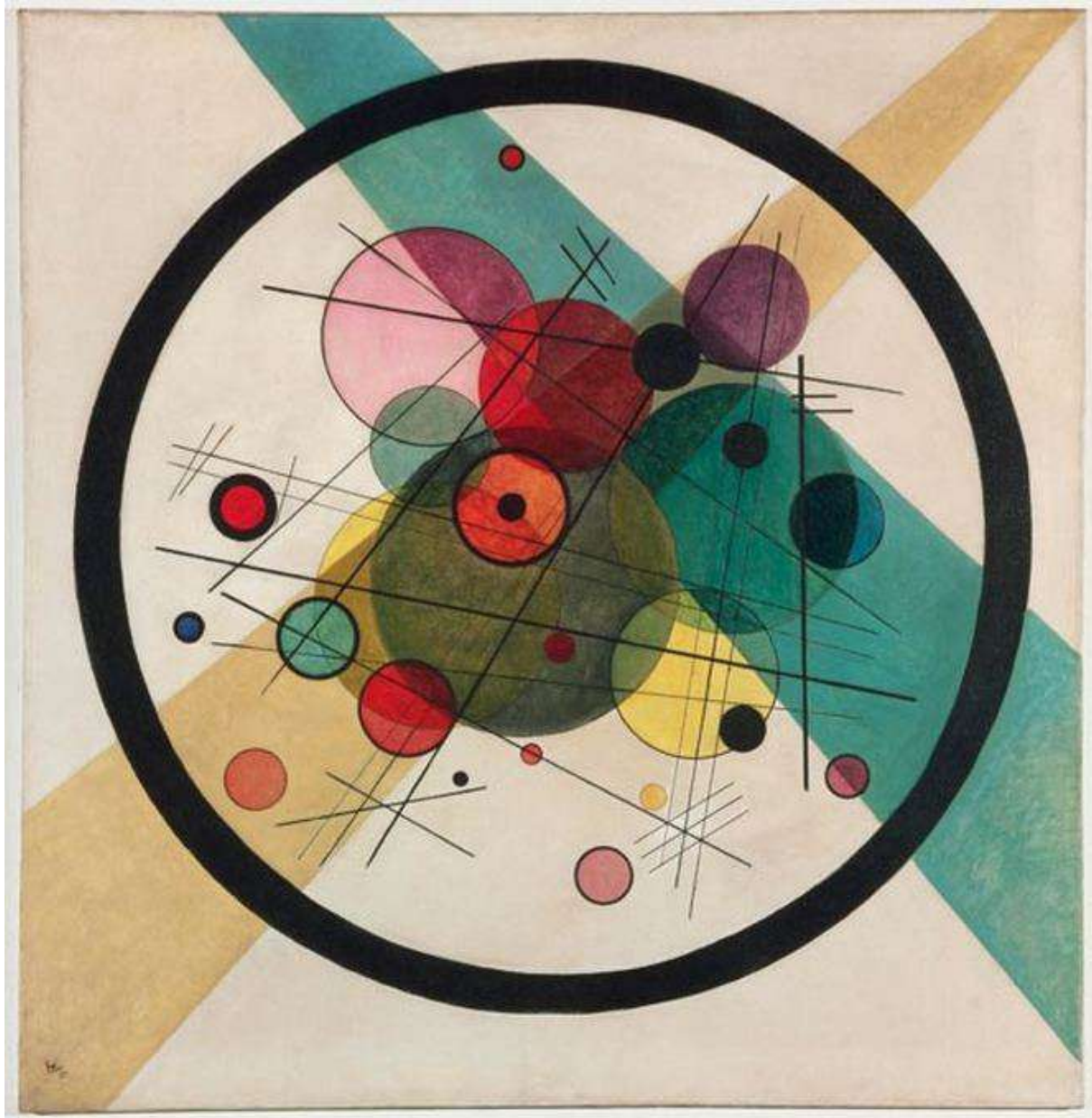


Figure 14.2: *Circles in a Circle*, 1922, by Wassily Kandinsky, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



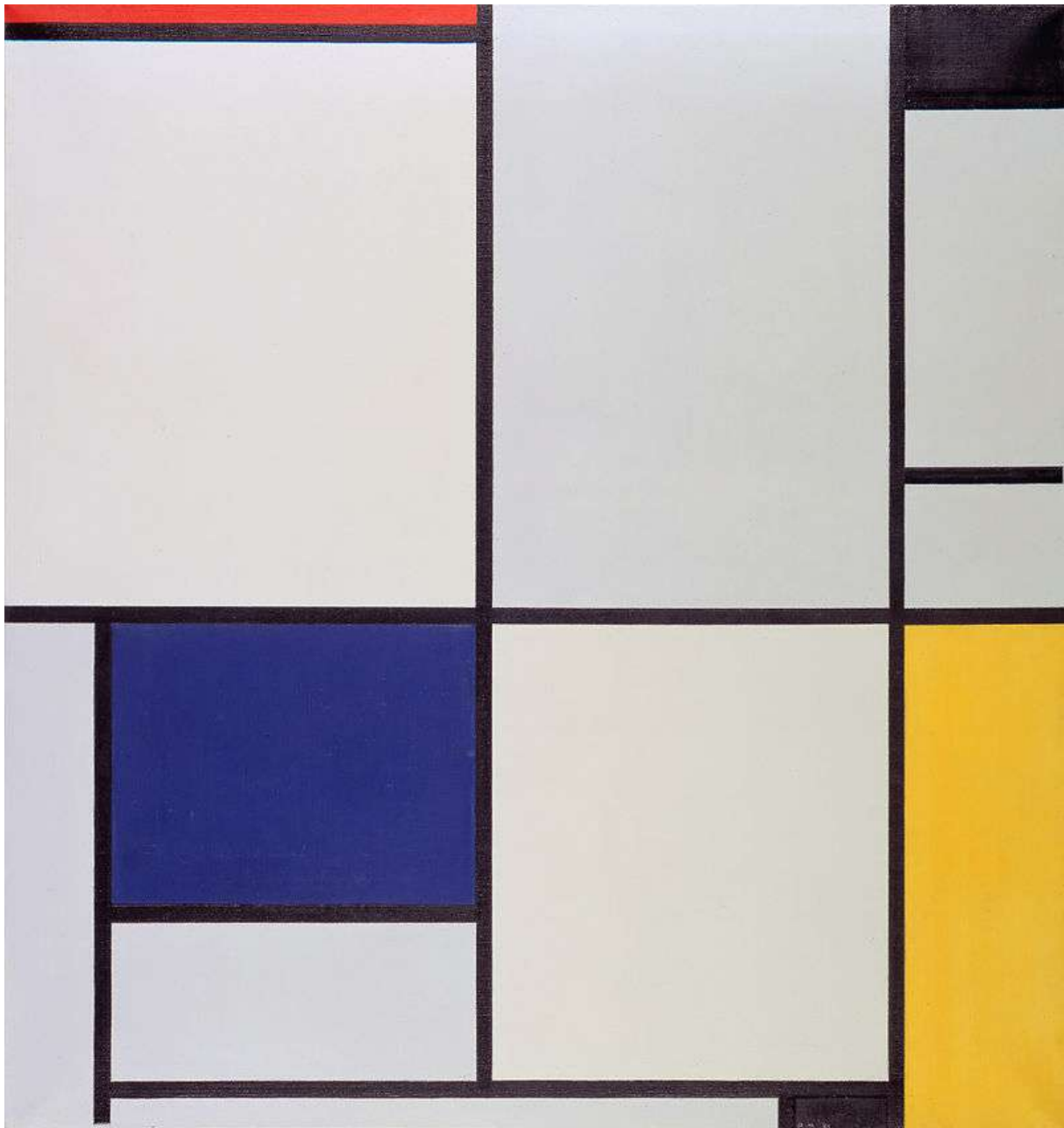


Figure 14.3: *Tableau I*, 1921, by Piet Mondrian, Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

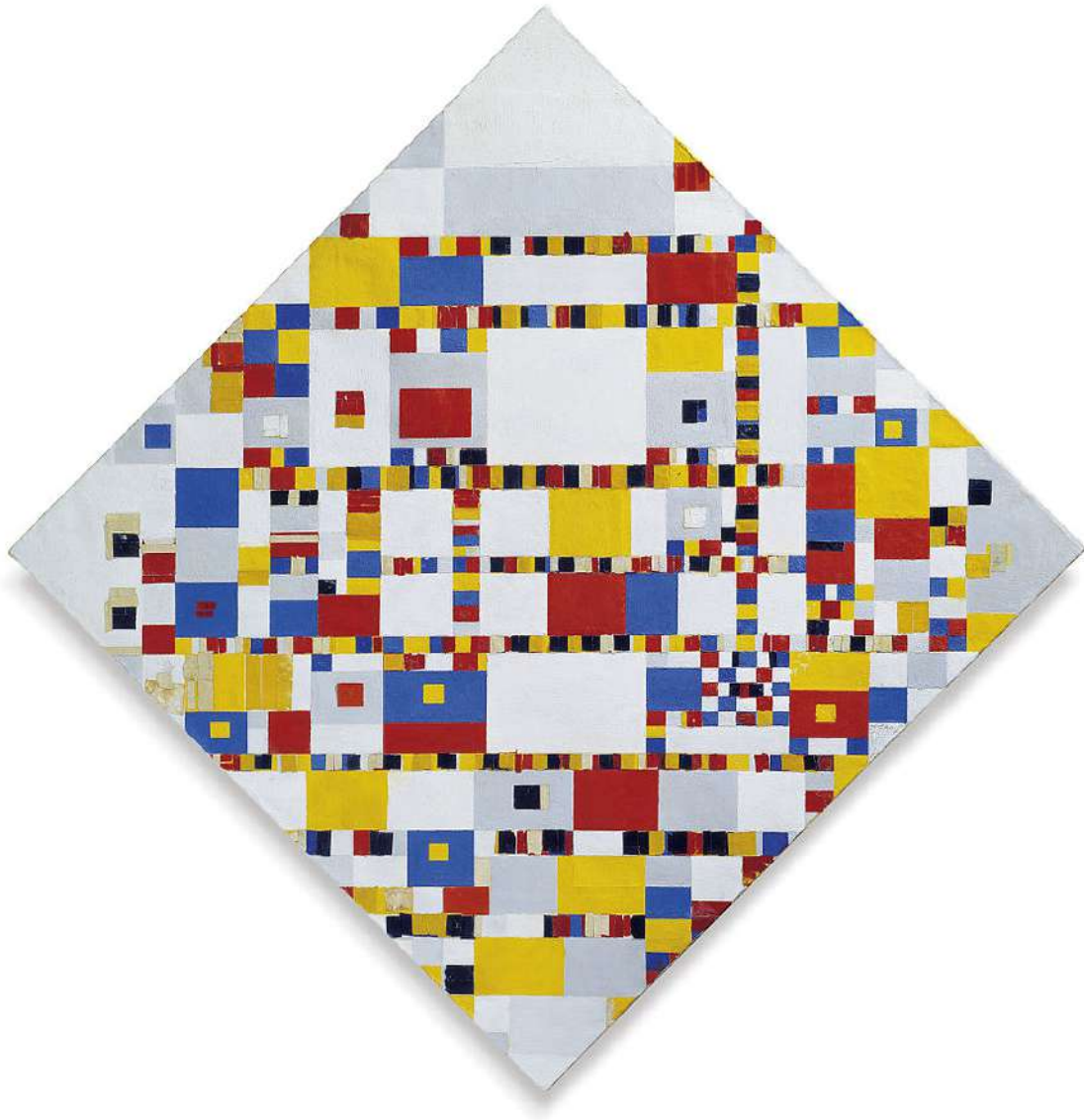


Figure 14.4: *Victory Boogie Woogie*, 1942-1944, by Piet Mondrian, Kunstmuseum Den Haag.





Figure 14.5: *Magenta, Black, Green on Orange*, 1949, by Mark Rothko, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

Proponents of De Stijl advocated pure abstraction and universality by a reduction to the essentials of form and colour; they simplified visual compositions to vertical and horizontal, using only black, white and primary colors.



Figure 14.6: *Rust and Blue*, 1953, by Mark Rothko, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

## 14.2 De Stijl

The term “De Stijl” means “The Style” in Dutch. It refers to the work of Dutch non-representational artists between 1917 and 1931.

According to Wikipedia:

**Proponents of De Stijl advocated pure abstraction and universality by a reduction to the essentials of form and colour; they simplified visual compositions to vertical and horizontal, using only black, white and primary colors.**

De Stijl is also the name of a journal that was published by the Dutch painter, designer, writer, and critic Theo van Doesburg that served to propagate the group’s theories. Along with van Doesburg, the group’s principal members were the painters Piet Mondrian, Vilmos Huszár, Bart van der Leek, and the architects Gerrit Rietveld, Robert van ’t Hoff, and J. J. P. Oud. The artistic philosophy that formed a basis for the group’s work is known as Neoplasticism - the new plastic art (or Nieuwe Beelding in Dutch).

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