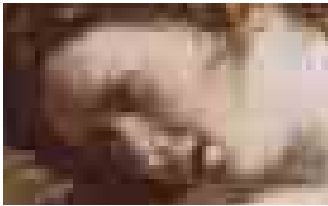
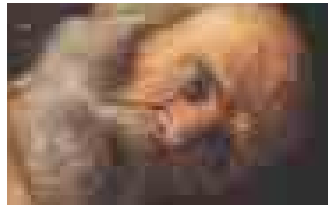
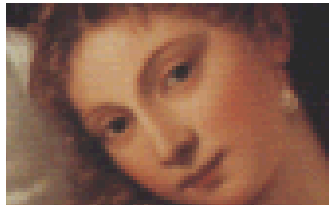
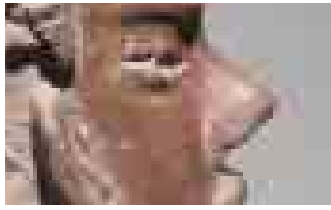


Mirror of the World





Mirror of the World

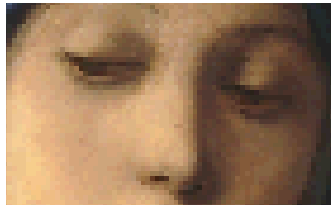
A New History of Art

Julian Bell

with 372 illustrations, 267 in colour



Thames & Hudson



For Jenny

Any copy of this book issued by the publisher as a paperback is sold subject to the condition that it shall not by way of trade or otherwise be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including these words being imposed on a subsequent purchaser.

First published in the United Kingdom in 2007 by Thames & Hudson Ltd, 181A High Holborn, London WC1V 7QX

www.thamesandhudson.com

© 2007 Julian Bell

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-500-23837-0

Printed and bound in China by C&C Offset Printing Co. Ltd

Preface 6

1

Horizon 9

Animal and human *before 31,000 BCE*

Torchlight *Western Europe, 31,000–10,000 BCE*

Imprecise feelings *America, Australia, Africa, South-west Asia, from 10,000 BCE*

Multiple choices *Central Africa, Melanesia, Japan, Europe, from 5000 BCE*

Lost for words *Polynesia, Scotland, from 4000 BCE*

2

Shaping civilization 35

Stones seen through fog *Mexico, Peru, China, India, from 3000 BCE*

Ground lines *Iraq, Egypt, 3100–2200 BCE*

Metal, merchants, maat *Central Asia, China, Greece, Egypt, 2000–1350 BCE*

Full circle *Mexico, 1200–800 BCE*

3

Classical norms 57

Suggestions and declarations *Northern Asia, Syria, Iraq, 800–600 BCE*

'Man' and 'Art' *Greece, Iran, 650–330 BCE*

Winds and mountains *Greece, India, Central Asia, China, 320 BCE–100 CE*

Quotation marks *Italy, 50 BCE–150 CE*

4

Medieval worlds 85

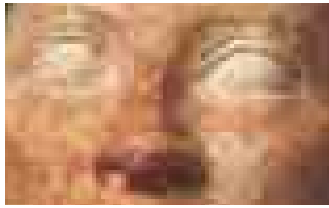
Unrelated images *Nigeria, Peru, Europe, 500 BCE–500 CE*

Work and pray *North Africa, India, Italy, Syria, the British Isles, 1–750 CE*

Jungles and caves *Central America, Indonesia, India, China, 300–900*

Word, flesh, light *Islam, Christendom, India, 950–1250*

Early modern, late ancient *China, Japan, Cambodia, Nigeria, 1000–1250*



5

Doorways and windows 135

- Banquets and bare trees *China, 970s–1370s*
- Earth colours *Germany, Italy, 1240–1350*
- Texts and textures *Iran, Italy, France, Spain, Russia, 1330–1420*
- Opening the windows *Northern Europe, Italy, 1390–1460*
- Private passions *Flanders, Italy, France, Iran, Indonesia, 1440–1520*

6

Re-creating the world 181

- Birth pangs *Mexico, Northern Europe, 1490–1520s*
- A thing of the mind *Italy, 1480–1520*
- Difficulties *Western Europe, Africa, 1520s–1550s*
- Philosophic heights *The Netherlands, India, Italy, Spain, 1540s–1600*

7

Theatrical realities 221

- Other times *China, Southern India, the Americas, Italy, 1530–1630*
- Crescendos *Rome, Northern Europe, India, Iran, 1600–1650s*
- Marketplaces and marks *Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, 1600–1660s*
- Richer and clearer *The Netherlands, Italy, 1620–1670*

8

Settlement, enlightenment 259

- The effects of peace *France, Italy, 1660s–1700s*
- Separate dreams *Mali, Japan, China, Korea, 1650–1750*
- Grand fabrics *France, Italy, Germany, 1710s–1750s*
- The public *Japan, Britain, 1730s–1770s*
- Reining back *India, France, Russia, 1750s–1780s*

9

A changed truth 291

- Modernities *France, Brazil, Japan, 1780–1805*
- Ideals and bodies *Italy, Spain, France, 1780s–1820s*
- Vision and landscape *Britain, Germany, 1790–1840s*

The new regimes *Iran, France, Denmark, 1800s–1840s*

Towards the suburbs *France, Japan, 1810s–1850s*

10

Industry's momentum 323

- Matter and fact *France, Germany, Britain, 1840–1860*
- Spectators *USA, India, New Zealand, West Africa, China, 1840s–1860s*
- Freedoms and duties *France, Russia, Britain, 1860s–1880s*
- Acceleration *USA, France, 1880s–1900*
- Wilfulness *Denmark, Norway, France, Mexico, 1890s–1900*

11

Breakthrough / breakdown 365

- Vitalities *Africa and Europe, 1900–1910s*
- Questions, junctions *Europe, 1909–1914*
- Machines *USA, Germany, Russia, Japan, 1915–1925*
- Behind vision, beyond vision *Europe, USA, 1920s–1930s*
- Close ranks *Mexico, USA, Europe, Cuba, 1929–1945*

12

Foreground 413

- Bombardments and ruins *USA, Britain, France, 1945–1955*
- Clean cut salesman *USA, Argentina, Italy, Tanzania, 1955–1964*
- The cool war *China, Germany, Britain, USA, 1965–1973*
- Plural / postmodern *USA, Germany, Canada, India, Australia, 1969–1989*
- World spectacle *from the 1980s*
- There and here

Timeline	468
Sources and resources	478
Acknowledgments	484
List of illustrations	485
Index	491

PREFACE

Humans tell stories, and humans make objects to fascinate the eyes. Occasionally their stories concern those objects. This type of narrative, which gets called art history, is commonly driven by a person's wish to consider how it was to be someone else at some other time, and to wonder at what those other hands made. Besides this, art historians sometimes try to explain why the making of things changes and differs between times and places. That is what this book sets out to do.

Storytelling of this sort, however, has an inbuilt awkwardness. A *work* of art seeks to hold your attention and keep it fixed: a *history* of art urges it onwards, bulldozing a highway through the homes of the imagination. In a general survey of art history, such as the one that follows, the tension may be acute. At all points, teller and listener will be tantalized by the desire to stop longer and to look longer.

So why push through with such a scheme? We live in an image jam. Streets and screens the world over present a clutter of diverse, disconnected items of visual information. Our eyes overhear a babble of artistic quotations – 19th-century Japan, 13th-century France, 16th-century Rome, Aboriginal Australia – and, at the very least, it would be good to know the necessary vocabulary: where what came from. More than that, it would be good to make out its grammar. How do these images relate to one another? How are they rooted in the experience of others? What, if anything, do we share with their makers?

Questions like these generate stories rather than scientific certainties. The story that follows is told by someone in early 21st-century England trying to reach out towards millennia of object-making across six continents, and hoping to offer a basis on which readers can go on to build their own stories. It is meant as a general introduction to objects and issues in global art history rather than as a set of conclusions about them. It is not greatly occupied with defining or redefining what might constitute art, more with describing its currently accepted range of contents. The objective is breadth rather than depth, openness rather than rigour.

This book's *method*, however, could be considered quite narrow. I shall weave my narrative around objects that seem to me to reproduce effectively on the page. Art is by no means just a matter of compact, easy-

to-frame pictures, but that is what it will tend to look like here. In this, I have to admit to a personal bias. I come to this task having spent most of my working life as a painter. As such, I am used to standing in a room facing a particular object that I hope will have a life and speech of its own. I face the pictures here in much the same way. The type of art on which this book concentrates, then, is less what surrounds us – environments, buildings, decor, utensils, clothing, adornment – as that which in some way *confronts* us, from paintings to figurines to monuments. The stillness of isolated pictures will introduce another limitation on the discussion. I shall not talk at great length about what moves before the eye or what keeps it moving, which means marginalizing not only pageantry and video, but also the many fascinating historical interplays between imagery and writing.

In writing this narrative, I have worked by three loosely defined rules. First, if there is really no way of showing something, keep quiet about it. Choosing some three hundred and fifty works to introduce the breadth of world art history means walking a tricky tightrope. Many will be dismayed by what is left unmentioned; many more will get bored if I mention too many names without giving them faces. When it has been absolutely necessary to name some important figure or phenomenon that cannot be illustrated, I have opted for a ‘looks-rather-like’ policy. Otherwise, I have thought it better to ignore what I cannot effectively present.

Second, keep things in chronological sequence. That reader-friendly directive has not always proved *strictly* possible, as the discussion shifts from one country to another, but I hope that, as far as it operates, it will produce an eye-opening sense both of contrasts from region to region and also of cross-cultural affinities.

My title, *Mirror of the World*, indicates the third of my working premises. I see art history as a frame within which world history, in all its breadth, is continually reflected back at us – rather than as a window which opens onto some independent aesthetic realm. I shall assume that the records of artistic change somehow relate to records of social, technological, political and religious change, however inverted or reconfigured these reflections prove.

Mirrors can only work with whatever light they are given, and yet mirrors can show us things anew. My title also indicates what I want to believe – that works of art can reveal realities that had otherwise lain unseen, that they can act as frames for the truth. It is the making of these objects, however, rather than their ultimate status, that will dominate the story. The main reason I care for art history is that it seems to bring me closer to some extraordinary things and to the people who made them. I hope that I can communicate some of that interest and pleasure.



HORIZON

Animal and human

before 31,000 BCE

Imagine you are clasping a lump of flint in your left hand. One end rests in your palm, the other hovers over the ground. With your right hand, you bring down another lump to hit the free end at an angle, striking up a tight, sharp rhythm of blows. As flakes of stone fly off, your hand-axe takes shape. The irregular nodule you took from the ground becomes something with a steady cutting edge and a balanced weight. The training you have gained from watching your elders is telling you how the object needs to be, whether or not you have words for this knowledge.

Yet the flint you picked up this morning is unlike the run of those you have handled before. Already it shows on a small scale the kind of balance your blows will give it overall: one of its faces is marked by a fossilized shell. You mark where the shell lies with your left forefinger and then hammer away an edge from the other face, so that when the flakes shear off they leave this special feature untouched. At the end of your work, a larger symmetry echoes the shell's smaller symmetry, with their points and curves set in opposite directions. The object possessing these qualities is singular [2]: it holds a certain attractive power over the eyes.

Are you human? Debatable. That hand-axe was dropped in England at least one hundred thousand years ago. *Homo sapiens*, our own species, had evolved in Africa twenty or thirty thousand years before, but it had yet to wander that far north, and a closely related 'hominin' or human-like ape, *Homo erectus*, would have been responsible. Yet most of what happens in art was happening here. The flint-knapper was making a thing well, to the best of his or her ability. The cuts of stone brought out edges, clear lines, where none had been before. They brought out definite relations between left and right, up and down, back and front. In all this he or she was following animal precedent, and the laws of physics. When other species make things – birds' nests, spiders' webs, beavers' dams – order is not optional but inherent in their purpose. Without it, those things could not do what they have to do. Eyes, brains and limbs, themselves evolved under physical constraints, come together to produce what works, what has *form*, what therefore looks good.



1 Rock painting of archers hunting deer, Cavalls, Spain, 5000–2000 bce.

2 This flint hand-axe, found at West Tofts, Norfolk, England, is at least 100,000 years old, but some estimates date it at more than twice that age.

3 Grooved tufa stone, modified more than 250,000 years ago, from the site of Berekhat Ram, Israel. An increasing number of objects of this nature – stones or bones with a deliberately altered shape – are coming to light as archaeologists extend their knowledge of the Lower (that is, older) Palaeolithic period. Their status remains controversial. In this case, it is certain that the stone was intentionally grooved; it is not certain, however, that the intention was to make an image of a woman. Yet this type of activity surely suggests that our distant ancestors had a growing habit of looking into objects and seeking meanings within



More than that, the way that this flint was worked suggests that its maker saw something special, something unique about it. But this ‘aesthetic experience’, as we might call it, does not really step outside the range of animal behaviour either. Magpies wouldn’t starve without jewels: in stealing them, they must be alert to some kind of visual allure. More spectacularly, Melanesian bowerbirds, gathering shells and glittering pebbles, arrange their bowers as spacious and orderly galleries. Whatever the biological motivation behind such actions, it shows that attraction to the strange, the bright and the shapely is a common possibility in many visual systems.

What properly separates the hand-axe from the concerns of biologists is not its sense of form or its visual allure, but the training that went behind it. The behaviour of animals is mostly transmitted genetically, by inheritance. When behaviour is transmitted instead by learning, researchers treat it as a matter not of biology, but of *culture*. The culture in question here, that of stone-knapping, had been developing slowly among hominins for more than two million years before this example was made. It would get further refined, until it delivered blades almost too exquisite to cut with, during the remainder of the Palaeolithic period – the ‘Old Stone Age’, which ended around 10,000 BCE. But maybe this practice, whatever purposes it may have served, does not entirely deliver what we now mean by art. Consider instead something at least as old as the hand-axe – if much less elegant – which possibly supplies what we have come to expect.

This small piece of the volcanic rock known as tufa [3] was found by archaeologists at Berekhat Ram, a site in Israel occupied by hominins some time between 280,000 and 250,000 BCE. Not sure what they were looking at, the researchers had its molecular structure microscopically analysed. The pattern of impacted crystals in the tufa confirmed that a natural stone formation looking rather like a head and torso had been scored with additional grooves, seemingly to emphasize a neck and the folds of arms against a womanly chest. To carry out this work – if this was indeed intended as a very early form of figurative carving – the maker would need to take a distinct image from the living bodies that he or she had seen. They would need to transfer this image, with the help of some tool, onto the body of a stone. Moreover, they would need some incentive to make this extraordinary assertion, this ‘Let *this* be *that*.’

These are not factors we observe in the behaviour of any previous animal. A new factor – not form, not visual allure – needs to be brought in. We need to acknowledge that a product like this has one foot in the invisible. Its maker has a mind. In an unseen space, objects seen and felt in the outside world have been organized into categories, such as ‘woman’ or ‘man’, which can then be applied to alternative sorts of objects, such as stones. These categories carry with them meanings and values that prompt individuals into certain types of

behaviour. Notably, into making visible that which points to the existence of invisible thoughts: that is to say, symbols.

Visual symbolism, in this broad sense, will be the main concern of this book. It will be a long dialogue between what your eyes can see and what your mind needs to infer. But just why and how symbolism emerged, and just when it converged with a sense of order and of visual allure to create art as we know it, remain wide-open questions. It may well be the case that cues offered by nature – such as the shell in the flint or the swell of the tufa – helped the process along. More generally, it seems a persuasive idea that abstract thought and its aural and visual expressions (language and art) arrived together with religion (that is, the turning of behaviour towards the invisible) in a single, interdependent evolution.

A tidy hypothesis. Can it be proved? Here and there in the ‘Lower’ – more deeply buried – Stone Age record, we find regular notches on bones and stones, seemingly recording various kinds of thought process. But any investigation has to close in on the activities of *Homo sapiens* – that is, people like ourselves. *Homo sapiens* was a species that initially grew up in Africa, somewhere around 130,000 BCE, but spread out from there across Eurasia to supplant all other forms of hominin during the course of the next hundred thousand years. At its early campsites, blocks of red ochre form a tantalizing litter. One, left at the Blombos Cave in South Africa around 75,000 BCE, has been grooved with a cross-hatched grid. If our ancestors were drawing patterns within the pigment-rich rock, surely they were also using it to pattern the surfaces around? The question brings us up against art history’s fundamental limit. Most of what people make to look at lasts little longer than the words they speak. Over time, the overwhelming majority of human visual activity has probably been focused on human skin or hair – or has involved biodegradable fibres and pelts, or forms given to flammable wood or unfired clay, or marks made in sand. Most returns to ash and dust. Mostly we gaze into the void.

The artistic record of the first hundred thousand years of this species is as yet profoundly misty. By 30,000 BCE, *Homo sapiens* had spread through Europe and Asia (if not yet the Americas) and had established a presence in Australia, a continent that must have been reached by boat. In Australia simple if cryptic symbols on rock faces, such as half-circles, can probably be traced back to a date such as this. A tradition of figurative rock art gradually grew upon this basis among a population who lost contact with the continents to its north. But it is what happened at the other end of the world that has seized the modern imagination: because suddenly, and all in a piece, we come face to face with everything that we expect to find when we talk about ‘art’.



4 Ivory carving of a therianthrope ('beast-human') from Hohlenstein-Stadel, Germany, c. 31,000 bce.

Torchlight

Western Europe, 31,000–10,000 BCE

This figurine from the Hohlenstein-Stadel cave in southern Germany is the length of a forearm and carved from mammoth ivory [4]. It stands like a human, with a head like a lion. This is where figuration as we know it appears to emerge: somewhere roughly around 31,000 BCE. Perhaps a greenstone carving of a slender dancing woman from Galgenberg in Austria, and a few hand-sized horses, bison and birds from nearby German caves, are as old as this lion figure. They match it in their graceful and confident workmanship. In this crop of artefacts, the sense of form and the finesse that humans had brought to axe manufacture have been turned to a new end, to representing bodies. Sculpture's basic production standards have arrived – symmetry, a feel for proportion, regular spacing in the notch-marks along the arms; fine buffing in the shaping of the head. Moreover, at Hohlenstein-Stadel all this is clearly at the service of the imagination. This 'therianthrope' or beast-human must have drawn its meanings not simply from observable nature, but from the supernature of myth.

The abrupt arrival of carvings like this in the European record has led theorists to conjecture that there was some 'creative explosion' – a phenomenon that would give rise to the basics of worldwide culture from this time onwards. The adoption of increasingly structured campsites for what was as yet a nomadic existence is also brought in as evidence for a dramatic mental transformation spreading through *Homo sapiens* during the ten thousand years following 40,000 BCE. All this is a characterization, not an explanation of events. It is mainly focused on Europe, and its dynamics remain very much a matter of speculation and debate. Any account of what happened clearly needs to allow for independent developments in Australia, if not elsewhere. We shall no doubt have to change the sequence of events if we find out more about whatever led up to the sophistication on offer in the German and Austrian caves.

But as it is, we encounter 'the figure' – the reimagined living body, the first thing that the Western term 'art' has become associated with – with hardly a clue as to how it first developed. Discoveries from Europe's prehistoric millennia have fed back into a long-running debate among modern Europe's art theorists.* How much do the roots of art lie in people's ideas – in what they intend, invent, imagine and design – and how much in what comes to people from 'nature' – in what they see around them, such as bodies? There is, needless to say, no conclusive answer. But the greatest of prehistoric rediscoveries

* The question of how art originated was already being raised in the 1460s by Leon Battista Alberti in his essay *On Sculpture* (see Chapter 5).

seemed to offer a boost to the proponents of ‘naturalism’ when it hit public consciousness at the beginning of the 20th century. Back in 1879 seven-year-old María de Sautola, following her treasure-hunting father down the Spanish cave of Altamira, chanced to turn her head to the roof lit up by his torch as he dug for buried riches in the floor. ‘*Mira, papá, bueyes!*’ Her cry of astonished recognition – look, daddy, oxen – was gradually, often reluctantly echoed by sceptical authorities as it became clear that these long-hidden floating visions of animals pushed painting’s timescale far beyond the reach of written records. While 20th-century artists were creating their breakthrough responses to modernity, the opening up of further subterranean complexes in northern Spain and southern France fomented a revolution in awareness of art’s past. That revolution has been ongoing. It is thought that caves like Altamira and Lascaux (France’s most celebrated Palaeolithic site) were being painted from perhaps 17,000 BCE onwards. But the radiocarbon analysis of murals in another French cave, Chauvet, discovered only in 1994, has added over ten thousand years of prehistory to the painting tradition. It would now appear to be nearly as ancient as the practice of figure carving.

5, 6 (overleaf) Paintings of rhinoceros and horses at Chauvet cave, southern France, c. 28,000 bce. The world’s earliest known paintings display an assured and indeed a sophisticated graphic language. The charcoal drawings of superimposed heads of horses and bison are characteristic of a tradition that continued in Western Europe for some 18,000 years. The scene of two rhinoceros fighting is more unusual – figures in cave art interact only rarely. Rhinoceros became extinct in Europe around 10,000 bce, probably as a result of human



Across this giddy, hard-to-conceive distance of 30,000 years, the assurance of Chauvet’s art [5, 6] leaps out with a power to seize the imagination – despite the fact that, as with all major cave murals, most of us can access it only through photos and simulations. How these painters were *seeing*, how they were feeling their way into the energies of beasts! As Picasso commented, visiting Lascaux in 1940, ‘We have learnt nothing.’ Graphic devices such as the way a fluctuating weight of line is used to suggest the forward hurtle of a rhinoceros’s body make an instant connection with the modern imagination. Shading suggests the modelling of bodies, as if these stylists, like others in Classical Greece or 13th-century Italy, were imitating the look of relief carvings. There is even a hint of perspective to be found in the turning and overlapping of heads and limbs.

From its beginnings, European cave painting seemingly involved highly naturalistic effects. But that does not explain why people should have dragged themselves away from the sunlight down cold, dark and hazardous passages to practise it – often returning millennium after millennium to the same site. Evidently, this was a ritual with a wide range of participants: the hands printed or stencilled with mouth-blown pigment onto many a rock face include those of children. On many cave walls the animal-drawing seems less an act of creating visible images than of people returning to add a trace to a site made significant by previous markings, which may be why some of them have become an unreadable tangle of superimposed scrawls. And yet, with the ceilings of the major chambers at Altamira and Lascaux, we see the habitual imagery of horses, bison and deer arrayed in more or less orderly formations.





These ceilings are so high that the artists who worked on them must have stood on scaffolds. Lit by lamps and torches, their pictures would have presented a flickering, unreachable spectacle to whoever peered up – a Palaeolithic equivalent to our present-day experiences of the cinema screen or the fairground ghost train.

Like these, the cave was a zone at a remove from everyday conditions. Those who entered it lived chiefly by hunting and hence on the move, following animals in their migrations. The major caves are mostly in valleys branching off migration routes, and people may have converged on them seasonally. Certain individuals must have led the way. In other words, the Old Stone Age had its specialists in art, if not its full-time artists. After all, whoever was carving at Hohlenstein-Stadel possessed distinct individual expertise. Move on to the period between 15,000 and 12,000 BCE, and whoever devised the sculptural invention left at the French site of La Madeleine [7] must have been spurred on – and hopefully rewarded – by an audience alert to high achievement. The bison doubled back to lick insects off its flank has been conjured out of the spatial confines of a section of reindeer antler, as it were turning them against themselves. It's a type of witty, paradoxical response to naturally imposed limits that looms large in the Palaeolithic aesthetic. To give a converse example, at the cave of Niaux a dark hollow between rocks, formed by geology with the outline of a deer's head, has been capped with charcoaled antlers. Smart thinking and refined execution might moreover be tradeable. La Madeleine was a major centre for the crafts of stone and bone during the 'Upper' (i.e. more recent) Palaeolithic, and visiting hunters took its products far afield. Towards the end of the era, another centre, the Mas d'Azil, kept up

7 Fragment of an antler carved to show a bison licking its flank, c. 14,000 bce, from La Madeleine, Dordogne, France. This small object – 10 centimetres (4 inches) long, easy to hold in the hand – would probably have served as a spear-thrower, a device to lend the hunter's projectile added momentum. It was an artwork to display in the company of other hunters: we might even think of it as a high-grade Palaeolithic fashion accessory. The extremely fine engraving it displays is seen on many bone fragments of this era, some including depictions of small human figures.



a production of clever, even jokey spear ornaments – for instance a deer extruding a giant turd, with two little birds sitting on it, pecking.

But to return to the question: why did specialists take their art inside the caves? Answers have changed along with intellectual fashion, and some have been discarded. It was once thought that this was ‘hunting magic’, but the animals the hunters drew and the animals they ate prove not to match. One more recent line of research may have a bearing on whatever rituals the caves once witnessed. Their walls, like other Palaeolithic painted rock faces, often show isolated dot patterns, grids, zigzags and spirals. These look like shapes the brain’s visual system sends up, dancing before the eyes, when someone is in a trance through fasting or drugs. Starving the outward vision, therefore, was likely part of the intention when people took their leave of sunlight. Darkness encourages dreaming. In the torch’s flicker, living shapes would loom up, and it was all one whether they stemmed from the mind or the rock. Imagination *was* nature, and vice versa. Figurative art probably started before people entered Europe’s caves, and when they withdrew from them as the world warmed up around 10,000 BCE, the murals – and, indeed, the local figurative tradition itself – effectively vanished, marking the end of the Palaeolithic era. But like nothing else, they seem to encapsulate figuration’s fundamental possibilities.

Imprecise feelings

*America, Australia, Africa, South-west Asia,
from 10,000 BCE*

I want to pursue one of those possibilities further. Visual art could deliver a primary spiritual experience, for the viewer as well as for the maker. Whether or not the lion figure took its meaning from a story, its actual arrival in the world gave myth a *face*. The invisible stepped forward into visibility. People’s lives would shift in shape accordingly to accommodate the new presence.

Let me give these abstract assertions a face of their own. ‘The Holy Spirit’ [8] is the name modern Americans have given to an image on a rock-wall high up the long bend of the Horseshoe Canyon in Utah. The locale, now extremely arid, could not have been hospitable even when hunting people were painting here in the wake of post-Palaeolithic global warming – during some unknown period between 7000 and 2000 BCE. Like Altamira or Lascaux, the Canyon would have been a place of awe, a zone set apart. Like them, it presents a dramatic progression, with a long gallery of similar over life-size figures leading up to this grouping. The differences, however, are many, the most obvious being the fact that here, humanoid presences replace the European caves’ almost exclusively animal cast list. The terse manner in which these early Americans rendered them seems to foretell the instinct for

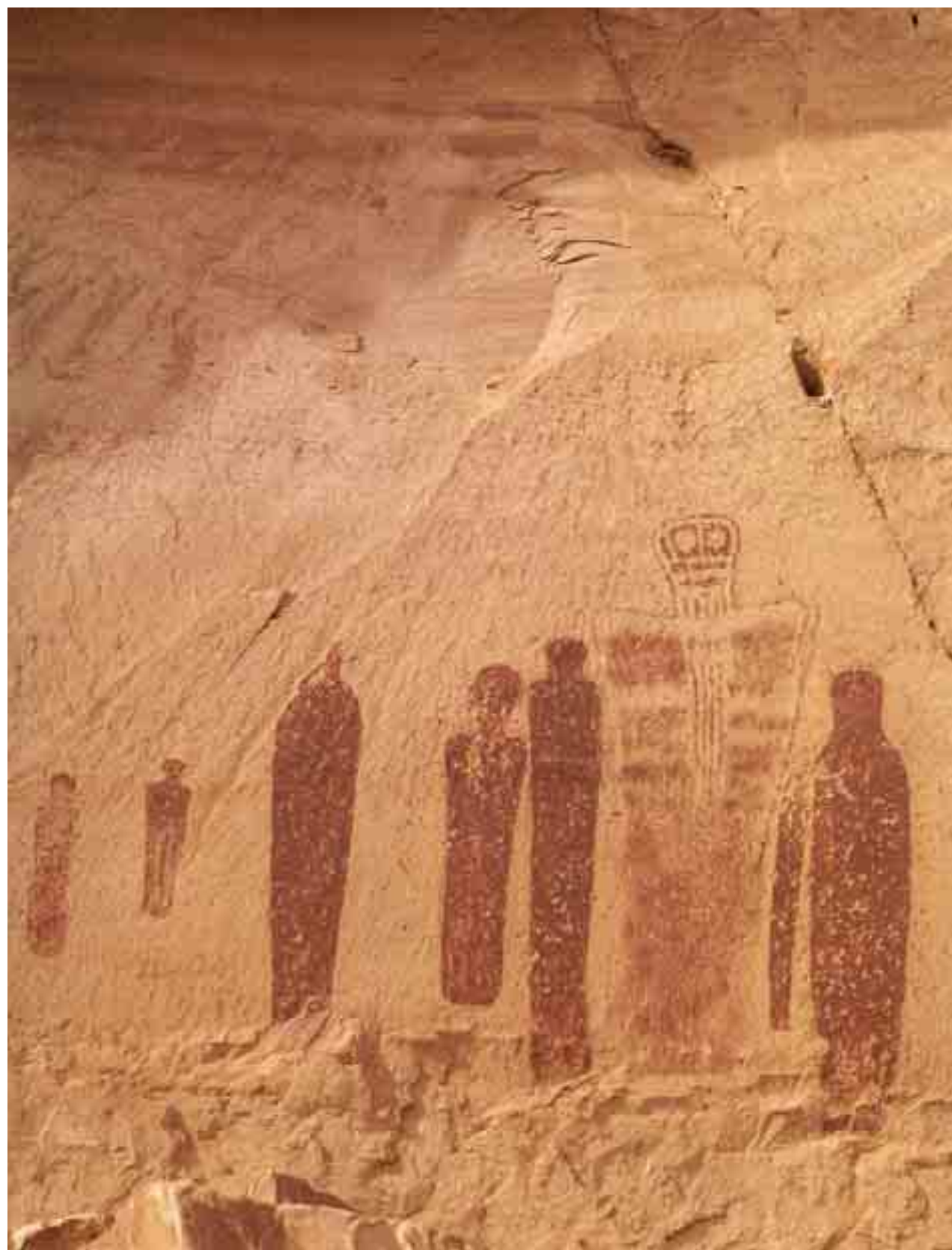
the compact and the block-like that dominates much subsequent ancient art in the New World. But, most remarkably, these laconic ciphers have here been brought together, by an unknown number of hands, into a pictorial arrangement of extraordinary spatial suggestiveness and imaginative charge.

The modern naming feels right: the ancient paintwork spooks me. I feel sure that this awesome presence changed the way people experienced their world. One of the many processes that seem to be at work, as societies diversified from 10,000 BCE onwards, is that such images started to create new spiritual – and hence physical, and eventually architectural – spaces around themselves through their impact on viewers. I think that from this point onwards, through and beyond what is called ‘the Archaic’ in American archaeology and ‘the Mesolithic’ in European, we need to keep in mind such a relation between what can be seen and what cannot.

My general suggestion is this. Ancient art revolves around invisible forces and principles that make the world the way it is, but which are at the same time persons. It revolves, that is, around what we would call ‘gods’. Furthermore, it addresses itself to these persons: it aims, through the act of making images, to establish for them a location and a bodily (often an animal) form. By making images, participants in such art may also hope to touch on those forces, or to enter within their protection. No one understands how the modern world of capitalism works if they disregard the principle of credit, on which the system hangs. No one is likely to understand pre-modernity without invoking some equally faceless principle – call it spirit, call it religion, call it (if we’re describing what truly lies beyond vision) the divine.

You may note that I’m resorting to a rhetoric of belief. How do I know things worked this way? Strictly speaking, I don’t. Archaeologists rely on material evidence and on principle refrain from such talk. But when questions of meaning arise, they, like art historians, turn to anthropology to hear what people in the recent past have told researchers about their myths and customs. For instance, interpreters of cave art have leant on what Bushmen in Southern Africa had to say about their own rock-painting practices, which died out in the 19th century as European and Bantu farmers encroached on their terrain. It’s an appealing linkage. We have little certainty how far back the artistic tradition of the Bushmen stretches, but, like the hunters and gatherers painting in the caves, they were lyrically naturalistic in their depictions of the eland, the animal central to their mythology. Their testimonies support the idea that such art revolved around trances and visions, though it would be rash to jump to the conclusion that there’s an intrinsic connection between the scale a society works on and the styles it adopts. American hunter-gatherers didn’t paint naturalistically. Nor did Aboriginal Australians, who were the subject of a classic anthropological investigation by Baldwin Spencer and Frank

8 ‘The Holy Spirit’, rock painting in the Horseshoe Canyon, Utah, before 2000 bce. What archaeologists so far know about the peoples who occupied the south-west United States during the ‘Archaic’ period (c. 8000–1000 bce) comes largely from art such as this. The hunters also left clay figurines in a comparable style. In this case, it is probable that the different figures were painted at a variety of times, possibly across millennia. Yet in contrast to European cave art, where later paintings were often heedlessly superimposed on earlier ones, the junior artists working on this rock panel evidently added to the composition in a spirit of respect for their predecessors.



9 This photograph, taken by Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen for their 1904 study of Aboriginal culture, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, demonstrates a sand-painting ritual among the Warramunga of Central Australia.



Gillen at the turn of the 20th century. Spencer and Gillen's photographs of hunter-gatherer ceremonies [9] evoke a visual language coded to the point of abstraction. Maybe, though, they help us get a general flavour of how culture might have operated before writing or architecture ever came on the scene.

You might counter that there are reasons to be sceptical about such an assumption. Aboriginal society may have developed along a different trajectory from civilizations elsewhere, but that is not to say it remained static: archaeologists have shown otherwise. And a century on, the historically alert will be suspicious of the way the shot has been composed with an eye to some European reverie of 'primitive' antiquity – not to mention the wary look a participant is handing the photographer. Spencer wrote that he and Gillen could photograph the Warramunga because they were treated as total initiates, yet he could still characterize his hosts as 'naked, howling savages'. For their part, they too – like most of us talking to strangers – might have had something to offer but something also to hide. Anthropology is negotiation, not quantification.

Nonetheless, here were some nineteen evidently real people focused on the climax of an eight-day ritual that clearly mattered to them. As their feather-plumed helmets were pulled away, the kneeling men withdrew from their collective role of representing the Wollunqua, the 'rainbow serpent' whose body lay represented on the ground. There, a ribbon of charcoal wove its way among a field of white clay dots, plunging between notated tree-circles down into a central waterhole. This giant serpent's previous wanderings had symbolically threaded together all the features of the country around. Myth mapped the landscape. But why it did demand this intensive investment of time and energy? Spencer and Gillen based their fieldwork around the rationalizations of myth put forward by anthropologists like James Frazer, but the ceremonies in question, 'the most impressive of any we witnessed', left them hesitant. 'It is not easy to express in words what is *in reality rather a vague feeling* amongst the natives.'^{*}

^{*} Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1904), pp. xiv, 247, 248 (my

10 Rock painting of pastoralists and cattle at Sefar, Tassili mountains, Algeria, c. 5000 bce. The domestication of cattle was the foundation of a way of life that still persists across the savannah, the tree-scattered grasslands stretching from Africa's west coast to its east. These lyrical early depictions of the cattle-herders, at ease in an open environment, are made all the more poignant by their location – in the midst of what is now the world's largest and harshest desert. Other Sahara rock faces show dances and hunts, elephants and giraffes. The sands still continue their southward advance.

Art history thrives on 'rather vague feelings' such as awe and aesthetic delight. It doesn't need to rationalize them: it needs only to provide frameworks for them. From this photograph, I would extrapolate several elements that might have structured prehistoric art. At heart, the serpent plunges down his waterhole and disappears: there would always be some point *beyond* vision. But the image indicating where that point lies provides a focus for people's activities and for their sense of the environment. Or, more exactly in this case, for grown men's activities. Women might have their separate exclusive ceremonies, but the young must bide their time without. And so senior and junior, inner and outer, or (in a hillier environment) higher and lower positionings would organize themselves around the centres of significance. At their peripheries, meaning would fan out into the weave of clothing and the carve of utensils, through repeated, coded patterns and emblems such as those the initiates of the Warramunga are wearing.

This is *not* to say that all prehistoric art need be religious in orientation. The periphery clearly had its own allure. The rock art left in the Tassili mountain range, in the Algerian Sahara, includes imagery of ritual significance, but it shows an abundant interest in the here and now [10]. People were painting here during much the same period as the Utah artists, perhaps between 8000



11, 12 Column with relief carving showing five birds, built at Göbekli Tepe, Turkey, c. 9600 bce.

and 2000 BCE, and likewise they came to use the rock face to suggest three-dimensional space, indeed landscape. As the picture reveals, here the way of life, in what was then a green, well-watered land, had turned to cattle-herding. Social scenes like this – not only women chatting outside their camp, but dances and massed battles – were a novelty of the Mesolithic era. They were also drawn or engraved at sites in Italy and Spain, and added to earlier pictographs at Bhimbetka in India. Wiry, quirkily vivacious parades of figures subsequently appeared at many a site across the world, including Huashan in China and Fossum Tanum in Sweden.

This incoming subject-matter probably reflected population growth, as a warmer climate combined with humanity's increasingly crafty grip on the environment. During the later Palaeolithic era settlements had been spreading, particularly in south-west Asia. Around 9600 BCE, some of this region's inhabitants radically upgraded their religious life, as recent excavations have shown. They *built* a centre for it, on a far heftier scale than any earlier constructions we know of. One of the many surprises of the excavations begun in 1995 at Göbekli Tepe in south-eastern Turkey was the size of the stones used in the construction of the circular temple erected there at this time, which weigh up to seven tons. The techniques of low-level carving ('relief carving') that we have already seen practised on an antler at La Madeleine were applied to these uprights [11, 12]. The swans and egrets carved on this stone, like the boars and foxes on others, probably had places in some vanished tribal mythology – an early form of heraldry, one might say. What's certain is that when the artists placed the birds among the undulating lines that universally signify water, they were starting to confront problems that still concern artists today. Buildings and objects made to fit them have regular confines. The designer needs to think what to do with the negative space around the figures placed within those confines. How are we to *represent* an environment around the figure, if we cannot simply let an open, indefinite rock face do the imaginative work for us?

Another surprise of the Göbekli Tepe excavations was that the building work there *predated* the growing of corn crops, which is known to have started in this area. Activity on the site may even have helped catalyse the world's earliest transition to farming, a way of life that would spread through western Eurasia during the ensuing millennia. The tussle between the 'mind' team and the 'nature' team that runs through art talk also runs through the discussions of historians. In so far as Göbekli Tepe suggests that agriculture was dependent on religion, the idealists would seem to have possession of the ball. The materialists may have their comeback.

13 Mbuti barkcloth, 20th century. Abstract art is in one sense a category invented in early 20th-century Europe (see Chapter 11); in another, it is a fundamental human possibility of immeasurable antiquity. It is impossible at present to hazard a history for Mbuti painting. The barkcloths are wrapped round babies at birth and are worn during rites of passage and celebratory dances. Painted by women in a gatherer culture where people have ample free time, these unpredictable meditations on line and space have a strange kinship with the doodlings of idle office workers.



Multiple choices

Central Africa, Melanesia, Japan, Europe, from 5000 BCE

Two more brief detours into anthropology before we head back onto the chronological highway. The mainstream narrative will squeeze our sense of what is possible and leaves little room to think about alternatives, such as the barkcloth art of the Mbuti [13]. This *may* be a tradition stretching back to the Mesolithic: the Mbuti feature in ancient Egyptian chronicles, Greek translations of which gave their name as ‘pygmies’. But since they have long based themselves in the fast-changing and fast-decaying rain forests of Central Africa, we have little archaeological grasp on the practice’s past. It involves men pounding bark-fibre into sheets, intended to give the wearer spiritual protection, which the women then paint. The artists deploy a common repertoire of basic linear units, but the intention is that each design should emerge as unique. The aesthetic of their work has been related to their singing, which likewise projects an abstract, ever-varying response to the life and spiritual

texture of the forest. The finest barkcloths seem everywhere alert to repetitions and regularities, but forever with a will to sidestep them.

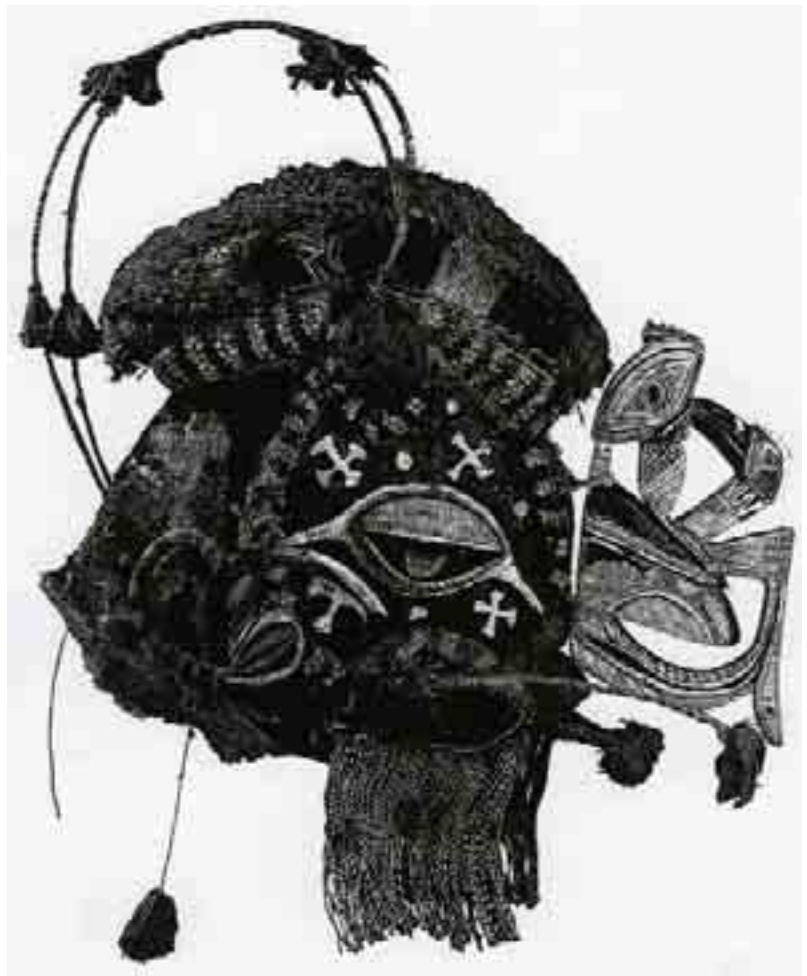
The Mbuti are hunter-gatherers who have lived symbiotically with other types of society since at least Egyptian times. (As of today, they are being systematically massacred by them.*) This constant coexistence of larger and smaller social units, of supercultures and subcultures, is another factor worth keeping in mind through the history that follows. It is too easy to fall into Western civilization's progress-led, dismissive rhetoric of 'artistic advances' and 'obsolete styles'. But there is a further consideration. We have fairly little idea which sex made what in prehistory, though probably even then cultural roles were assigned by gender. But in most of the societies that the Mbuti have dealt with and which we will deal with, from ancient Egyptians to 19th-century European empire-builders, the *male* held control of the business of image-making. Stories about other forms of making might present a more balanced picture, but as it is, this attempt to 'relate images' cannot pretend to celebrate all humanity. It will mostly listen to the sound of one hand clapping.

My second excursion is to New Ireland, a large island off the coast of Papua New Guinea. Until the recent past, Melanesia – the scattered islands north-east of Australia – has been the preserve of small-scale societies whose economies centred round fishing, pigs and yam cultivation. The windings of sea, river and mountain have set communities apart but alert to one another, and the resultant political rivalries seem to have encouraged the growth of intensely aesthetic cultures, devoted to competitive spectacle. A comparable geography led to a comparable art history in the jagged inlets of Canada's Pacific coast, home to the totem poles of the Haida and the Kwakiutl – and to some extent also in ancient Greece, as we will see in Chapter 3. In Papua, the pigs and the yams have been nurtured and preened as objects of artistic excellence. People here also have their equivalents to the totem pole, piling mythic and ancestral references into outsize, brashly coloured, intimidating carvings.

The main arena, however, for Melanesia's art wars is the living person. Self-transformation may well have been the mainstay of visual culture ever since early *Homo sapiens* took to picking up blocks of red ochre. An *inward* transformation, with the hallucinated mind leaving its own flesh to enter other animals' bodies, may have informed the Palaeolithic imagery of the therianthrope. It also shaped the more recently recorded supernatural visions of shamans, the spiritual healers who have had a crucial role in small-scale societies from Lapland and Siberia to the Americas. When the prime means of *outward* transformation, the mask, first entered onto the scene no one knows. But in Melanesia, as in Canada and in sub-Saharan Africa (see Chapter 11),

* See, for instance, the 2004 report available from www.minorityrights.org.

14 A mask from New Ireland representing a bush spirit, 19th century. The peoples of Melanesia have kept at a cultural remove, both from the larger societies of south-east Asia and from the hunter-gatherers of nearby Australia, until the very recent past. Agriculture and village life developed in the main land mass, the island of New Guinea, around 7000 bce. The artistic traditions behind pieces such as this may have equally ancient origins, as the radiocarbon dating of archaeological finds is beginning to reveal. During the 20th century, areas of Melanesia like New Ireland and New Guinea's Sepik river valley became a treasure trove for researchers and collectors, on account of their art's wild visual flamboyance and the daunting complexity of the belief systems involved. In particular, participants in German Expressionism and in the Surrealist movement were drawn to the art of this region.



mask-makers had developed arts of prodigious complexity by the time Westerners first arrived.

At one end, masking entailed modifying given materials that had spiritual power. Above all, that meant skulls – either of revered ancestors, or of slaughtered rivals, defleshed, remodelled in clay (sometimes with great naturalism), strapped head-to-head in physical union. At another end, masking linked and multiplied matters ad infinitum. This New Ireland mask [14] was made for a personal daemon or alter ego that dwelt in the forest, yoking some male member of a village's secret society to the landscape around him. At its outermost verge, a fish springs away from a hornbill that springs out of a fishhead that's the beak of a chicken, with a further hornbill at its ear ... A delirium of eyes and coded patternings thrills the view and rebuffs it. This mask doesn't *want* to be understood. As with much else in the world of men's clubs, here and elsewhere, aggressive secrecy is the agenda. It didn't even want to stick around. The daemon would die along with the club member, and the mask, like the *malanggans*, New Ireland's giant funerary complexes of carving, would probably on principle have been consigned to the fire. That is, until European collectors created a market for 'primitive' exotica.

15 Flame-style Jomon vessel from Niigata, Japan, c. 2500 bce. The Niigata pots are some of the most remarkable demonstrations of what can be done with coiled clay – the technique generally used by ceramicists before the advent of the potter’s wheel, which seems to have originated in ancient Iraq somewhere around 3000 bce. In societies where the wheel is not employed, pottery has most often been an art assigned to women (compare ancient Mexico, **39**, and ancient Africa, **65**), and thus it probably makes



The mask was acquired in the late 19th century by Otto Finsch, the ethnographer who brought New Ireland under German colonial rule. The florid frailty of its cane and yarn speaks of what we can only guess at in so much ancient art – the colour, the extravagance, the ephemeral *joie de vivre*. Perhaps we see a relic of such qualities in some of the most spectacular art objects of prehistory, the ‘flame-style’ pots of Niigata in Japan [**15**]. This example, made around 2500 BCE, stands at 61 centimetres (24 inches), slightly larger than the mask. It too proclaims the wild intricacy that creative play can generate. The vessel may or may not have been made with symbolisms in mind: twisting, spiralling flows like these seem to have evoked cosmic rhythms throughout ancient Eurasia. It may or may not have had functional purposes (most ‘art objects’ have, on some level or other). What it is undeniably full of is its own elaboration, its delighted interest in the infinitely ductile possibilities of coiled clay. It opens up the prospect of art-for-art’s-sake aestheticism.

Japan’s prehistoric ceramics – known as ‘Jomon’ ware – had a tradition stretching back to 10,000 BCE, the longest continuous record in the world. Fired clay figurines have been found at Dolni Vestonice, a site in the Czech Republic, dating back fifteen thousand years before that, but it was only when people took to settlements that they began seriously to make pottery. In Jomon days Japan was a land of small villages living off fishing and horticulture.

Covering vessels in ribbed or painted linear rhythms was commonplace, as it was also to the west, in contemporary Korea, China and Europe. But it was the workshops of a single area, around Niigata on the north-west coast, that produced handcoiled pottery of this calibre for the space of a few generations. Perhaps a lone individual set off the vogue.

Very broadly speaking, ceramics is a field in which eastern Asia has led the way globally ever since. It's an art that will become somewhat marginalized in a history designed around Western ideas of the two-dimensional image – not so much because it is 'functional', but because so much of its appeal gets obscured. You can't walk around a book illustration or turn it in the hand, can't feel its weight or its curvature, let alone hear its sonorities: we only have our eyes here. Yet clay may turn back to confront them. The 'Lady of Pazardzik' [16], who seems to stare back less with her eyes than with her sex, is one example. Here, modelling and firing give new meanings to an already ancient theme. Instances of the female figure date back, as I have mentioned,



16 'The Lady of Pazardzik', ceramic,
c. 4500 bce.

to the ‘Venus of Galgenberg’, a svelte dancer-girl contemporary with the Hohlenstein therianthrope. From a period some eight thousand years later, somewhere around 23,000 BCE, comes a scattered crop of very different Venuses, found in places ranging from the Ukraine to France – almost faceless figurines, with great breasts, bellies and hips swooping and bloating like ripened fruit. Later again, when farming spread from its base in south-west Asia, icons of the feminine took on a new authority. The enthroned ‘Lady’ is unmistakably a vessel for worship. She is sensual, mouldable clay, but with her oblique, effaced head she is implacably firm. Across her deep-etched pubis, the same coiling ‘S’ that winds around the Jomon pot would seem to symbolize transition: she may well have sat by a grave. She was made around 4500 BCE in Bulgaria, the Balkans being Europe’s most technologically sophisticated region at the time. Comparable goddesses have been found from Turkey to Moldova to Malta, suggesting a widely shared mythology. Very few male figures dot the West’s prehistoric record, then or before.

The fishing-and-farming people of the Cycladic islands, only three hundred miles south of Pazardzik but over two thousand years later, seemed to make art with similar beliefs in mind. Their figurines were mostly female and mostly intended for the grave. But they aimed at a different kind of firmness [17]. The islands of the central Aegean are rich in marble, and artists cultivated a sensitivity to this dazzling, fine-grained stone as aesthetically refined as the contrary extreme of the Jomon potters. The figurines seem to retain the feel of the long pebbles and boulders that they probably started out as. They have been lightly scored and inflected with bodily features, and originally they bore light paintwork, but just as much as the stone was lent divine meaning, it seems as if the divinity were treated as stone. Another word for this aesthetic might be minimalist. We know fairly little about its context, in a still-preliterate society, but both the sensibility and the marble itself may have provided the Cycladic artists with assets they could trade, for their work has been found at sites far afield. At the time they flourished – 2800 to 2300 BCE – we are starting to enter a world of Mediterranean trade and of style wars. The Cycladic phenomenon would itself eventually be forgotten, but it is on the cusp of a time when some cultures became richer in art, and some poorer.

Lost for words

Polynesia, Scotland, from 4000 BCE

Let us recapitulate the way in which the social structures behind art had been diverging. I have been edging my way around the gradual emergence of greater complexity. Hunter-gatherers, living on the move in small bands, had spread across the continents from 130,000 BCE onwards, reaching South

17 Cycladic figurine by ‘the Kontoleon sculptor’, c. 2000 bce.



America last of all. Here and there the habit of staying put took hold. Some time after the global warming of around 10,000 BCE, various people began herding in places like the Sahara and vegetable-growing in places like Japan. Meanwhile in south-west Asia, not long after that date, crop-farming became a way of life, spreading thence to Europe. It sprang up independently in various other places rather later.

‘Neolithic’ is the term that archaeologists use to describe the societies that converted to agriculture, with the result that the dates when this ‘new stone’ age is supposed to commence shift from place to place across the map. Archaeologists used to reason that crop-growing produces a food surplus that allows populations to increase, meaning (a) there are more hands to build big things, and (b) there are more social contrasts than in the relatively share-and-share-alike Palaeolithic era, with the strong getting a chance to bully the weak into working on projects. The erection of a large-scale temple by hunter-gatherers at Göbekli Tepe suggests that there may be problems with this sequence.

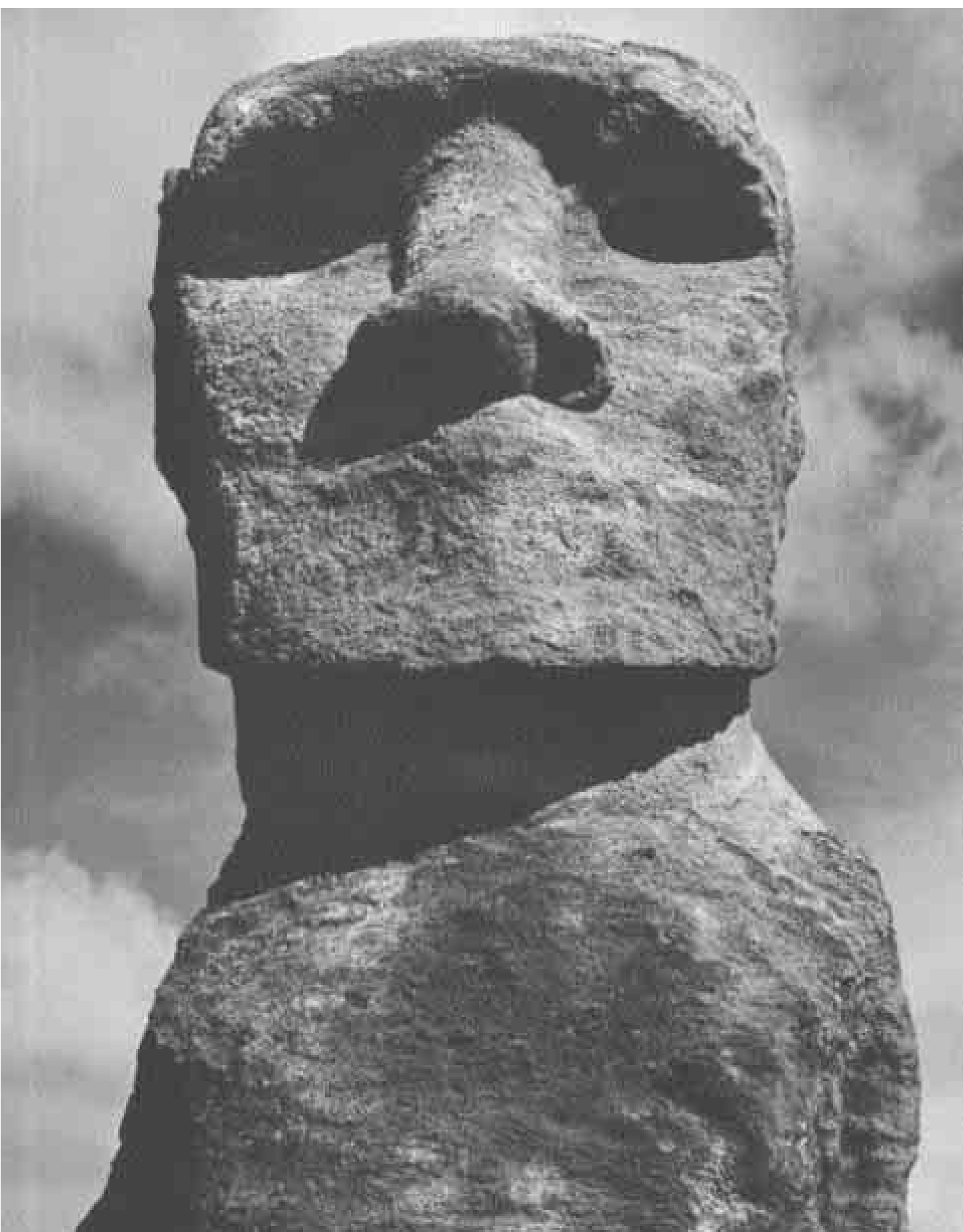
The crop of giant stone (or ‘megalithic’) projects that transformed prehistoric landscapes from 4000 BCE onwards, from Atlantic-facing Europe to ancient Egypt to Peru, gives the modern imagination further headaches. It is usually at this point – up until written records establish a firm hold on events and ‘history’ proper sets in – that parascientific speculators like to reach for extraterrestrial explanations. How could mere human mind and muscle have devised such things? The instinct to look to the heavens may have something facile about it, but it’s faithful to the spatial qualities of these monuments. It is not simply that England’s Stonehenge, a site slowly aggrandized for a thousand years from 3000 BCE, and Egypt’s pyramids, started four hundred years later, have evident astronomical orientations. To walk in the ambit of standing stones anywhere – they can be also found dispersed across Asia, Africa and the Americas – is to be aware of an overriding will to hoist the stuff of earth up into the immaterial, endless skies. Alongside image worship and myths infusing the landscape, the relation between the solid world and the principle behind it has been given a fresh orientation. God is now *above*.

That concept has many possible interpretations. Hypothetically, it could have been space gods returning from Sirius who helped Easter Islanders erect their megaliths millennia later, while Europe was busy with its cathedrals. It’s more likely, though, that here we see the final manifestation of a now remote human mindset, produced by concerted sweat and teamwork almost within the reach of recorded memory. The Neolithic, as I’ve said, is an elastic time zone. Patterns of human settlement spread out from Melanesia to reach the eastern Pacific and New Zealand little more than a thousand years ago, and the technologies their settlers brought with them revolved round stone, bone,

18 *Moai* (megalithic heads) on Easter Island in the Pacific, 900–1500 ce. The singularly remote Easter Island, first settled perhaps around 300 ce, grew into a rich hierarchical society with chieftains and with its own system of writing. The *moai* statues seem to have been repositories of chieftains' *mana*, as Polynesian people term spiritual power. Typically, they stood over 4 metres (13 feet) high, in groups on platforms facing the island's coast: these came to run all round its circumference. At some point most of them were toppled, though whether this occurred before or after first contact with Europeans during the 18th century is a matter of dispute.

clay, wood and fibre, the means that have produced all we have hitherto talked about. On Easter Island, the most isolated landmass in the great ocean, people from around 900 CE took to erecting ever larger heads-and-torsos of their ancestor-figures, quarried and carved from soft volcanic ash [18]. These *moai* make explicit an equation that's more or less implied by menhirs elsewhere. As Utah's 'Holy Spirit' painting demonstrates, even the most minimal upright can be powerfully invested with supernatural, paternalistic authority.

The colossal scale of the *moai* was seemingly encouraged by the kind of spectacular rivalry between clans that flavoured Melanesian cultures. The upshot was unfortunate. By around 1600 all the island's timber had been felled in order to roll the monuments into place. As a result, the topsoil rapidly eroded, and the inhabitants, forced to abandon their megalithic ambitions, were also left without the means to build boats in which to escape their increasingly precarious ecology. Imagery may have set in motion developments that led to civilization. It could also foment its collapse.



The 1970s photographs of Fred Picker record the island's ruins with awe and careful art [19]. Would it be more 'authentic' to illustrate this text with a *moai* whose white-coral eyes have been reinserted in their sockets? Why not show one with its weathering scrubbed away, in simulated pristine condition? What constitutes 'authentic' when it comes to objects from the long-gone past? There is no escaping the fact that prehistoric art gives the literate – ourselves – an unintended, slightly melancholy pleasure in freeing us from words. We literally do not know what it means. That allows us to dream and maybe to lament. By the same token scepticism is always in order. Archaeologists' findings are changing the picture fast. Perhaps that figure you thought you saw on the distant horizon – a stone looking like it was meant to be a woman, a shaman leading initiates down a cave – is merely a speck on your lens.

All interpretations are loaded. Trust an Englishman to begin his history of art in England! Trust him to consign the remnants of prehistory to Scotland! Multifaceted stone balls of various designs, all of a size to fit in the hand, have been found at many a site there. They date from around 3200 to 2500 BCE. This one [20], from Towie in Aberdeenshire, is a small masterpiece of refined and intricate workmanship. Those who are able to read ancient reflections on the cosmos into whorls and mazes will find it rich in meaning. Its three lobes, moreover, connect to the three-spiral imagery of prehistoric, megalithic Ireland, and even perhaps to the rotund and bulbous goddesses of Neolithic Malta, where an isolated civilization seems to have suffered the same fate as Easter Island's four thousand plus years ago. But what on earth was the stone ball's function? Your guess could well be as good as mine.



19 *Moai* (megalithic head) on Easter Island, 900–1500 ce.

20 Stone ball from Towie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, c. 3200–2500 bce.



SHAPING CIVILIZATION

Stones seen through fog

Mexico, Peru, China, India, from 3000 BCE

Strange stones mark out the beginnings of civilization in the Americas. The basalt head shown here [21], nearly 3 metres (10 feet) tall, is one of ten unearthed at San Lorenzo, a site near Mexico's Gulf coast where the earliest city in these continents seems to have been built. The so-called 'Lanzón' (or 'lance') [22], a granite pillar over 4 metres (13 feet) high representing a fanged and grinning snake-haired deity (here seen facing to the right), stands at a junction of corridors inside a massive temple built at Chavín de Huántar in the Peruvian Andes. The first probably dates from around 1000 BCE, while the second may be a century or two younger. I call them strange partly because I reckon that this is a reaction their makers wished for: they aimed to alert and alarm, not least through sheer scale. But the stones are also strange because, long after their archaeological rediscovery, we are still left guessing at whatever else their makers intended. In Mexico, decipherable records only began centuries after these giant heads of the so-called 'Olmecs' were overturned in some unrecorded tumult, while in Peru writing remained unknown until the Spanish conquest of 1532 CE. For archaeologists, stones such as these nonetheless stake out the first indigenous transitions from small- to large-scale social structures – and hence to 'civilization'.

What makes people reach for that term? A lucky hand in the game of history might be one answer. To judge by artistic format alone, the Olmec heads and the 'Lanzón' are not that far distant from giant stone statues such as the Easter Island *moai*, the kind of phenomenon we have just relegated to pre-history. (It's unlikely, incidentally, that any of the three had the slightest influence on one another.) Maybe we categorize things by hindsight rather than by looks. The *moai* were a historical dead end, but San Lorenzo and Chavín seem to have set precedents for cultures to come. We might see the seeds of later sculpture in Central America – the work of the Maya and Aztec city-builders – in the tense power of the Olmec heads, at once so compact and so fleshly; in the Andes, designers down to the time of the Inca empire and the Spanish conquest would expand on the compactly coiled, almost abstract sign-language seen in the 'Lanzón'. And thus we read the ancient stones as distant, preliminary steps towards the position we are all now in, bound up

21 'El Rey', colossal basalt head from San Lorenzo, Mexico, c. 1000 bce.

for better or worse in highly complex societies. We may recoil from the element of terror implicit in such acts of foundation – the archaic totalitarianism clenched up in the basalt’s mass, the ‘Lanzón’s’ manic, rapacious grimace. Were people *forced* into living together, through fear? But then civilization is, among other things, the position from which it is possible to entertain mixed feelings about civilization.

Is it relevant to art history to define it further? Let us settle, here, for using the term to describe whatever happens when societies get big: it doesn’t matter too much how. For instance, the early monuments of the Andes – like those at Göbekli Tepe [see 11, 12] or like the slightly comparable totem poles of the Canadian Pacific – may well have been built by people subsisting chiefly on hunting and fishing rather than on the farming that theorists often consider prerequisite for civilization. Let us turn back from economic to formal considerations, and note that in the picture of Chavín we are, for the first time in this narrative, looking inside a built interior. Architecture is outside this book’s remit, but from now on constructed environments – often now vanished – will hover just beyond the boundaries of most of its images, implicitly determining their meaning. Here, tight corridors drastically restricted the movements and the attention of temple-goers who were probably tripping on cactus juice. Three times their height, the monolith might have catalysed their spirit adventures, standing at once for the vertical ascent into the supernatural realm and for the awesome power that ruled over it.

Also note that in the ritual complex of San Lorenzo we start to come across portraiture. The ten heads here, and seven more at later Olmec sites, all smack of stout authority, but each is to some degree individualized. The illustrated example is particularly suggestive in evoking some jowly, weary politico: could the carvers have enlarged on a clay model produced from observation? This kind of naturalism, unprecedented in the earlier Mexican record, seems to have receded as the series of king portraits went on: in fact, it is very hard to theorize about its comings and goings. Closely rendered fleshly faces are an occasional feature of the mask-maker’s repertoire in all kinds of small-scale societies, but it is true that, until large-scale societies arrive, very few individual likenesses are to be seen.

I want to extend the discussion of what happens when societies enlarge to Eurasia – but to do so, I shall have to jump back two thousand years. My justification for this chronological lurch is that the shift to civilization, wherever it occurs, is effectively that region’s starting line or year zero for ‘history’ and ‘tradition’; also, to set things in this reverse order will give us a greater awareness of the differing ways in which civilization might take shape. Such regional shifts seem to have happened in at least seven places across the world without any significant external prompting: Mexico, Peru, China, south

22 ‘El Lanzón’, carved monolith inside the temple at Chavín de Huántar, Peru, c. 900 bce.



23 Jade *cong* (or *tsung*) from the Liangzhu culture, c. 3200–2200 bce. A ring with four faces, a *cong* seems literally to ‘square the circle’, and is thus a form to which many symbolic meanings might be attached. In other examples, units such as the jade carving shown here are stacked to form a tall tube.



Asia, Iraq, Egypt and Nigeria. It would be much less of a headache for global historians if these shifts had all chosen to start out at the same time (I shall have to leave Nigeria to a later chapter), and indeed it might have been less of a curse-in-waiting for subsequent global history. But this is not the place to analyse why civilization arrived more quickly in one place than another,* let alone to bemoan or celebrate its advent; my business is to describe how it affected art.

People were undoubtedly wrong when they used to speculate that all civilizations had come from a single source (‘diffusionist’ thinking). And yet the artworks of far-separated early civilizations often appear to *look right* when bunched together, whatever the reason. There’s almost no chance that the ancient Americas were influenced by ancient China, but this *cong* [23] from the Liangzhu culture, made some time between 3200 and 2200 BCE, sits well with what we have just been glancing at. Both the Olmecs and the Neolithic Chinese shared a passion for far-to-seek, hard-to-work jade. Behind the distances over which this unearthly stone was imported and the patient labour required to slice and grave and buff it, we can infer in each case the patronage of an aristocracy thriving on agricultural surpluses. Around the mouth of the Yangzi river, their employees specialized in precisely poised and partitioned forms and, still more than the Chavín artists, in multiplied and subdivided interlaces of abstracted faces.

What is a *cong*? We don’t entirely know. It’s a modern name for a certain type of hollow upright cylinder deposited in a noble’s grave. People may well have made it out of jade so that it could perform some function more

* Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel* (1997) is a fascinating account of the ecological reasons why societies have developed unevenly across the world and of some of the historical consequences.

24 Male torso of red jasper, found at Harappa, c. 2200 bce. From the many excavated sites of the Indus civilization, stretching across Pakistan and northern India, a very small number of objects stand out as marked by high-grade workmanship. Most are seals: one shows a buffalo-headed divinity seated in what would now be called a lotus position. This is one of two tiny stone figurines from the major city of Harappa, both headless and without extremities. Exactly what would have been attached to the sockets remains unclear.



powerfully than might otherwise be the case with a tube made of clay or of fibre – the translating of object-shapes from cheap into precious materials being a hallmark of elite art everywhere. Its four matching mask-faces probably look out towards the world's four directions, which are of central importance in the Chinese doctrines later known as *feng shui*. It is possible that whatever passed through that hollow passage from below to above had always been invisible in nature. Conceivably the most fruitful way of connecting eastern Asia to the Americas is through a common substratum of spiritual practices that crossed the Bering Strait along with early human migrants. The shaman, the individual who navigates supernatural worlds, occurs on both sides of the now-sunken land bridge. This, though, this would be to go *very* far back – ten thousand years or more.

Pursuing such deep cultural identities and affinities is as tantalizing as tracing all civilizations back to Egypt or Iraq, and is likewise a line of thinking that could easily get snarled up in racism. The fog surrounding the foundations of civilization is certainly a good place for such speculation. It throws up fragments like the finger-length torso of jasper [24] that emerged during an excavation at Harappa in Pakistan. What was the maker of this generously relaxed little body thinking about? Jumping from one quarter of Asia to another, we might read into this artefact too an interest in the invisible; but here that quality has been translated into the experience of *breath* infusing the body, swelling and easing and vitalizing it from within.

Archaeologists tend not to like this torso. It's too good. There are only half a dozen pieces at most with anything like as fine workmanship in the record of the 'Indus civilization' – the phase of city-building that spawned Harappa and many other south Asian sites between 2600 and 1900 BCE. A number of experts would prefer the torso to have slipped in somehow from a more recent stratum of Indian art. Yet other Indus images do suggest that what would later be labelled *prana yoga* – disciplines of 'breath' or of 'spirit' (the words at root mean the same) – were already being practised in the region at this time. And if we cannot account for the sudden appearance of refined naturalism at the Chauvet cave and at San Lorenzo, why should we be obliged to here?

As a whole, however, the ruins of the Indus cities stand as a counter to most assumptions about what 'civilization' ought to look like. They show almost no sign of any elite: no palaces or temples, no monoliths or monuments, no hierarchies of imagery, little that's more costly of craftsmanship than beads of carnelian and agate. What mainly gets excavated are humble terracotta figurines, moulded for toys or magic, things that elsewhere would get passed over as products of some subculture. Gregory Possehl, an authority on the Indus phenomenon (who, incidentally, stands up for the jasper torso's antiquity), suggests that there was a deliberate, ideological 'nihilism'

about it: this was a self-conscious experiment in living that people embarked on that involved more or less eschewing high art and tradition. There is no one way of doing things.

Ground lines

Iraq, Egypt, 3100–2200 BCE

There is, however, in the Indus record a large quantity of seals used to stamp transactions, which connect it to its maritime trade associates, the Sumerian cities of southern Iraq. I've walked this discussion backwards into what is habitually labelled 'the birthplace of civilization' because I feel that the Sumerians have foreclosed historians' ideas about what a large-scale society ought to consist of. Many of the West's most familiar habits of mind ultimately derive from the Sumerians: its contrasts between kings and priests (i.e. between the political and the spiritual); its concepts of literature, as well; and probably even the seven-day week. And thus it appears that Sumer possesses the master recipe, and other countries mere disparate ingredients. Ruler effigies; large-scale architecture; ritual accoutrements in *recherche* materials; carefully controlled use of naturalistic effects – the culture that developed from 3500 BCE onwards, first at Uruk and then at rival cities on the river plains, exhibited them all. Above all, this civilization possessed a self-preserving interest in recording systems. The slabs of soft river-clay that received written notations of property and revenue, and later of *Gilgamesh*, the world's first known epic, also took impressions from engraved cylinders of soapstone and lapis lazuli, used as seals of authority.

In other words, with images like this print [25] taken from a seal of around 2800 BCE, we start to enter the world of reproducible information that now surrounds us. On this model, civilization standardizes. It marginalizes the idiosyncratic, handmade flair that might still be seen in village forms of production such as pottery. In its place, it promotes the authoritative, the

25 Imprint from Sumerian seal of men and beasts, c. 2800 bce. Images stamped into clay were an important functioning part of the systems of property and bureaucracy developed by the Sumerians. The imagery of humans holding beasts at bay reflects a civilization that needed a high degree of control and coordination in order to survive in the fragile ecology of southern Iraq. Technically, the seal is a forerunner of the engraving made to produce multiple prints, and it is remarkable that this possibility would only be developed over three thousand years later, initially in eastern Asia.



perfected, the streamlined. The image here is at once more cipher-like and more elegantly rhythmical than comparable seal-strips of men and bulls and lions engraved in preceding centuries. A sense of ‘style’, as we might say, has intervened, refining the interplay of figure and negative space that we last saw explored at Göbekli Tepe [see 11, 12]. It’s not clear how closely the figures shown on the seal relate to the narratives of *Gilgamesh*, though each evokes the clashing of energies between heroic males, here human, there divine. Animals are to be held in awe; animals are to be defeated. Themes of control and contest energize the design.

Like so many personalized dolls, hundreds of near-identical figurines were deposited in the interiors of Sumerian temples, each with big eyes plaintively fixed towards a large central something that embodied spiritual power. They stood, quite literally, for citizens who wished to maintain eye contact with a protective deity while they went about their business elsewhere, and who had paid for these figurative insurance policies. Such phenomena underline the point that vast swathes of ancient artwork were not intended primarily for mortal viewing. Much, moreover, would be sealed up in the invisibility of the tomb. The big ‘idols’ (if we can thus designate an object taken for a god) of Sumer are mostly vanished, but in Egypt, a land less easily invaded and one where this principle applies still more, the archaeological record is richer.

Egyptian civilization grew up a few centuries later than Sumerian, separately though perhaps adopting from it the notion of writing. If city-building was the decisive development in Iraq, the starting line for the three-millennium, thirty-dynasty reign of Egypt’s pharaohs was the unification of the strip of territory that stretched between the Nile’s delta in the Mediterranean and its upland African rapids. This pushing together of the land was accompanied by a corresponding standardization of images. The fluidity and informality of pastoralists’ art – think back, for instance, to the camp scenes painted far to the west in the once fertile, now desertified Sahara (see p. 21) – made way for clarity and precision. The new state civilization thought in terms of ranks, hierarchies and framed spaces. All this dictated that figures should stand level on the same ‘register’ or groundline, just as they do on the Sumerian seal. Moreover, their body proportions should submit to ‘geometry’. (The term, meaning ‘earth-measurement’, derives from the Greeks but denotes an idea that initially came to them from the Egyptians.) By the time of the Fourth Dynasty, a comprehensive rulebook of representation that would be known as ‘the canon’ had been evolved. Menkaure and Khamerernebt, a pharaoh and pharaoh’s spouse from around 2470 BCE,* step out of it together [26].

* I shall keep my dates deliberately fuzzy for the rest of this chapter so as not to involve the reader in an infinitely complex debate, still bedevilling archaeology, about how to reconcile various ancient chronologies with one another and with modern scientific evidence.



26 Menkaure and Khamerernebty, royal statue in diorite, c. 2470 bce.

This three-quarter life-size statue was dug up from the temple below the pyramid at Giza that Menkaure built to ensure his soul's proper passage to the heavens. It too may have been intended primarily for celestial attention rather than for political propaganda. A 'perfect' – i.e. a rulebook – likeness could act as a back-up receptacle for the soul should its owner's physical remains suffer damage. Menkaure (or Mycerinus) was the grandson of Khufu (or Cheops), the pharaoh for whom the Great Pyramid, the world's most imposing building project, was erected. He would have been a hard act to follow, and not only Menkaure's opting for a yet smaller pyramid than that of his father Khafre (or Chephren), but also the slightly unfinished nature of his statue may reflect conditions of economic overstretch.

Its roughly tooled areas also make us reflect: what does it take to make such an object? Archaeologists have reconstructed the recipe. Extract a rectangular block of diorite from a quarry in Upper Egypt. Chalk up a grid with 18 vertical divisions on its front and side faces. Use them to control the design of the intended body: the shoulders come at line 16, the belt at 11, the knees at 6, etc. Cut in from each face, remove unwanted weight. Cart the roughed-out



27 Seneb and Sentyotes and their son and daughter, limestone, *c.* 2300 bce.

statue forty kilometres from quarry to Nile, raft it another thousand down to the royal workshops at Giza. Here, finer tools will take up the task, up to the level of pitted rock we see between the limbs. A long labour of sanding with quartzite and buffing with fine clay will produce the desired flawless surface. The perfect functioning of a fully finished piece would then have been guaranteed with hieroglyphs recording the royal couple's names.

Out of this production-line process Menkaure and Khamerernebty emerge with a positive, absolute sureness of step that is still able to transform the space around them, projecting religious certitude even into the alien conditions of a modern museum. 'The statue', that fixture of Western culture, starts here. But really to see Egyptian art in three dimensions – and also to understand how it has held its grip on the Western imagination since the late 18th century, appealing to the nostalgia for order that grew as modernity accelerated – we need to double and maybe redouble our vision. Seneb and Sentyotes and their son and daughter [27] lived two dynasties later, around 2300 BCE. Seneb was a dwarf who was given major responsibilities at court. Khamerernebty slips a correct, composed hand round her imperious spouse's

28, 29 Stele of Naram-sin, king of Akkad, c. 2250 bce. The mighty Naram-sin is ascending the Zagros mountains, between the plains of the Tigris and the plateaux of Iran, to defeat a tribe named the Lullubi: part of a scheme of universal conquest. The vanquished barbarians plead in vain for mercy. Naram-sin's horned helmet (compare the figure on the right in the Sumerian seal: **25**) marks him out as divine. It is uncertain whether the double solar discs underline this concept – claiming, as it were, that the sun now has an equal – or whether it represents a comet's passing or some such portent.



shoulder, but Sentyotes – so I think the sculptor felt – was the primary source of power in her family. Her hand on Seneb's shoulder is protecting him while he gets on with what he's good at; it is she who has provided him with those thumb-sucking proxy limbs on which he will be able to walk proud into the future. There's also a technical reminder to be had in looking at the gawky little grouping, only a fifth of the pharaonic statue's size. Like this cheap limestone, that far-travelled fine-grained diorite that now imposes itself on us would once have been smothered in paint.

But of course the real point is one about sentiment. In the five-centuries-long security of 'Old Kingdom' Egypt (that is, from around 2650 BCE onwards), a clear light of meaning beams down from the gods above to the god-king pharaohs and their artificial mountains, and from them seemingly spreads outwards to everyone and everything under the sun. The power-struggles of emergent large societies often appear to have been at the expense of women, but in Egypt the female retained at least a relative parity with the male. Interestingly, Mexico also had the Egyptian habit of paying honour to people with unusual bodies. But no other region went so far in creating comprehensive, celebratory representations of the high, middle and low of society, whether pictured or wood-modelled as servants in an aristocrat's tomb, or, as here, starting to make a claim on divine favour on their own behalf. We even encounter an artist who mentions his name on the walls of his patron's tomb (Ptahhotep, at Saqqara) and includes an image of himself being served beer in a riverboat. That far-off age provides as enticing a prospectus as anyone is likely to find for the fantasy ideal of 'compassionate conservatism'.

Or I could put 'the real point' another way. I have been presenting this account of early civilizations as if we could operate with a sentiment-free description of what 'art' or 'civilization' consists of. But probably that ideal is just another fantasy. Probably we end up loading any definition with our own values.

Egypt's glamour spread internationally long ago. Naram-sin, fourth king of Akkad – the upriver city that conquered southern Iraq's Sumerians during the 2300s – very much saw the advantages of being a pharaoh. In a bold conceptual import, he tried to bridge the division that their society had nurtured between priests and politicians by styling himself god-king. His record of his victory against mountain-dwellers in southern Iran [**28, 29**] was equally innovative. On a 'stele' or tall commemorative slab, a format familiar in both Egypt and Iraq, the divine monarch, almost twice the size of the mortals around him, strides forward in defiance of anatomy, legs and face turned sideways, shoulders and chest full-frontal. So much is familiar Egyptian canonical convention. But all the 'registers', the steady horizontal rulings on which previous art had done its figure-writing, have been ruckled and tugged



sideways – because, for the first time in the tradition, Naram-sin wished to locate the memento of his triumph in a more or less coherent landscape. The Akkadians spoke a Semitic language, as the Hebrews later would; conceivably the stele's content was flavoured by the taste, which flavours many parts of the Bible, for telling stories in the style of a carefully specific witness statement. *And we went up the mountain: and we came upon the Lullubites among the woods. And some we slew with arrows: and some ...* Well, I paraphrase, I speculate. Narrative art induces such thoughts. This was a sudden lurch in its regional development, not to be repeated for over a millennium – by which time the stele had ended up in Iran, a trophy carted off by invaders of Iraq's river plains to the city of Susa, where some other paraphraser scratched an inscription onto Naram-sin's conical mountain.

Metal, merchants, *maat*

Central Asia, China, Greece, Egypt, 2000–1350 BCE

Iran and the lands stretching east to India also had witnessed the growth of more complex societies. Southern Iran was in fact a heartland for one of the most influential factors in Eurasia's civilizations: the growth of metal-working. For many millennia people had been drawn firstly to native gold, and secondly to the copper that emerged from dropping green-blue ores such as malachite into the fire, on account of their lovely hot shine. Initially, craftworkers hammered these strange substances mainly to create items of personal finery rather than tools. But with the invention of metal-casting they found they could take the shapes of objects previously produced in clay and stone, such as vessels and weapons, and turn out something unprecedentedly glamorous – a status symbol for the elite. It was the kind of socially advantageous metamorphosis that may also have happened with jade-working. This new process of casting was already in evidence by about 4000 BCE in the Balkans and in Iran, where smiths also started to employ silver.

An associated attraction of metal was that very complex contraptions – even shapes as frail and fantastical as the previous chapter's mask from New Ireland [see 14] – could be given a lasting existence. Sumerian smiths became adept at these types of effect, using metal mined in the nearby Iranian mountains, but we could equally look for them in the opposite direction. The ritual axe-head shown here [30] comes from western Central Asia, what is now Turkmenistan, and dates from somewhere around 2000 BCE. Its silver was all cast in a single piece, except for the dragon's tail and the wiring that would have helped tie it to a wooden haft. A collar was left for the insertion of a twin-headed eagle of gold, and elsewhere patches of gold leaf bounce off colour against colour, each burnished and chased to the limit of virtuosity.



30 Shaft-hole axe-head with bird-headed demon, boar and dragon; silver and gold, from Turkmenistan, c. 2000 bce. The vanished civilization from which this object sprang was rediscovered during the 1970s by the Soviet researcher Victor Sarianidi. With a rigorous avoidance of romance, archaeologists have labelled it 'BMAC' – that is, the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex, those being two ancient names for regions of Central Asia. More speculative minds have linked the traces of imagery and ritual left at the BMAC sites to references in the *Vedas*, the ancient hymns of India, and to the Zoroastrian religion of Persia, which is likewise of unknown antiquity.

Some leader, presumably, would have brandished this extravagant proclamation of power; his citadel would have overlooked the farmlands that petered out where rivers flowing from the Afghan mountains vanished into the Karakum Desert. The names involved have also vanished. This civilization has only recently been rediscovered.

With this object, we have already come a great distance from the aesthetized axe that began this book, and it seems like a journey deep into strangeness. Arguably, that's what drove people on when they experimented with new materials, new shapes and technologies – in essence, a longing to amaze themselves. This bizarre and distant gallimaufry might then point the way to today's dazzling spectacles of digital imaging and virtual reality. Certainly in Central Asia (as in Peru) the imagery of composite phantasms to which ancient artists liked to lend muscle was accompanied by a culture of drug-taking, since remains of opiates have been found in the region's temples. How exactly this would have overlapped with the religious and political



31 *Yu*, Shang dynasty bronze ritual vessel, c. 1050 bce. A priest-king of Shang dynasty China would have carried this wildly encrusted tiger bucket at temple banquets held to honour his ancestors. It would join him in the tomb when he died, and thus he could still keep up his obeisances to his seniors during the afterlife. A deer perches on the tiger's back: behind, the beast rests on his tail.

meanings this imagery had in Iraq and Egypt we don't know. Twin heads and twin adversaries suggest that the eagle-man embodies surveillance and balance, dealing on his left with a boar like those carved long before and some way to the west at Göbekli Tepe (see p. 22).

The dragon on his right has a distant eastern cousin in the beast that winds round the flank of a still more extravagant artefact from Anyang in China [31]. During the era in question, however, with five thousand kilometres (three thousand miles) of inhospitable mountain and desert separating the two foundries involved, the only level on which we can confidently trace the dragons' common ancestry is in the deep habits of the human imagination. Only the most indirect route, via the steppe grasslands far to the north of either civilization, connected the trade networks of south-western Asia to the Huang-he and the Yangzi, China's great eastward-winding river valleys. Whether the physical techniques at work were transmitted along this route remains uncertain. The smelting of copper with tin ores to make the much tougher alloy called bronze seems to have started up in one way in Iran and Iraq around 2800 BCE and to have taken a rather different form in China about a millennium later. From that time on, at all events, bronze grew to be *the* elite material for rulers in the various states between and around the river valleys. At Anyang, in the north, these were the Shang, later regarded as a precursor dynasty to the emperors of a united China. They ruled through their performance of rites – without the priest/king distinction that bothered Iraq – and objects to help them do so properly were the main forms into which artistry poured. The more hierarchical subdivisions that could be incorporated into the vessel, and the more spirals of transformation and dragons of wild energy with which its bronze could be engraved, the more it and its users would be empowered. This much, at least, seems evident. So does the mastery with which such visual complexity has been organized, in this *yu* or ritual bucket of around 1050 BCE. Harder to read is the vessel's code of mythic meanings – in particular, that big forlorn face staring up from under the tiger's jaw. He may stand for the sun, undergoing eclipse, but he also seems poignantly human – half fearful, half cleaving to some implacable fate. Large, overriding patterns of time and change, often marked out by special omens, were already an important factor in Chinese thinking. Three or four centuries later they would be summarized in book form in the philosophic oracle of the *I Ching*.

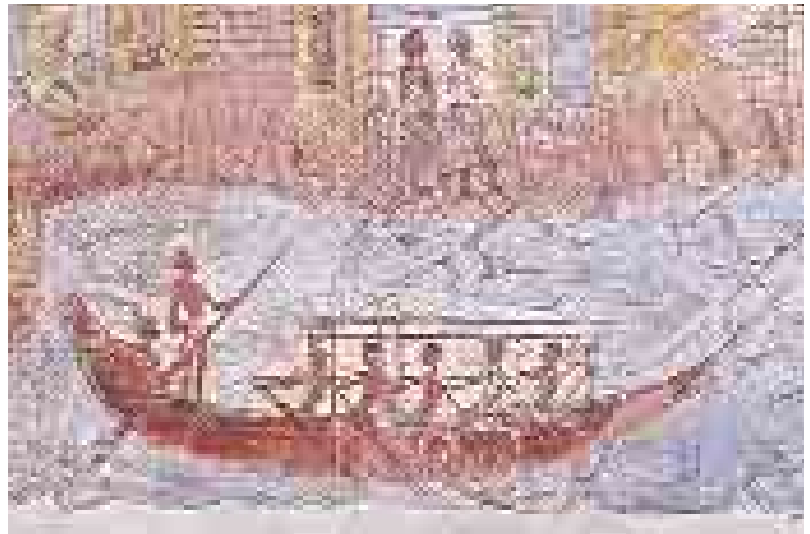
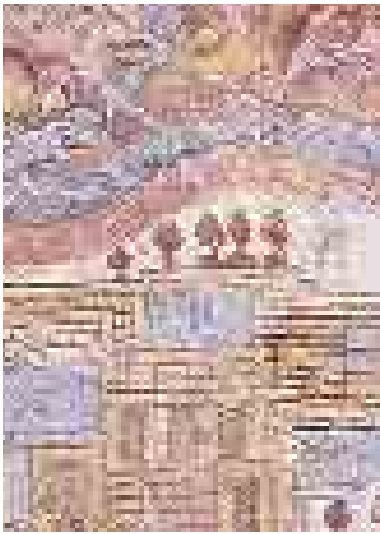
Bronze was not only excellent for ritual but, with its hardness, excellent for cutting up things and people. It had such a technological impact that the period after it was introduced, and before the yet tougher steel came in, is often called 'the Bronze Age'. The dates for this historical category, like those of the preceding Neolithic or 'new stone' age, jump around from region to region. Even if we return to south-west Asia, to apply 'Bronze Age' to everything

that happened between 2800 and 1000 BCE would be to gloss over some rather considerable changes. For a start, from around 2200 BCE civilizations in these parts started to backpedal. After the megalomaniac Naram-sin, the Akkadian empire soon fizzled out and its successors, a neo-Sumerian regime best known for its king Gudea and then another upriver Semitic dynasty based at Babylon, proved more aesthetically conservative. Meanwhile in Egypt the ‘Old Kingdom’ fell apart and a century of political confusion ensued before further dynasties began to restore stability. Climate changes – a prolonged drought – probably contributed to these disruptions, sending many people away from city-dwelling into herding. Large-scale settlements in the Indus regions and in Central Asia seem simply to have been abandoned altogether by around 1800 BCE.

Another factor accelerating change was the new technology of the horse-drawn chariot, then spreading across Eurasia from the steppes around Russia’s Ural mountains towards Iraq and Egypt. As it arrived in that area of the world, it sped up competitions for power, turning regimes keen on precedent and propriety into military empires. During these centuries, the most striking variations on the familiar models for art emerged on this region’s north-western periphery, among islands in the Aegean Sea that were beyond the reach of the mounted invaders. People on Crete – the so-called ‘Minoans’ – and then in the Cyclades to its north took to sea-trading and town-dwelling on a large scale, as an extract from a mural on the Cycladic island of Thera seems to show [32–36]. The original painting is less than

32–36 (below and overleaf) ‘Flotilla’ fresco from Akrotiri, Thera, Greece, c. 1550 bce. The specifics of the imagery are open to interpretation, but seemingly this is a scene of contemporary life as it appeared to a visual poet living on an island in the Bronze Age Aegean. The spirit here compares with that of the much earlier rock paintings from Tassili in the Sahara (see 10). This is another vision of a humanity at ease with its environment, and though the frieze is bounded above and below, the figures seem innocent participants in a world free of constraints.





twice this book's height, but ten times that in length, and once stretched across a wall inside some merchant's house at the site of Akrotiri, with more such scenes going on round the room. From the island town that you observe, a flotilla rows across open sea to a further port at the right-hand end. Well-dressed types are sitting in the boats, and town-dwellers are watching from the rooftops; quite likely this was some annual rite with which the merchants solemnized their dealings with the sea. Two people are conversing across a river-mouth, while in the mountains above a lion chases deer; and out to sea dolphins are darting.

In the centuries around 1600 BCE, painters were also conjuring up vistas of serenity inside Egyptian tombs, and indeed that glamorous unearthlike blue is a pigment imported from Egypt. There, the brush-drawing, the patterning of colours and the deployment of washes over white plaster could be equally deft and calligraphic. But there was nothing quite like this loping, loose, wandering-and-wondering bird's-eye flight above the world, redreaming it. The Egyptians' canonical rulebook was replaced in Aegean painting by a love for meanders and little hooks for the eye – curlicues, illusionistic ribbons, pretty women and youths. There was equally little sign of the hierarchies and triumphalism that appeared among cultures to the south and to the east. It all seems to cater almost perfectly to modern tourist fantasies of some hedonistic bourgeois paradise. Too perfectly, perhaps? When the archaeologist Arthur Evans uncovered the ruins of the Cretan palace of Knossos in 1902 he liberally repainted the gaps between the plaster fragments along the lines of the currently fashionable European style, Art Nouveau (see p. 368). The images from Akrotiri seem more trustworthy because when Spyridon Marinatos started digging in 1967, he was bringing a more scientific, if rather less creative, spirit to a veritable time capsule – a town that had been suddenly

smothered by the dust of a volcanic eruption not long after the painting had been made. Following that disaster, other Aegean cities would be overrun by warriors from the European mainland, now known as the Mycenaeans. They would take up the existing imagery and techniques but lend them a more martial tinge.

The work of Aegean painters has been found also across the Mediterranean at a palace in Egypt. Familiarity with different cultures was one factor changing the outlook of a once self-contained, now imperialistic nation. Another was the growth of philosophizing – teachers and writers trying to reflect on and synthesize all available modes of thought. During the 18th Dynasty, midway through the so-called ‘New Kingdom’ (the four centuries from c. 1550 BCE), the son of the conquering pharaoh Amenhotep III took to such speculation full-heartedly. He changed his name from Amenhotep to Akhenaten to indicate his disregard for the deities around him and his devotion instead to a single, transcendent sun-god, Aten. He changed the nation’s capital, building a city at a new site now known as Amarna. Here he set about changing the nation’s imagery too. He instructed one of his leading sculptors, Bek, to represent all things ‘in *maat*’.

What is *maat*? Well, here is a panel [37] that was probably executed in Bek’s workshop, in the ‘sunk relief’ technique that Egyptian carvers specialized in. It shows Akhenaten, his wife Nefertiti and three of their daughters gathered under Aten’s beneficent rays. It makes me cringe. It is rather like



37 Bek, relief of Akhenaten and family, c. 1375 bce. This relief, which was originally painted, stood in front of an altar at Amarna, Akhenaten’s new capital for Egypt. With its lively details (the little child tugging at her mother’s ear, for instance), it might have offered viewers a kind of substitute for the Amarna palace window at which the royal family would appear in person.



watching the British royal family appear on a celebrity game show, or – to return to our earlier examples – it’s as if Menkaure were condescendingly playing at being Seneb, laying claim to an equal vulnerability. I suppose that some lingering royalist spark inside me, wanting kings to be kings, must choke on the panel’s pathetically demeaning saccharine touchy-feeliness. Why introduce it, then? Intriguingly awful art (not a scientific category, but one for which we can probably all find candidates) affords a specialist pleasure to art historians, and this book isn’t really the place to indulge it. But my point is to suggest how complicated the facts and feelings involved in art have already become, over three thousand years before modern culture ever started talking about ‘sentimentality’ and ‘kitsch’.

The *maat* that Akhenaten demanded from images is sometimes translated as ‘truth’. That would make him some kind of realist, intent on getting away from Egyptian ‘stereotypes’ and letting the world know what a frail and gawky body he possessed. Despite the respect Egyptians may have had for the physically unusual, what kind of respect for ‘truth’ would have obliged his sculptors to fit all the figures around him into the same spindly, androgynous straitjacket? I don’t think it adds up: I don’t think Bek was working from nature. Another translation for *maat* might be ‘right order’. Quite possibly, like many another revolutionary, Akhenaten may have thought he was getting back to some *original* way that things should have been – which entailed visualizing what human bodies might have been like before gender and emotional reserve compartmentalized and complicated our lives. But we can’t be sure, and it’s too late to interview him.

What is fairly certain is that, over in another studio of Akhenaten’s Amarna, his sculptor Thutmose would also have respected some principle like *maat*. Thutmose’s portrait of Nefertiti [38] catches my feelings in quite the opposite way to Bek’s. I don’t, in honesty, just tell myself ‘*It is beautiful*’; I tell myself ‘*She is beautiful*.’ Of course, little tricks of craftsmanlike magic assist the life-size block of painted limestone in prompting that reaction, for instance its glittering right eyeball of copper and quartz. (When excavators discovered her in 1912, mysteriously abandoned in a sculpture storeroom for spare heads, her other eye was found to be missing.) But behind those naturalistic effects lie much the same instincts for sinuous elongation and for closed, completed visual rhymes that underlie Bek’s panel – far more cunningly and tactfully applied, without doubt. *Maat*, let us say, is some insidious, invisible regulator, tugging slyly at appearances; something indefinable, something subtler than rulebook geometry. It had always been latently present, but in a context like Amarna’s – programmatic, controversial, innovatory – it started blatantly to make itself felt. Already, this tradition had got itself hooked on the tension between nature and *the ideal*.

38 Bust of Nefertiti by Thutmose, painted limestone, c. 1340 bce. It was Mohammed Ahmes es-Senussi who first caught sight of the paint on her necklace, emerging beneath his spade after three thousand plus years, on 6 December 1912. His cry of surprise roused Ludwig Borchardt, director of the excavation, who hurried up from his siesta to help free her from the debris. Borchardt made sure that this particular find went back with him to Germany rather than to the authorities in Egypt. After she was put on show in Berlin in 1923, Thutmose’s masterpiece did as much as any contemporary work of art to crystallize 20th-century Western ideas of feminine beauty.

Full circle

Mexico, 1200–800 BCE

With that pair of terms, we arrive at a certain narrowed-down characterization of what ‘civilized’ art might be about, and maybe at a way to place certain feelings about it, whether positive or negative, within a familiar historical tradition. But art comes before civilizations, and there may not be anything inevitable or permanent about the latter. After Akhenaten’s reign, complex societies in western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean once again began to collapse. His radical ideology was swiftly abandoned by his short-lived successor Tutankhamun (he of the famous golden tomb), and afterwards Ramesses II returned to a policy of conservative military triumphalism, erecting some of the nation’s most imposing monuments. But Egypt’s New Kingdom would eventually fall apart in a prolonged period of turmoil that ravaged Iraq, Syria and what is now Turkey and Greece, bringing an end to the Mycenaean kingdoms. The causes of this ‘Dark Age’ around 1000 BCE have been traced to the arrival of iron weapons, which disrupted the military balance among the big empires. The initiative tended to pass to smaller political entities.

We could also switch the historical perspective round to their viewpoint. After all, villages and tribes come before cities and states in history, as a rule: the smaller unit initially feeds the larger, rather than vice versa. Creative innovations may often have occurred in that manner too. For instance, many archaeologists see the giant stone monuments of San Lorenzo as being less significant for the course of subsequent Mexican art than the local pottery of villagers spread far and wide across the valleys of Mesoamerica. It seems very likely that, then as now, pottery was an art practised in this region mainly by women. It produced an exuberant variety of figural inventions in handcoiled clay, solemn, gross, refined, austere. From the goods left to accompany a buried shaman at the site of Tlatilco, now swallowed up inside the Mexico City conurbation, comes a vessel in the form of an acrobat [39]. With its flows of volume around a rollicking visual conceit and its neatly abbreviated half-leg half-spout, the acrobat-bottle could hold its own against art of much more grandiose pretensions. *It*, in its way, is distinctly beautiful.

He, some might say, is not. But maybe in the ancient American tradition represented by this piece a figure is something quite other than the solid block miraculously brought to life that might represent their ideal. Here, persons are indeed clay vessels – wavery and hollow receptacles, transiently filled with vitality, energy, emotion, blood. There is nothing of the stone-like eternal to them, yet the potter may seize on startling metaphors for their metamorphoses. Thutmose, sculptor of Nefertiti, had little to say that could touch on that, for all his idealizing.



39 Anthropomorphic bottle from Tlatilco, Mexico, 1200–800 bce. Much art in ancient Mexico imagines the extreme states that the human body might experience – for instance acrobats’ contortions (as here), tortures performed on enemies, death or childbirth (see **134**).

This circling bottle has been dated to the centuries around 1000 BCE, contemporary not only with our opening Olmec head, but also with those big political disruptions occurring around the eastern Mediterranean. For a moment, both wheels of this story’s chronology are running more or less together. We can roll into a new millennium.



CLASSICAL NORMS

Suggestions and declarations

Northern Asia, Syria, Iraq, 800–600 BCE

It sat on the breast of a nomad chieftain's horse, a harness attachment in bronze the size of a dinner plate [40]. When the chieftain died, his horses were slaughtered and their carcasses laid around him inside a great burial mound, a *kurgan*. This happened some time around 750 BCE in the land of Tuva. Now a republic within the Russian Federation, Tuva lies between the forests of Siberia to the north and the mountains and deserts of Mongolia to the south, part of the long corridor of grasslands or 'steppes' that stretches from China to Eastern Europe. Along this corridor, ideas and techniques moved east and west together with the horseriders and their grazing flocks and herds. It may have been along this route that bronze-casting first travelled from the farming civilizations of Central Asia to those of China. It may have been from China that the nomad artist had picked up his symbolism – the beast that would devour itself, a thought that could stand for the rotating of the seasons or indeed for the nature of time. The harness roundel gave that sophisticated paradox the form of the prime local predator, the snow leopard. It stands at the beginning of a tradition in which the steppe nomads would create emblems of power based on familiar fauna – stags, goats, camels and eagles in tightly wound rhythms of bronze and of gold. What has been called the 'animal style' would later influence and merge with the more abstract styles used by the tribes of Northern Europe, and even at this point there seems a stylistic sympathy – across two thousand years and six thousand kilometres – between the leopard's springy spiral and the whorls of the Scottish stone ball we saw at the end of Chapter 1.

The nomad tribes of the steppes were generally called by the people to their south the *Saka* or the Scythians. Cultures such as theirs are one aspect of the emerging historical situation in the centuries following 1000 BCE – a time sometimes known as the 'Iron Age', since a new, harder-to-smelt metal was beginning to affect technology and warfare. By this period, we can no longer think simply in terms of self-contained 'primary' civilizations. More and more, art history will be bound up in the interplay between big and small, between fixed centres of power and mobile intermediaries, between works that feel like commanding declarations and others that are more like

40 Coiled panther plaque, Scythian bronze, from Tuva, Russia, c. 750 bce.

conversational suggestions. The objects this chapter will look at range from a mighty state temple to a trouser leg. To negotiate this many-levelled interplay, I shall temporarily ignore large swathes of the globe and keep the focus fixed instead on Asia and the Mediterranean region. Historical luck steers this selective policy. It was in these areas, during the following millennium, that styles took root which still have a worldwide cultural authority today – the traditions that we now call ‘classical’.

In global terms, the Scythian nomads might be seen as a fringe subculture, devising a sophisticated and distinctive variant on the art being made in the bigger states to their south. There were insider subcultures too. The collapse of the big empires of Egypt and south-west Asia during the centuries around 1000 BCE allowed other, smaller political entities to emerge between the old centres of power. The cities of Syria and Phoenicia – nowadays the Lebanon’s Mediterranean coast – had long acted as middlemen in trade and at this point, with a freer hand to steer the market, their workshops became leading purveyors of luxury wares. Some of the region’s cultural flavour around 800 BCE lingers in a hand-sized fragment probably broken off the top of a local ruler’s throne [41]. It crystallizes some forgotten legend as if it were steeping a fruit in sugar. With this languorous lioness, enfolding the pretty young African prince with the gold-striped pants in her vampire embrace, we enter a new zone of taste, the genteelly erotic and the ever so slightly camp. Around them a swaying thicket of lilies and papyrus weaves an ambience of sumptuous ornament. Papyrus was a plant growing in Egypt, and the boy seems by his looks to come from Nubia, the lands higher up the Nile; the sole source for the lapis lazuli of the lilies lay in Afghanistan, while the ivory in which they were set – the supreme material for delicate small-scale carving – may well have been imported from India, since by now Syria had probably exterminated its local elephant population for the sake of art. Only three of the florets of red carnelian that capped this eclectic fusion are still in place, but they suggest the love of glowing, intricately patterned colour that had become entrenched in south-west Asia. The Phoenicians were also masters of the originally Egyptian technique of glass-making and shipped bottles of rippling blue and yellow to their western colonies in North Africa, Sicily, Sardinia and Spain.

The furniture to which the carving belonged, however, went east. It was taken, probably as war booty, to an Assyrian palace at Nimrud, by the river Tigris in northern Iraq. Small states, like those in Syria and Phoenicia, create opportunities for systematic military bullies, and in the centuries after 880 BCE Assyria was rising up to become the dominant power in the region. It’s an empire that gets a particularly bad press from the Bible, a book produced by some of its other victims – the Israelites, living inland to the south of Syria.

41 Inlaid ivory panel of a lioness devouring a boy, Phoenician work from Nimrud, c. 750 bce. The ancient cultures of Phoenicia (the Lebanon) and Syria have been remembered chiefly through references in Hebrew and Greek literature. These had been the people who invented the alphabet, whose ships traded with distant Britain, and who circumnavigated Africa. Remains of their visual achievements are relatively few, for the reason that their cities were systematically erased by conquerors—firstly the Assyrians, then the Greeks under Alexander, and finally the Romans, who destroyed the Phoenicians’ North African base of Carthage.



This small nation was gradually staking out a unique set of cultural principles in which imagery was wholly rejected and writings became the main place to seek the divine. But while the Israelites’ disagreement with all the cultures around them may have been sharpened by bad experiences at the hands of the Assyrians, their adversaries were also a Semitic-speaking people with an intensely literary culture. Assyrian kings collated writings stretching back to the Sumerian *Gilgamesh* not only in their libraries, but also in the reliefs flanking their palace walls, revived and expanded on the descriptive ambitions of Naram-sin fourteen hundred years before [see 28, 29]. Many offer exhaustively detailed histories of military campaigns set in panoramic landscapes, straining at the ways in which stories and spaces had previously been represented.

In his palace at Nineveh, Ashurbanipal, erudite bibliophile and genocidal conqueror, had stone panels carved and (in their own day, back around 640 BCE) painted to record his ritual shootings of lions and wild asses [42]. They vie with the most striking passages of Old Testament storytelling in the pacing of their sequences, their sense of the snatched and sudden and random,



42 Assyrian relief of asses in flight, from Nineveh, Iraq, c. 640 bce. Asses flee volleys launched from a chariot by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in a ceremonial cull. Working among court historians and poets, Assyrian artists developed a narrative art of unprecedented resourcefulness and descriptive precision. The springy spacing of outlines opens up a controlled chaos and an innovative quality of pictorial space.

and in their appeal to the emotions, with the difference that the tragic protagonists are animals. The royal archer (just out of view) is by contrast impervious and impersonal. The ass shot just as the hounds catch up, the fleeing mare turning desperate for her foal, and the victims crashing before and behind – all these tug at our heartstrings by tugging at our sense of realism. Frame by frame in photographs asses don't move that way, yet it is hard to believe that these actions have not been closely studied from life.



Nineveh and Nimrud were torched when a downriver alliance led by Babylon overthrew the Assyrians in 612 BCE. Seventy years later power shifted further east when a new superstate, the Persian empire based in Iran, overthrew Babylon. The throne ornament ended up at the bottom of a well, while the Phoenician culture that it recalls had moved west across the Mediterranean, transferring its headquarters to the North African city of Carthage and transmitting its new high-speed writing system, the alphabet, to Greece.

‘Man’ and ‘Art’

Greece, Iran, 650–330 BCE

Greece is a name for the homelands of people who spoke similar languages and agreed to call one another *Hellenes*. No such community is to be found in the Aegean region back in the days of the Minoans and Mycenaeans, but it grew up through the ‘dark’ centuries of depopulation following the Mycenaeans’ downfall. During that time, invaders from the European land-mass to the north fed into the area’s ethnic mix. The arrival of the alphabet around 730 BCE enabled the resulting loose community, which was starting to flourish, to record its chief shared narrative – the *Iliad*, a tale of many tribes gathering to besiege the city of Troy in the north-east Aegean, helped and hindered by their gods. Like Melanesia, the lands occupied by the Greeks (as the Romans would call the Hellenes) were broken up by irregular barriers of seas and mountains, setting them apart. An independent local power unit, the city-state known as the *polis*, had become the regional norm by 776 BCE, when the first Panhellenic – ‘all-Greek’ – Games were convened at Olympia.

As with Melanesia, fractured geography and fractured politics may also have encouraged people to compete in showing off their artistry. But as the Greek *poleis* grew rich on trade and followed the Phoenicians in planting overseas colonies, competition revolved round quoting the artistic manners of their neighbours to the east. The designs painted on early Greek pottery are strongly linear and abstracted, and seem dictated by the European tribal origins of the area’s ‘Dark Age’ invaders; then, from around 700 BCE, this hardline ‘geometric’ style yielded to a more sinuous ‘orientalizing’ one, with ports like Corinth and Rhodes vying to capture the international market in sumptuous luxury items. The *poleis*, meanwhile, were upgrading their own ritual statuary with an eye to the older and grander civilizations. This life-size figure [43] from Attica, the region round Athens, is a fine example. It was carved somewhere around 590 BCE, out of marble – a locally available material that had scarcely been used since the days of the Cycladic carvers two millennia before. To judge from the way the block has been carved from four distinct faces, giving the figure sharply distinct front and side aspects, and from its precisely obeyed canon of proportion and its overall stance, the statue seems to follow the example set just as long ago by the Egyptian sculptors of the pharaoh Menkaure [see 26].

The Greek sculpture has the same implacable, blithe certitude, the same aura of striding into our secularized world from quite another spiritual plane. The obvious difference is that this figure is naked. In Egypt, one particular man, the pharaoh, is divine. In Greece, *man* is: a general idea, divested of clothing and circumstance. Let us retrace the thinking involved. In ancient

43 Archaic kouros from Attica, Greece, c. 590 bce.



cultures gods are powers who make all things happen and whom we need to address. They may enter into an object we make if we give it an appropriate face – the face of the god’s personal animal, very often. Myths bind these divine persons together in stories involving human emotions. The whole premises of this arrangement started to slither, however, when the *Iliad* and the other poem assigned to Homer, the *Odyssey*, boldly played with myth so as to portray a world controlled by a horny, peevish, squabbling gaggle of shining super-beings. If gods could resemble mortals, why not vice versa? Might there not be a power or principle inherent in humanity itself? It was this blurry frontier between increasingly fluid categories that the minimal nudity of the statue from Attica bestrode – although a distinctive ancient Greek enthusiasm for fit male bodies, and indeed for male–male sex, was certainly also involved. This type of statue, popular for over a century from around 630 BCE, is known as a *kouros* (‘youth’). It could represent the god Apollo and it could represent the memory of some youth killed in battle, whose family had commissioned it: either, both, there’s no saying.

44 ‘Kritios Boy’, Greece, c. 480 bce.



Even allowing for fluid thinking, how do we get from that kouros to this [44], the so-called ‘Kritios Boy’* of c. 480 BCE, in little over a hundred years? There, marble is spiritually charged, yet still it feels like marble: here, it feels like an actual living person. This transition is known by art historians as the switch from ‘Archaic’ to ‘Classical’. Its worldwide influence remains enormous. Another retrospective label for the new principle in sculpture might be ‘the imitation of nature’. But that term needs qualifying. As we’ve already seen, artists in all kinds of cultures have brilliantly imitated the look of flesh or the feel of lively, moving bodies. To obtain startling resemblances was one of the feats at which Greek artists competed, and certainly this competition spurred the fast pace of change. What was unprecedented was the strategy they adopted. Actually, the earlier kouros offers a pointer towards it. Its schematic lines dividing chest from diaphragm and torso from limbs suggest that the sculptor was interested in *analysing* the different parts that make up a human body.

Intriguingly for historians, the period between 600 and 400 BCE saw the arrival of new styles of philosophical reasoning in several widely separated cultures – not only in Greece, but in India and China. Only in Greece, however, did critical arguments about the relationship between appearance and reality translate into a thoroughgoing analytical breakdown of what the eyes are looking at when they inspect a body. Behind the skin lies the muscles, and behind the muscles the bones – three levels of reality, their transitions eased by fat and blood and decorated with hair. The Kritios Boy turns that

* The nickname, as sometimes happens in art scholarship, comes from a complicated chain of reasoning that now seems obsolete.

subtly interlocking complex into an individual, for its sculptor also indicated that an interior consciousness is the pivot of the whole system – a reflectiveness that slightly turns the sculpture’s head, as if it were alert to the world around it. It is – *he* is – a fully rounded being.

That is the conceptual logic of the artistic revolution that had been speeding forward in Athens in the decades preceding this ‘Early Classical’ sculpture (a period label by which art historians point to the lingering firmness and severity of carving between the 480s and 450s, soon to disappear). The technical logic is in some ways harder to retrace. Rethinking the human body as a multi-level system becomes easier if you leave aside your block of marble and work with flesh-like clay on an armature of bone-like sticks. You can then cast the results in expensive, glamorous bronze. That is what many Athenian sculptors were doing during the decades in question, but later generations reckoned the bronze was worth more than the art, and nearly all such pieces have been melted down. The less easily recyclable marble statues may have been ‘imitating’ the art of the bronze-worker as much as they imitated ‘nature’; and, indeed, their own alluring whiteness is deceptive, since originally paint would have covered it. Painting was another art that by all written accounts was going through rapid transformations, but of these nothing major survives.

Instead we are left with the small-scale but lively products of hundreds of pottery workshops, where painters adorned ‘vases’ (any type of pot, in this context) with scenes ranging from Homeric myth to humorous erotica. Luxury ceramics was a major business in several Greek cities, its growth no doubt accelerated by the recent regional innovation of a money-based economy. Art historians don’t know the real name of whoever painted this roundel [45] in the centre of a broad drinking cup, a kylix, but they know, by checking small giveaway details of draughtsmanship, that he tried on at least one vase to forge the signature of his more famous Athenian contemporary Douris. By 480 BCE, reputations had become valuable currency. The kylix’s outermost ring repeats the already ancient ‘Greek pattern’ that connects the vase tradition ancestrally to the prehistoric symbolisms we saw in Chapter 1 (see p. 27). Its innermost disc shows the mythical winged horse Pegasus, painted in the technique that Athenians of a former generation had excelled in – ‘black-figure’ work, over the red of the clay. But from 530 painters started reversing the practice: the main image shows off their new ‘red-figure’ technique, fusing fine action draughtsmanship with a controlling sense of decoration. There’s an arch wit about the central placing of the shield, half-detaching it from the design. In the restless intellectual and commercial environment of Athens, ‘art’ was becoming a self-conscious affair, a talking community busy reviewing and criticizing its own specialized interests, half-detached from the tasks it was paid to perform.

45 Triptolemos Painter, kylix showing fight between Greek and Persian soldiers, c. 480 bce. A 'kylix' was a broad shallow drinking cup, and a scene like this, painted inside its bowl, would be gradually revealed as an Athenian banqueter drained his wine. Other important types of Greek vase were the 'krater', or mixing bowl, with a scene running round its exterior; the 'oinochoe', or wine jug, with a framed scene painted on the swell of its body; and the 'lekythos', a tall narrow oil jar often used in funeral ceremonies and thus bearing imagery of a more sombre character. In Classical Athens, vase painting was a dynamic competitive scene in which elegance, wit and a refined line were highly prized; in these respects this small-scale urban art bears a certain resemblance to *ukiyo-e*, the printmaking of 18th-century Japan (see Chapters 8 and 9).



This kylix of 480 BCE also had a topical interest. That collapsing figure about to meet his doom from a hoplite's sabre represents the invader that the Greeks, led by Athens, had just beaten off – to their own surprise and delight. His cap comes from Phrygia, in present-day Turkey; his clothes and bowcase from the wide-roving, mercenary Scythians; he is altogether an easterner, representing the 'million-strong' army of Persia. From Turkey and Bulgaria ('Thrace') to Egypt, through Iraq to the borders of India, a single vast Persian empire now stretched. Its heartland lay in the central plateau of present-day Iran: a secure zone of prosperity and order, where the distant military setbacks at the battles of Marathon (490 BCE) and Salamis (480 BCE) would have meant fairly little. The emperor Khshayarsha (or Xerxes) continued to employ *Yauna* (Greek) workmen to execute reliefs [46] for the imperial palace at Parsa (Persepolis), just as his father had when he started the project in 519 BCE. The multinational workforce camped around this rocky foothill was serving a United Nations-style ideology. The dignitaries here are Persians, but 'every kind of people' (as the phrasing had it) appeared in the friezes flanking the palace's stairs and lofty halls, each with their own distinctive attire, each bringing their local offerings up to the serene light of truth, justice and imperial rule. Inseparable qualities, evidently: although the Persians designed with the precision of the Assyrians before them, their art

had none of the aggression and realist angst displayed in Ashurbanipal's lion reliefs. Instead, all was becalmed and idealized. Multiplication ruled. A crisp and exquisitely polished artifice sets the long ranks of half life-size figures apart in an alternative dream-world, from which some of them playfully ghost the viewer's footsteps.

Whether returning *Yaunas* brought word of 'Persepolis', as they called the palace, back to the stone-yards of Athens we don't know. But by the 440s naval dominance over the Aegean had given Athens an imperial self-consciousness of its own. Its leader, Perikles, decided it was time to cap the Akropolis – the rock overlooking the city – with a grandiose temple to replace the shrine burnt by the Persian invaders of 490 BCE. He commissioned the builder-cum-sculptor Pheidias to design a temple to the city's protector, Athena. The Parthenon – that is, the shrine for the 'virgin' goddess – became an architectural marriage between Greece's hardline, warrior-like 'Doric' tradition and the culture's more flowing, curvilinear instincts – the 'Ionic'. Its corner columns were cunningly made broader than their neighbours so that they seemed to hold their size against the sunlit sky; allowance for optical distortions and for what we would now call 'perspective' effects was a recent sophistication in this man-centred, critical and analytical art world. This principle did not extend, however, to a frieze running round the outer walls of the hall inside, for its details would have lurked in shadows in the eaves 9 metres (30 feet) above the floor. And yet this frieze [47], presently scattered across Europe, is the most substantial image that remains from the now shattered monument to Athenian authority.

It shows troupes from the city's wards making their way to an annual holy festival. They are well dressed, handsome, young; they are the *polis* in the form of an idealized citizenry. Their horses, in this section of the long running

46 A staircase relief of satraps from the Council Hall at Persepolis, Iran, c. 470 bce. A 'satrap' was a governor of a province of the Persian empire, collecting taxes for the divinely appointed monarch and charged with the improvement of roads. On other Persepolis reliefs, we see the subject peoples themselves, stepping equally steadily into the light of imperial authority. An imagery of lions grappling with bulls also punctuates the palace halls, but its violence is checked by the extreme finesse with which the dense black limestone has been engraved and buffed. The massive ceremonial complex delivers its effects by accumulation and by a consistency of immaculate workmanship.





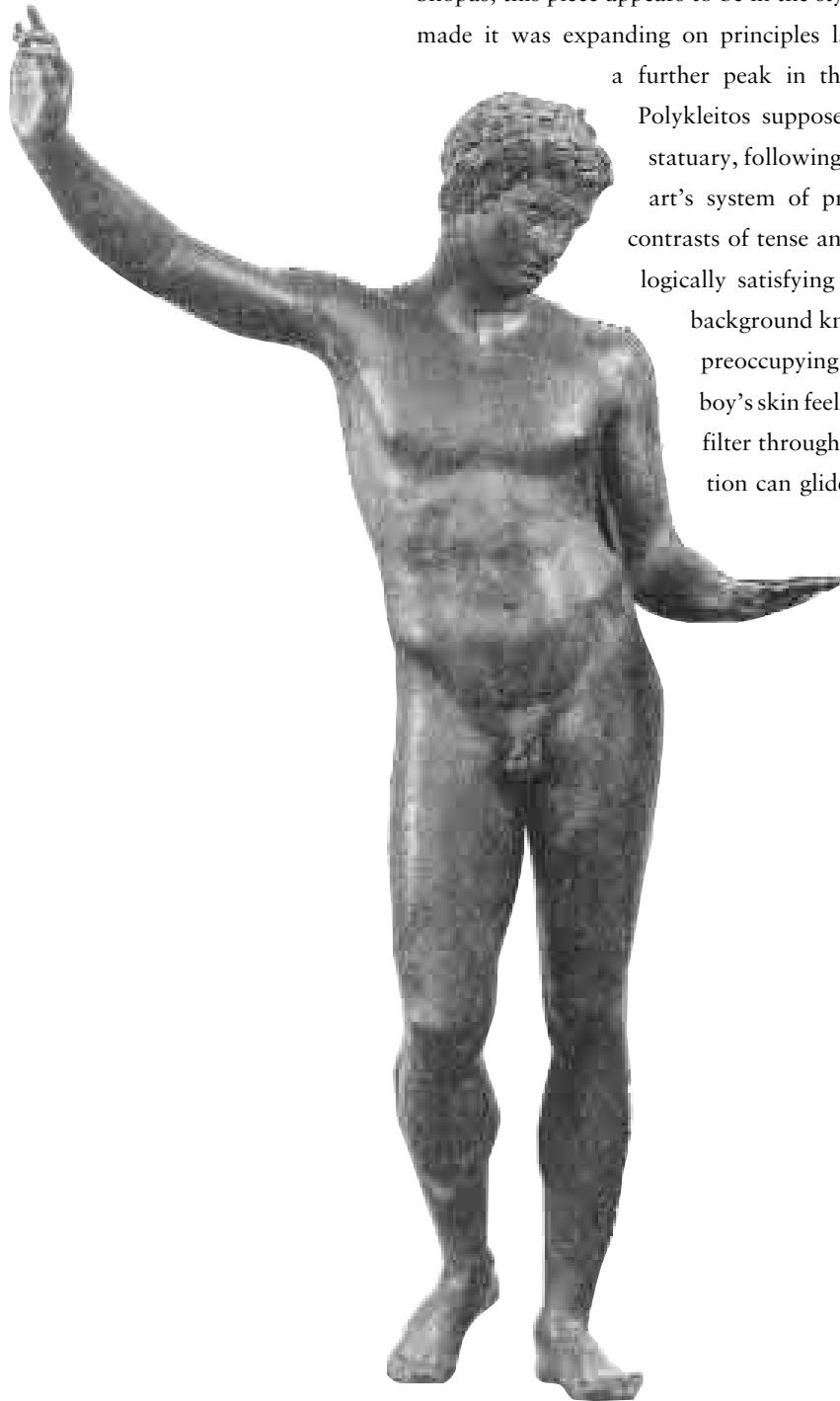
47 A section of the Parthenon frieze showing riders to the Panathenaia, 447–432 bce.

strip, have taken to prancing and almost bucking; but with a mild, steady demeanour the riders control them, for energy, in this culture's values, must finally submit to reason. The whole surge of muscle and drapery is controlled by contours – the rippling clean lines, at once descriptive and decorative, that were already making Greek art internationally exportable (moreover, proud of itself). Whether or not the Parthenon was meant as a political riposte to Parsa, whatever arguments can be advanced for Perikles and his slave-owning 'democracy' as opposed to Khshayarsha and his slave-owning 'autocracy', Athenian writers were already honing a vocabulary that contrasted 'oriental' or 'Asian' and 'African' cultures – their forebears across the seas – with those of 'Europe' on their own shore. The two sets of reliefs suggest some of the oppositions that have fuelled that argument to this day. '*And ... and ... and ...*': that's how the Persian figures are linked, mesmerically or, arguably, monotonously. '*Behind which ... however ... not to mention ...*': so go the Parthenon conjunctions, setting up what Greek artists would term 'rhythm' and what others might think forced rhetoric.

The Parthenon was completed in 427 BCE, by which time Athens was deep in a war it eventually lost to its rival, Sparta. Yet although Athens was diminished politically, as a centre for cultural innovation it continued to expand. A glimpse of the extraordinary range of effects opened up in its studios can be gained from two works created a century later. One is a tombstone slab [48], later rediscovered in a riverbed. Even when ripped from the monument that once enclosed them, the meditations of its sculptor still strike at the heart, sombre and eerie. Just what are the dead? On what plane does the battle-slain hero now exist? There he seems to stand, a man passed over into the better-than-nature, 'the ideal' – and yet, is that to say any more than that he is *not* among us, he is an emptiness that sucks at our thoughts? The bereaved father exudes the steady, all-seeing dismay that runs through

48 (opposite) Grave relief of a young hunter from the Ilissos River, c. 330 bce.

49 The 'Marathon Boy', bronze statue in the manner of Praxiteles, c. 330 bce.



Greek tragic drama. The child bent double and the sorrowing dog play up to the viewer's sympathies yet more directly.

While these figures claw vainly at what is gone, another piece from around 330 BCE, a bronze boy retrieved from the Aegean seabed near Marathon [49], charmingly holds up some unseen, agreeable offering. Drinks, perhaps? The tombstone seems to be in the style of one elusive 'Late Classical' celebrity, Skopas; this piece appears to be in the style of another, Praxiteles. Whoever made it was expanding on principles laid down ninety years earlier by

a further peak in the art-historical mist, Polykleitos.

Polykleitos supposedly created a canon for Greece's statuary, following that of Egypt – setting out the new art's system of proportion and laying down what contrasts of tense and relaxed limbs would make for a logically satisfying rhythm. But by 330 all that was

background knowledge and subtler nuances were preoccupying the arts community. The bronze boy's skin feels almost porous rather than firm – a filter through which the engaged viewer's attention can glide into a focusless reverie, far from

the tense, individual alertness of the Kritios marble. What was he intended for? Not for religion, surely. This work of art is a work made as *Art*.





Winds and mountains

Greece, India, Central Asia, China, 320 BCE–100 CE

In 330 BCE the Greek tradition, with its complex dynamics, was just about to enter into a wider relationship with the world beyond. Trade and coastal colonization had already generated vigorous overseas variations. To the north-west, the first city-builders of the Italian peninsula, the Etruscans, had been producing bronzes, ceramics and murals related to Greece's Archaic art for some four centuries before this. To the north-east, by the shores of the Black Sea, the realist aspects of Classical art got compressed by Scythian goldsmiths, who devised miniature scenes of tribal life among animals. The goldsmithing of nearer northern neighbours, the Thracians and the Macedonians, explored its ornamental possibilities. But in 338 BCE the latter of those kingdoms upturned the map: its ruler, Philip, established complete control over the divided Greek *poleis*. When Macedonian-and-Greek armies then went on, under his charismatic son Alexander, to conquer the whole of the former Persian empire, stretching out to Egypt, Central Asia and western India, Greek culture was suddenly broadcast across a vast and unfamiliar network. This step change, between 336 and 323 BCE, is seen as the end of Greece's 'Classical' and the beginning of its 'Hellenistic' phase. There are various ways we could put it in context.

One would be to start from the base already established within Greek territory. After Alexander's early death, his political empire was swiftly split up among squabbling heirs. What stayed and grew through the next three centuries – and what in a sense had given Alexander's legendary career its style and rhetoric – was the aura of lofty, indefinite dreaming that we have already seen in the Praxitelean bronze boy from Marathon. Alexander's favourite sculptor, Lysippos, spoke of representing men 'not as they *are*, but as they *appear*', and the range of seductive illusions that Greek art could now employ expanded in all directions. Sculpture and painting interacted with the development of theatrical stagecraft and of visual science – both themes reflected in the writings of Alexander's tutor, the philosopher Aristotle. They projected a superhuman glamour onto political status symbols, such as the giant sun-god who straddled the harbour mouth of Rhodes from 282 BCE (its now-lost Colossus), and also gave human substance to abstract ideas. Personifications and 'allegories' – concepts symbolized by interplays of figures – thrive among the era's warring would-be superstates. The *Nike* [50] – a life-and-a-half-size 'Victory' – from the Aegean island of Samothrace bursts out of this milieu on vast beating wings. Gone are her head and the arms that would once have lifted a trumpet to her lips, proclaiming some despot or other's military success – not that she really seems to need them.

50 The *Nike* of Samothrace, c. 190 bce. Half as large again as life, she stood on the prow of a marble ship in a fountain pool, overlooking the harbour town of an Aegean island. Or, more exactly, the fast-rippling, deep-cut carving would have suggested that she had just touched down there from the skies above, her strong wings beating and braking. The naval 'victory' (*nike*) she allegorizes probably belonged to the city of Rhodes, and so probably did her sculptors. A Cypriot coin showing a similar image suggests that one of the missing arms raised a trumpet to the missing head.

At last, you may say, struck by her exultant surge – a change of gender! Ancient Greek made a distinction between the concepts *aner*, a man, a male, and *anthropos*, a human, but Greek sculpture, like so many modern languages, tended to equate the two. Its fundamental stock unit was a male nude, and the desirable naked female, the kind of sex symbol found in so many other cultures, was merely a late, self-conscious extra that Praxiteles added to the canon when he carved the goddess Aphrodite around 340 BCE. (We have only dismal copies of the result.) Women were clothed beings, or rather they were the prime bearers of ‘drapery’ – a special, idealized fabric that ripples into intricate linear rhythms, here hugging the figure enticingly, there fanning out into the open space around it. That effect, which offered delightful design possibilities to painters filling framed panels on vases, here created an interface between the *Nike* and her original placing. A deep-digging, dynamized chisel, characteristic of Hellenistic carving at its most urgent, evoked the invisible breezes that rushed past as she touched down on a plinth overlooking a harbour. To transform the environment, or to crash-land? Not long after she was erected, around 190 BCE, ‘victory’ in Greece passed decisively to the invading Romans. She was pulled out of the sea two thousand years later.

Let us set beside her another voluptuous demigoddess, the *salabhanjika* at Sanchi [51], a hilltop in the heart of the Indian subcontinent. Here, the nearest artistic reference point in this chapter comes from Greece’s old enemy. When Asoka, the emperor who ruled most of India around 250 BCE, encouraged stone-carving in his dominions, his immediate model was the mirror-smooth, multiplicatory palace art of Persia. Yet the new monumental art of India seems so distinctive and self-assured that one has to assume that people there had previously been carving on now-perished ivories. The site of Sanchi richly preserves its early character, although its ceremonial gateways, from one of which the *salabhanjika* grows, were probably carved two centuries later. Her name describes her pose, tugging off a fruit-laden tree-branch. At the same time, in village legend she herself is a spirit of fruitfulness who with one touch of her foot has caused the tree to spring forth with fruit. That complexity creates the *tribhanga* – three flexions – of her body, and suchlike switches and twists would engender much of the energy of subsequent Indian sculpture. Here, a body was less a surging structure of muscles and bones than a winding course of flesh and breath. It welled from its environment and flowed back into it. Beyond the peacocks (just visible), the same sandstone of the gateway opens out into stories involving village life, in which humans and their huts and animals partake with the rivers and woods in a pervasive, rhythmically breathing fullness. Such village life had provided continuity the region since the forgotten collapse of the Indus cities eighteen

51 A *salabhanjika* from the eastern *torana* (gateway) of the Great Stupa at Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh, India, c. 50 bce. A *salabhanjika* is a nymph of fecundity, the touch of whose toes makes a mango tree blossom. Her full and sinuous figure customarily stands at a gateway, a harbinger of plenty to the temple worshippers outside; at the same time, she represents the sensuous appearances that they must put behind them as they pass to the sanctum within. This scheme of meanings is of great antiquity and still applies in contemporary Hindu temples. Sanchi, however, was built during the centuries when Buddhism was ascendant in India.



centuries before. The fundamental attitudes informing the way in which the *salabhanjika* was carved may well have made their way across that stretch of time.

Behind the jutting lintel of the gateway, the photograph shows a curving slope. It belongs to a *stupa*, a manmade hill surmounting Sanchi's hilltop, and the decorated gate is one of four opening onto a pathway around it. In this way people coming to Sanchi could ritually circle a symbolic cosmos and turn about its invisible centre. India, like Greece, had undergone an intellectual revolution during the preceding centuries. It too possessed epics, corresponding to Homer's tales of aristocrats and divinities – the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* – but, as large-scale Indian kingdoms grew up between 550 and 400 BCE, a new generation of reasoners challenged their complex hierarchical mindset. One of them became known as the Buddha, and his teaching about a single, unifying emptiness behind all desires and appearances proved persuasive to the emperor Asoka. It was Asoka who first ordered the building of a stupa at Sanchi. The narratives in its gateway reliefs all revolve around the great teacher of enlightenment, who himself is regarded as beyond bodily representation – a wheel, or at most footsteps, provide the Buddha's ciphers. We are situated, then, on the threshold of an abstraction. But as ordinary sensual mortals, we have been offered immediate imaginative handholds, couched in a language of local country myth that we are more likely to understand. The principle will later expand in application not just in Buddhism, but also in Christianity.

At this time in the West, however, the Greek intellectual revolution was becoming ever more critical and more internalized. Between the Parthenon in the 430s and Praxiteles a century later, Classical Greece had witnessed the religiously minded teaching of Plato. The philosopher chose to denounce 'art' as a mere mimicking of appearances that had little to do with reality, and in a sense the expansion of artists' technical resources demonstrated his point. The ingenuity of teasing the viewer with illusionary food scraps scattered on the floor (an early form of still life) or with a lifelike simulation of an old beggar-woman in marble – what, the serious questioner might ask, had such a proliferation of trivialities to do with the principles that governed the universe? But then, what appearance was and what reality was could become an interminable debate. Philosophy divided out into rival schools, and artists found new and saleable themes in delineating the distinctive characters of each. What manner of frown distinguished a Stoic from an Epicurean? To one side of that question lay a growing market for individual portraiture. To another, an open-ended longing for 'greatness of soul'.

A bronze head from around 90 BCE [52] takes these developments to their furthest point. Unlike the mourning father in the tomb relief two hundred and

52 Bronze portrait head from Delos, Greece, c. 90 bce.





53 Tapestry wall hanging with centaur and warrior, c. 150 bce. This tapestry was very likely woven in Bactria, a kingdom taking in much of Central Asia that flourished between 250 and 125 bce. Excavations in Afghanistan indicate that Bactrian cities maintained a strongly Hellenistic culture, with civic amphitheatres and gymnasia in the Greek manner, coins similar to those of Aegean cities, and powerfully realistic portrait sculpture. The region was a junction for Eurasian art: from here Greek styles diffused southwards into the kingdom of Gandhara (see Chapter 4) and thence to India and eastwards towards China. This fragment was found off one of the roads that led in the latter direction.

fifty years before, this unidentified man is not troubled by some identifiable problem. He could take any question you care to throw at the universe and make it his own: he is a bottomless well of spiritual ambivalence. Equally, he is a brimming surface of fluctuating modelling, responsive to every sad nuance that middle-aged flesh has to offer. This art-assailing art came from Delos, a tiny freeport island in the mid-Aegean. Before being sacked by pirates in 69 BCE, Delos was the last real centre for innovation in the Greek world before the art industry moved west to Rome.

A comparable concern with modelling can be seen in a head on a fragment of roughly contemporary wall tapestry [53]. The weaver would have been translating into fabric the treatment of light and shade that could be seen in paintings all over the Hellenistic world, for instance in the realistic portraits with which Egyptian mummies were now being decked. But he or she was working far to the east, most likely in Afghanistan or Turkmenistan – which, for somewhat mysterious reasons, was the region of Asia where Alexander’s conquests made the deepest cultural impact. Above the muscular, bandana’d warrior a centaur, a creature from Greek myth, jauntily blows at a horn unknown in his own country, surrounded by the emblematic flowers that weavers’ designs thrive on. Weaving is an art that will intersect with this story rarely, partly because most relics of its early history are even more battered than this, and partly because it leads into ways of looking and sensing too far removed from the book’s main concerns. But throughout Asia’s uplands, rugs and wall hangings were already long established as the supreme works of art. Much as jade and bronze upgraded imagery in China, so wools and vegetable dyes placed the herders’ favoured symbolisms on a rich and otherworldly patterned plane. Looked at from this perspective, the attitudes that lay behind Persia’s stone-carvings and perhaps even Phoenicia’s furniture ornaments make a different kind of sense.

For nomads and traders, tapestries were also conveniently transportable. This one crossed the Central Asian mountain ranges into the dusty plains of Xinjiang, where some practical-minded person stitched it up to make a trouser leg. Chinese archaeologists dug it out of a grave there in 1984 and undid the results. Back in 138 BCE, a Chinese explorer had ventured through these forbidding regions at the behest of the emperor Wu, thereby opening up the ‘Silk Road’, the trans-Asian trade route that would export China’s national product westwards. In those days, China was itself a fairly recent construct. Its Western name derives from ‘Qin’ Shihuangdi, the tyrant who conquered the various states around the Huang-he and Yangzi valleys and proclaimed himself their emperor in 221 BCE. As we have seen, however, civilization in this region was already thousands of years old. In contrast to India, no gap in the archaeological record disrupts the steady production of



54 A *boshan* ('fairy mountain') bronze-and-inlay incense burner from the tomb of Liu Sheng, c. 120 bce. Chinese tombs yielded many of the most spectacular archaeological rediscoveries of the later 20th century: ancient China has now acquired a public profile as glamorous as that of ancient Egypt. This perfectly preserved masterwork comes from the tomb of a prince and princess whose bodies were encased in suits made of jade plates, threaded together with gold wire. This phenomenal expense of labour and materials was meant as a guarantee against physical corruption, so that the dead could go forward into the afterlife with body and possessions intact.

bronzes (not to mention of jades and ceramics) between the *yu*, the Shang ritual jug of around 1050 BCE we saw on p. 48, and this gilded *boshan* [54] from around 120 BCE.

But a flick back through these pages would suggest that subtle pressures had been operating, refining and transforming the gnarled pugnacity of the earlier vessel. The *boshan* or 'fairy mountain' of 120 BCE was a type of object designed for private reflection rather than for public ceremonial. The new thinking that emerged in China around 500 BCE had pushed those two spheres asunder. Confucius had outlined restraining precepts meant to guide the conduct of people like the *boshan*'s owner – a prince named Liu Sheng – towards his family and the community around him. The mannerly elegance of his vessel's foot and bowl seems to respect the resulting ethos: know your place, avoid grossness. But rising out of the cup's symbolic ocean, with its coiling whiplash waves, peaks as wild as flames flare up. They represent an island belonging to the blessed (the tiny creatures that clamber upon them) – an island evoked in legends ascribed to Confucius's quasi-legendary contemporary, Lao Zi. It was Lao Zi's book of wisdom, the *Dao De Jing*, that spoke of the realm for which any distinguished individual must yearn, that of quiet, solitary contemplation of the cosmos. It spoke in hints, for no assertion on such matters could ever be final. Likewise, the *boshan* that we now see is in itself incomplete. Each flamelike peak is pierced by a fine hole and would have emitted smoke from incense burning under the lid. Thus the *qi*, the life force running through the cosmos, would have been lent a transient visibility, slowly dispersing in some palace chamber.

Deposits round the piercings tell us the *boshan* was put to use in Liu's lifetime, but it was rediscovered as one of the tomb treasures ranged around the prince's corpse, which lay clad in a suit of jade armour. Over two millennia after the burial of the Neolithic jade *cong* [see 23, another cosmos in miniature, perhaps], much labour-intensive manufacture was still being sealed away from living eyes. The most grandiose example, another rediscovery of 20th-century archaeology, was the tomb of the nation's founder, the Qin emperor, who died in 210 BCE. Around it was found a six thousand-strong army of life-size terracotta warriors, and each member of this afterlife retinue had been painstakingly individualized by varying a selection of modular body parts. As we shall see, China was not the only civilization of this era to set about representing facts faithfully on an industrial scale. But a distinction between what is factual and what is vital, later important for Chinese art theorists, can already be seen in operation during the four centuries from 206 BCE on, the period of the Han dynasty.

The 'Flying Horse' [55], a bronze figurine found in a tomb from the later Han days, has a footing in historical circumstance. This was the type of



55 'Flying Horse', a bronze model from a tomb in Leitai, Ganzu Province, c. 120 CE. This is another piece from a Han dynasty Chinese tomb, unearthed in 1969. The bronze is modelled on a breed of horse introduced to China by the Han emperor Wudi around 100 BCE. Wudi conquered the Central Asian kingdom of Ferghana with the express intention of obtaining these uniquely powerful 'horses of heaven'.

powerful Central Asian steed that the Han emperors were keen to import, so as to combat the troublesome tribes on their northern frontiers. It possessed the prestige of a Harley-Davidson, while the 'flying swallow' on which it so smartly perches may have given it additional royal cachet, that being the name of an emperor's wife. But, informed by the same whipcrack energies that electrify the *boshan*, a trophy performing a balancing trick becomes a transcendent convulsion in space. The life force, the *qi*, charges the emptiness around, making it potent. The Confucian habits of restraint and suggestion turn void into fullness from alternative angles. In a tile from another late Han tomb [56, 57], the clay has been stamped with a mould that seems to translate an original design painted in ink. One can see the way the riverbank has been bevelled so as to correspond to the blur where a brushload gave out. As it falls away behind the duck-shooters, the flat clay becomes the mist from which the birds and the lotus flowers rise up. Below, the rice crop around the harvesters



56, 57 Rubbings from earthenware tile with scenes of hunting and harvesting, Chengdu, Sichuan, Han dynasty.



is evoked with a few brisk downstrokes, and an equally fluent economy conjures up the man who brings them their lunch. Here was a prospect of a happy peasantry, subjects of the vast bureaucracy now encompassing East Asia, fit to amuse a country landowner in his afterlife.

Quotation marks

Italy, 50 BCE–150 CE

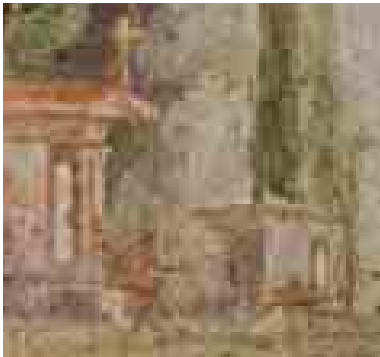
Deep in the security of another huge empire, under the roof of a nobleman's villa, a painter was staring at the wall, confronting a blank panel of fresh wet plaster [58–61]. A centre dab, to guide me. Run two verticals either side: we'll start with a column. What shall we have right and left? A tree; a shrine. Actually, another shrine as well. That one will be on a country road, there'll be junipers, crags (keep the pigment very watery here). But we need to fill that foreground: let's break it up. A river, yes – a chance to bring in blues; then a bridge; then pilgrims crossing it. Switch brushes, to scribble them down; to pick out some goats, stipple some oak leaves ... As the painter of this saloon in southern Italy improvised his 'fresco' (the name for this wet-plaster technique), he drew on a capacious bag of assumptions. About light and shade, and how objects could be made from them – an approach that probably had its roots in the visual science of Classical Athens, some four hundred years

before. Assumptions about the way in which, since then, classical architecture and religion had settled down to become weathered features of a landscape – a landscape that had been internalized and idealized, a landscape you could virtually hum. The tunes for it had been written by Greek poets like Theokritos with his ‘pastoral’ (shepherd-style) idylls, back around 250 BCE. Allusions to such imagery would no doubt have delighted the painter’s employer, Agrippa, a close friend of the emperor Augustus. They elevated his private property to a plane of charm and fantasy; they conformed to the analogies recently drawn by writers like Plutarch and Horace between poetry and painting. ‘Vignettes’ such as this bled away indefinitely into the white of the plaster, like a scene in the mind’s eye. No less indefinitely, when viewed from the villa’s porticos in 11 CE, the *Pax Romana* – the ‘Roman peace’ settlement – now stretched out to encompass the Mediterranean and all that lay beyond. What better time and place for playing games of quotation and for dreaming?

We share the privacy of Agrippa’s saloon thanks to the volcano Vesuvius, which erupted in 79 CE and smothered his villa at Boscotrecase and the city of Pompeii below in preservative ash for eighteen hundred years. Other walls in that comfortable seaside conurbation reveal the range of visual entertainments then on offer. Fake colonnades, fake swags of flowers adorning them;

58–61 (right and overleaf) Wall painting of an idyllic landscape, from the ‘Red Room’ of Agrippa’s villa at Boscotrecase, Italy, c. 11 ce. The works of the most famous painters of classical antiquity, such as Zeuxis and Apelles, are all lost and instead we are left for the most part with lighthearted frescoes of quite modest ambition. This example comes from a notably gifted hand, employed to decorate the villa of a major Roman politician. The free-flowing, associative manner in which the scene is dreamt up might be compared to the literary tactics of contemporary prose writers such as Petronius, author of the *Satyricon*.





fantasy tenements and gardens beyond; tasty fruit in glinting glass bowls; a graceful Flora, gathering flowers in a meadow; a gross Priapus, weighing his outsize penis on the scales; actors, theatre, masks. The brushwork is often as flash and free as in Agrippa's villa. Meanwhile, on many Pompeian floors and pavements its patterns of shading were being translated into the costlier and tougher medium of mosaic – fields of embedded coloured chips, a technique old in origin but given fresh impetus by recent improvements in glass and cement manufacture.

Learning of the disaster that befell this provincial pleasure-ground, the emperor Titus in Rome might have paused for reflection before his palace's prize possession, the *Laocoön* [62]. We know as much because a visitor to his palace, the Roman writer Pliny, admired this tangle of anguish as 'a work to be preferred to any other painting or sculpture'. Pliny went on to identify its sculptors as Hagesandros, Polydorus and Athenodorus, from the Greek city of Rhodes, thus raising them above the anonymous ranks of artists employed under Roman rule. He failed to tell art historians when this team was working, and where. They note that much in this carving resembles some turbulent sculptures made for a despot at Pergamon* around 180 BCE. Yet the same trio's names have also been found on a piece of site-specific statuary made some two centuries later for the emperor Tiberius. While his predecessor Augustus had commissioned monuments with a nod to the Classical restraint of the Parthenon, the tastes of Tiberius inclined more to the dynamism of Hellenistic Greece—a to-and-fro of opposing reference points that would carry on through successive imperial reigns for centuries to come. Moreover, an ambitious Greek sculptor might find that the heroic sufferings of a priest from Troy—one cursed to be strangled by serpents, along with his offspring—would go down well with the world's present rulers. Not long before, the *Aeneid*, Virgil's epic for the new empire, had upturned Homer's *Iliad* by proposing that Troy, so long ago defeated by Greece, was the original home of the now victorious Romans.

In other words, we are looking through shifting gauzes of allusion, double bluff and cultural anxiety when we try to retrace the origins not just of the *Laocoön*, but of many of the best-known icons of antique statuary. For instance the *Apollo Belvedere*, presenting a contrasting ideal of balmy grace, stands on similarly fuzzy historical foundations. The painters serving Rome's leisured classes at Pompeii were probably very largely of Greek origin. The same type of clientele, commissioning copies of already ancient Greek masterpieces to adorn their Italian gardens, are responsible for much of our second-hand knowledge of Praxiteles, Polykleitos et al. Admiring 'the antique' is very largely a matter of dreaming somebody else's dream.

* Pergamon is in present-day Turkey, but the sculptures in question are now in a museum in Berlin.

62 Hagesandros, Polydorus and Athenodorus, *Laocoön*, c. 40 BCE (?). In Homer's *Iliad*, Laocoön was a priest of Troy whose warnings to the Trojans about their Greek enemies displeased the gods, who sent giant serpents to kill him and his sons. This over life-size image of Laocoön's sufferings was probably carved by a team of Greek sculptors working for Roman clients, since Romans liked to claim connections with Troy. With its dynamic contortions and contrasts, and its attention to the emotions of mortal humanity, the *Laocoön* would become a central fixture of Western European culture after its rediscovery in 1506.



What kind of dream is the *Laocoön*? A meditation on agonies heroically borne, no doubt. Personally, I can't help being struck by the sheer wilful *artiness* of this melodramatic muscle-machine. But then, perhaps I'm trapped inside an accident of historical perspective. The mighty Michelangelo was transfixed when the *Laocoön* was dug out of the ruins of Titus' palace in 1506, and it still held canonical authority when people started excavating Pompeii in 1748. But since then the West has developed its awareness of the ancient Mediterranean more or less in reverse order. Definitions of what was truly and approvingly 'classical' shifted from the Rome of the emperors back to the Athens of Perikles – particularly when Britain's Lord Elgin transported much of the Parthenon frieze from Athens to London in 1819. By the turn of the next century, the still-earlier Archaic had swung into view, and soon afterwards Minoan civilization was rediscovered: 20th-century modernists would be happiest of all with the prehistoric Cycladic idols. Somewhere on that sliding scale artists have always found compelling structures of thought and imaginative challenges, and have thus given fresh meanings to the stale term 'classicism'.



63, 64 Spirals 10 to 16 of Trajan's Column (seen from ground level), Rome, 113 ce. A narrative frieze 200 metres (nearly 660 feet) in length winds up around the massive column. An evenly high standard of carving is maintained throughout. It is not certain whether the marble was originally painted. The totality stands as a matchlessly thorough and plain-spoken document of imperial propaganda. At the same time, however, the enterprise remains slightly mysterious. What kind of viewer can the artists have been hoping for, as they continued chiselling every last detail of Trajan's campaigns on a level far beyond the reach of the keenest eye?

Before the *Laocoön's* re-emergence in 1506, however, the authority of ancient art resided in what stayed above ground – above all, in the awesome constructions of the Romans. Among all the bridges, forts, amphitheatres and temples stretching from North Africa to Syria to the Rhine, among all their prodigious array of ornamentations and inscriptions, the principal foci still remained in Rome itself: the Colosseum and the Pantheon, monuments to entertainment and enlightenment respectively (the one built 75–80 CE, the other in 126); the gilded equestrian statue of the emperor Marcus Aurelius from the 170s; and, from the same century of imperial self-confidence, the column left by the militaristic Trajan [63, 64]. It stands to this day in the forum that Trajan had built in 113 CE, commemorating the two wars in which he conquered Dacia, present-day Romania. They proved to be the Romans' final attempt to expand the empire's territory, and this would be the first area from which the empire retreated before its collapse in the west. For subsequent viewers, this monument more than any other has epitomized the otherwise elusive essence of 'Roman art'.

The 30-metre (98-foot) marble column was carved with everything that happened in the wars by an unidentified team, working to an exemplary degree of punctiliousness and finish. They may have had the emperor's own campaign journal to refer to as they gradually spiralled their way forwards from a beginning at ground level. In our photograph, you have raised your head past ten of the column's circuits, each one metre (three feet) high. The history is winding and grinding its way upwards, pushing through forests, fort gates, harbour mouths. On the first main rung in view, barbarians and legionaries alike hew down the woods of Dacia as Trajan prepares to assault the enemy's chief redoubt; on the next, victorious Romans mass around their seated emperor, receiving the Dacians' surrender. Yet barbarian pledges prove transient; so, a rung and two years onwards, the emperor must take ship again from Italy, passing from port to port until he is back on the frontline, conducting a campaign that will not end until it reaches the pedestal on which his statue once perched, a further eight circuits out of the frame. It is a pile-up of factuality beyond telling. It stood between Trajan's Greek and Latin libraries, but even if you had climbed up to their windows, you could no more read its entire contents than you could those of an encyclopaedia. Overlooking the city's apartments with their poetic vignettes and its courtyards with their arch, spectacular statuary, the column insists that there is also an art that is plain prose, and that it is no more easily containable: it establishes a towering normality, and that is partly what 'the classical' has come to mean. Always this choked, remorseless world of arms and men comes back to the type of figure, and the type of truth, that is stated at this picture's base. Chop, pull, lift and carry: life means work, and every man must shoulder his burden.





MEDIEVAL WORLDS

Unrelated images

Nigeria, Peru, Europe, 500 BCE–500 CE

There were three kings: one in Africa, one in South America, one in Europe [65, 66, 67]. So the story might begin. But first, the storyteller draws breath and issues a disclaimer. What has been happening in this book up to now? *Homo sapiens* has wandered all over the continents and has found various ways to make objects that fascinate the eyes. In all these efforts, there is some factor that is unseen – the mental, the spiritual, however you define it – but otherwise they develop diversely in different places. After a while, bigger societies grow up here and there, and within these imagery gains new dimensions: it interacts with writing and building, and high visual cultures arise, full of ‘canonical’ authority. And between the various centres of power and tradition, artistic intermediaries emerge, swapping and blending styles and techniques.

So what happens from this point onwards? Does the story continue until these middlemen have inexorably woven together the global fabric of images that surrounds us today? No, I don’t think it proceeds anything like that smoothly. In fact, from here the plot gets trickier. To think about global history in the millennium from 200 CE means thinking about cultural worlds that are steadily becoming more intricate and steadily more divergent. As a result, the argument that follows will weave in alternating directions – here towards discords, there towards harmonies. Nowadays, of course, we have something called the ‘world heritage of art’, a big bag enclosing all those fascinating objects people once made. To discuss global art history involves picking from that bag whatever fits the page and the argumentative purpose. Nevertheless, *back then* the artists and the cultures that produced those objects may well have been entirely innocent of one another. So if any of my tricks of presentation make them look like relatives, friends or foes, be wary: things may be stranger than they here appear.

There were three kings. One lived in what is now Nigeria. He would have been a contemporary of someone in the last chapter, since the culture that produced portraits (or ancestor images) like his flourished from around 500 BCE to 200 CE. Archaeologists try to read from these terracotta figures what that society might have been like, since the evidence is otherwise frustratingly

65 Seated dignitary, Nok terracotta, 250 bce (?). This is one of the most complete terracottas that has come to light from Nigeria’s ancient Nok culture. The majority of other finds are of detached or fragmentary heads, finely moulded and scored. Despite this, there is a considerable variety in the scales, designs and expressive moods of Nok pieces. It seems reasonable to treat Nok as the earliest known ancestor of the numerous local West African traditions that would eventually attract international fascination in the 20th century.

thin. They have named it the ‘Nok’ culture after the town in the tree-strewn grasslands north of the Niger River where the figures first came to light. This seems to be the area from which the Bantu people stemmed, later to spread far to the west, south and east across sub-Saharan Africa. It was also the area where they first began smelting iron, a practice they traditionally regarded as the foundation of civilization. But with these figurines we are effectively back in that fog of mystery in which we started Chapter 2. Do they connect historically with Egypt, via three thousand kilometres of grassland and Nile? Just possibly: it may not be a coincidence that the crook in the king’s armband is the badge of office a pharaoh would have worn. But simply as a question of artistic attitude, it’s interesting to compare this lugubrious and virile dignitary with the gawky Akhenaten we saw on p. 51. In both, a figure seems pulled into shape by way of forceful, idealizing metaphors. To go by later evidence from sub-Saharan Africa, greatness of mind was here being shown by greatness of head. Each feature of the figure has been savoured for its own linear essence, as if it were a word being rolled on the tongue for its sound. The artist built up cylinders of clay and let them dry before she scored at them with a blade,* incising the lines as if working on a length of wood. And that may suggest the main reason why we are still pretty lost when it comes to ancient African history: apart, it would seem, from a few terracottas, nearly all high art in these parts ended up as biodegradable food for termites.

How disturbingly *lacking* in ideality is the head made by a Moche potter on Peru’s Pacific coast [66]. ‘Modern’ is the word we might reach for, confronted by the ruthless naturalism of this ruler portrait. With a queasy fascination, all the subtle asymmetries into which time moulds a face have been remoulded into a presence quite as ambivalent and sinister as that of any contemporary politician. But the subject lived some time between 200 and 500 CE, and to put him back into history is to retrace what a strange, incoherent phenomenon naturalism is. The Moche were one of the larger-scale Peruvian societies picking up on the cultural foundations laid by the builders of Chavín de Huántar, the temple we looked at two chapters ago [see 22]. Like all these societies, they excelled in terse, abstract designs, and the ruler’s headscarf resembles the brightly coloured cloths woven by the upcountry Wari, some of the most stunning fabrics to have survived from ancient times. Like peoples far and wide across the Americas, the Moche invested much creativity into painted clay vessels. You could drink from this head, as you could from the Mexican acrobat from Tlatilco [see 39] or from the Moche’s many lively little sodomy pots and suchlike erotica. Within this tradition, someone

* Again, to judge by later evidence clay-workers in this region were traditionally female.



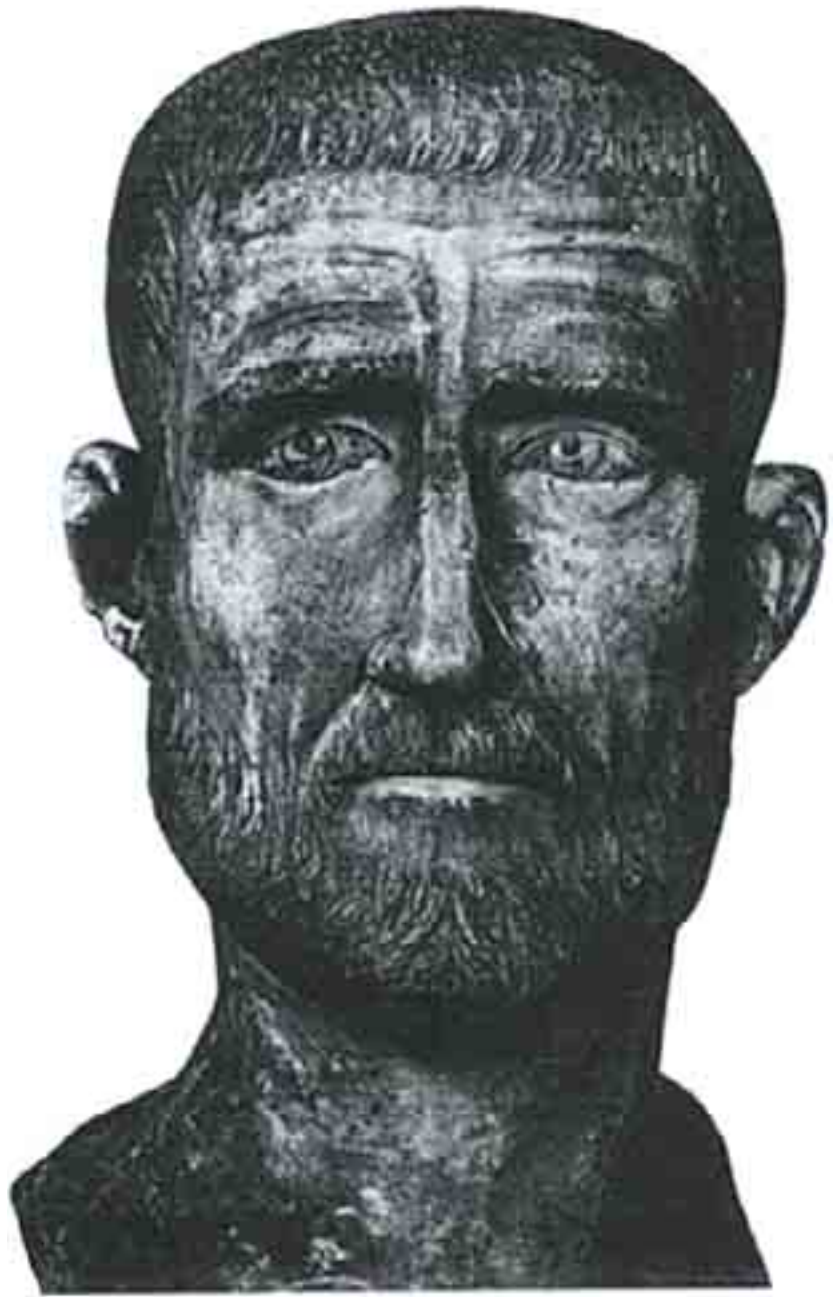
seems to have started portraying rulers directly from observation around 200. The habit caught on for a few generations and was then discontinued. But the *meaning* of these life studies stayed vessel-like. There was nothing here to idealize about a head, because it was only a container for transient flows of energy. There was no cause to monumentalize the person of the king, because it was a sacrificial instrument that might need smashing. Some of these Moche portraits form sequences, returning to the same individual at different stages in his career. In one sequence, a king who confronts you in his prime as proudly and commandingly as the man in the present picture winds up as a grotesque and gibbering diminutive figure, arms tied behind, naked. He has been beaten in combat with a fresh contender for power. The new king will ritually drink his blood.

My third frontman for incoherence is Probus [67], a soldier from the central Balkans who became emperor of Rome after a predecessor was assassinated in 276 and who was himself assassinated six years later. In the interval he rode ceaselessly over the vast empire to fight rebels in Egypt and invaders from Germany and Persia, at some point finding time for an artist to take a likeness. Such a sitting was necessary because the image of the emperor was the linchpin to this sprawling and currently almost collapsing political system. Copies of it could be everywhere that he wasn't. A marble head such as this would be slotted into a waiting body, standing on a plinth in a city forum, and form the focus for salutes and for the province's respect. During the mid-3rd century there was a swift and brutal turnover: twenty-five heads of 'soldier-emperors' toppled in fifty years.

Does this carving belong to a naturalistic tradition with which we are familiar? Three centuries before, the Romans had taken to the Greek sophistications expressed in pieces like the Delos bronze head on p. 74. Compare Probus with that, and you sense that in this brisk new political climate artists were brushing them aside as irrelevancies. All the rippling, tremulous subtleties of modelling were being forsaken for compact, simple planes and crisply repeated grooves. Here, the feel of the brow and hairline is closer if anything to that of the Nok carving. It is an effect often seen as symptomatic of a broad 'decline' in classical artistic standards; and it's certainly true that anyone wandering through a chronological display of ancient Mediterranean sculpture will notice a strange lurch in quality during the 3rd century, as if a bunch of cut-price operatives had contracted to take on the work without the necessary know-how. And possibly that is a reflection of contemporary realities: terrible plagues, recurrent throughout the era, may well have wiped out many high-class studios.

Urgency rather than incompetence, however, seems the keynote here. Historians keen on state politics might claim that the no-nonsense portrayal

67 The emperor Probus, marble portrait bust, 276–82 ce. The portrait sculpture of ancient Rome was as a rule less idealistic and more factual than that of ancient Greece. Despite the far-reaching influence of Greek classical elegance in Italy, a preference for defining the subject's uniqueness – even his ugliness – ran through Rome's art from early times till at least the 3rd century, the time of soldier-emperors such as Probus. In this sense, the present severe likeness maintains an old tradition.



of this Central European hard man in fact represents the ‘true’ values of early pre-imperial Rome, practical and unsentimental, reasserting themselves after four centuries of dalliance with the fancy tricks of Greece. Historians keen on religion might find in Probus’s frown and in his far-focused pupils (a common carver’s knack in these times) evidence of a widespread spiritual unease, as if he and his age were awaiting some new answer to the meaning of life. Simply as a chronicler of style, I read into his furrowed brow a mind working hard to grasp unfamiliar historical conditions. It’s true that the mannerisms of classical art would be revived – or at any rate requoted – in a new period of imperial stability during the 4th century. But in Europe at least this

restoration proved short lived, like others through the centuries to come. The city life that had sustained classical values started to break down as invaders from Germany and Asia rode in during the 400s; subsequent invasions would further erode or even eradicate it. Uncertain times ahead: for Probus, read the author.

68 Sarcophagus for a lady, carved with the four seasons, c. 340. For the Romans, 'Africa' meant principally the region around Carthage, the city that had once been their enemy – in other words, present-day Tunisia. A major agricultural zone, known as 'the granary of the empire', Africa maintained a vigorous cultural life, as witnessed by numerous mosaics and sculptures, as well as by writers – not only the celebrated St Augustine, born in the province in 354, but also the anonymous intended occupant of this sarcophagus.

Work and pray

North Africa, India, Italy, Syria, the British Isles, 1 – 750 CE

So I shall return to base, to where this book began. Imagine for a moment that there is such a thing as a typical artist, and put yourself in that person's shoes. It is now around the year 330, but, like the hominin with the flint, you are still face to face with stone, tool in hand. The stone is bigger – a slab of marble – and the equipment is better: you have a selection of steel chisels, not to mention a drill. You have been entrusted with carving the garlands on the lid



of a sarcophagus [68]. (A stone coffin, in other words: one of the standard lines for Mediterranean stone-yards throughout classical times. This stone-yard is in Carthage, the North African city the Romans had taken from the Phoenicians centuries before.)

You are only a teenager, let's say. But, since you have handled a chisel from early childhood, the days are long past when the master would bring out his stick to punish you for botching a leaf or a fruit. You still have to watch for him; but the curling of a ribbon as it emerges under your chisel, the dapple and glitter of the marble as chips fly off in the sunlight – these are things to take pleasure in. It is good work, moreover it is work that you will be able to make your own. The master says your shallow carving looks timid, and the master's word is law; nonetheless, you may suspect on some level that his deep-drilling technique, over there on the main panel of the sarcophagus, is rather staid and fussy ... Sometimes across the yard you hear him hobnobbing with a patron, and occasionally with a scholar. He knows most things, but they may know even more. There may be something in what the scholar says that chimes with your own instincts, there may be patrons who come to value your touch.

I'm fictionalizing a type of working situation that had been around ever since large societies emerged, and which remains the norm for very many people making art today, particularly in southern Asia – except that now, such work is commonly regarded as 'craft'. This type of situation is firmly hierarchical and compartmentalized, and yet among its various levels of authority there is a certain room for creativity to come through. The reason to focus on it at this point is that such conditions will predominate throughout the millennium described in this chapter, but after that, what Westerners call 'art' will gradually move to more individualistic means of production. Moreover, this difference in working practice is one reason why historians set this period aside from modern times, describing it as 'medieval'.*

In other words, it belongs to a 'middle age', separated from the individualistic modernity to come. What factors distinguish it from what had gone before? The decor of this 4th-century sarcophagus is in the broad sense 'classical'. Those chubby nudes had been around since a few generations of competitive Greek inventors devised their adaptable figure styles eight hundred years earlier. The draperies, the framing columns and the interweaving vines had long been equally familiar stock-in-trades. But under the long normality of Roman rule, all these had become a system of so many signs to be read – like the histories on Trajan's Column, or like the scrolls standing bundled next to the central figure, the literary lady for whom the sarcophagus

* Where 'the medieval' starts and stops is any art historian's guess. 'Late Antique' is a common current term for the period from around 250 to 800 in Europe and south-west Asia, the medieval being deemed to come after.

was being prepared. Four allegorical figures – four seasons – satisfyingly framed her memory in a comprehensive unity of figure, nature and architecture. That system of meanings and numbered placings had stealthily emerged as the central concern of art, whereas naturalistic effects were revealing themselves as merely incidental. The master drilling away at the base was offering a ‘look’ of close modelling, temporarily fashionable in the 330s and again here and there through the centuries to follow, but issues of proportion didn’t really concern him. More post-classical artists would follow the flattening, short-cut instincts of the apprentice carving at the lid; the meaning could still be conveyed.

And yet the whole system itself was open to an alteration in meaning, like an emperor-statue changing heads, or like the lid’s unused inscription panel. By the 330s, the bunch of grapes that had long meant ‘autumn’ was coming to stand also for the faithful Christian, the fruit of the Lord’s ‘true vine’. If we want to see where the switch to a new system of religious significances first began, we need to look not to the Roman Empire but to India – where much contemporary sculpture obeyed surprisingly similar principles. We have glimpsed, via the trouser-leg tapestry mentioned in the last chapter, how Greek art was taken up after Alexander’s invasions in Central Asia. It spread from there into Gandhara – what is now eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. We have also seen how at Sanchi in central India sensual images from village mythology surrounded the stupa, the abstracted cosmic mound at the centre of Buddhist devotions. We don’t know whether the novelty of portraying the Buddha himself began here, in mid-India, or else as a Gandharan response to Greek statuary. Either way, images of the great teacher had started appearing in both regions not long after Jesus’ birth.

Gradually, by processes probably including the type of apprentice variation I’ve outlined, these images developed to reach a pitch of refinement seen in a two-thirds life-size Buddha at Sarnath [69], carved around the year 450. Sarnath lay further to the east within the Ganges-plain heartland of the Gupta empire, which was the biggest political unity that India had seen since the reign of Asoka seven centuries before. The exquisite alternation of pattern and smooth polish in this sandstone shrine-piece reflects the confident, courtly sophistication of Gupta culture, as does its intellectualized geometric design. A code of hand gestures, the *mudras*, had been adopted in Buddhism long before, and here the Buddha’s fingers denote ‘teaching’, for the deer park at Sarnath was where he had preached his first sermon. The sermon’s hearers are ranged in the panel below, akin in format to a sarcophagus relief. Amidst them stands one wheel, that of the Buddha’s law; about his halo spins another, that of things appearing and changing and withering, the busy illusion from which his law promises release. *Apsaras* turn it, cloud spirits from ancient

69 The Buddha teaching, c. 450 ce.

This exemplary religious image comes from Sarnath, just north of Varanasi on the Ganges. This is one of the four chief sites of Buddhist pilgrimage in India, the other most important being Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Sarnath’s ancient monuments range in date from the reign of Asoka (mid-3rd century bce) to the Gupta empire (250–550 ce), often regarded as the classic phase of Indian civilization. Very similar patterns to those that dance around the Buddha’s head were carved in Gupta times around the circumference of Sarnath’s massive Dhamekh Stupa, a stone mound erected by Asoka.



Indian mythology. The underlying reality resides in that still, full spherical head, reflected one way in its subtle smile and another in the breath buoying up the body beneath. It's almost like the site plan of a stupa-based temple, turned ninety degrees and set against the wall.

To address this new type of religious imagery involves talking about systems of meaning – iconographies. Also, perhaps, about the possibility of perfecting them. As a side-effect of its promise of salvation *from* the world, Buddhism caused a certain social and cultural progress *within* the world. Christianity had a comparable dynamic: Jesus had left his Jewish disciples with a mission and a vision of history to come. His 'kingdom' stood apart from worldly politics ('Give to Caesar what is Caesar's; give to God what is God's'). Did it also stand apart from the imagery that promoted these politics? Should it maintain a traditional Jewish hostility to figural art? For the early Church, these questions were open to debate: the statues that stood for pagan gods were particularly obnoxious to them. During the 3rd century, when their faith was being persecuted by the emperors, Christians in Rome daubed their underground catacombs with minimal, tersely expressive vignettes of Gospel imagery. Between 312 and 337, however, the emperor Constantine transformed their persecuted spirituality into a state religion – one element of a shake-up of his crisis-struck empire, the other being to relocate its capital from Rome to the Greek city of Byzantium, or 'Constantinople'. From this point on, familiar items of classical rural imagery, such as bunches of grapes or shepherds with their flocks, were given fresh meanings associated with the symbolism of the Gospels. The sarcophagus belongs to this era. Its studious classical look would be maintained in much small-scale church art, such as the panels telling Gospel stories that ivory-carvers made for caskets.

This mosaic from Ravenna [70], a city on Italy's eastern coast, has its roots in this top-down revolution. Jesus at its centre has a halo like the Buddha's (both derive from some source in ancient south-west Asia) and in his own way surmounts the circle of the cosmos. But the purple robe of the Saviour is one customarily reserved for the emperor: God and Caesar have become uncannily resemblant. The mosaic draws us into further historical confusions. It was made at the behest of a 'Roman' emperor, but by the 540s, some two centuries after Constantine, this emperor was a Greek named Justinian with a throne in Constantinople, and he was fighting the length and breadth of Italy to reclaim it from the Goths, the German clan who had taken over the country seventy years before. To complicate things further, these Goths had in fact been vigorous upholders of Roman values and the Christian religion. In Ravenna, which had become Italy's administrative centre, they added to an existing imperial complex a fine church in the style established



Photo Scala, Florence

70 Christ Cosmocrator with angels and St Vitalis, mosaic in the apse of San Vitale, Ravenna, 540s. The churches of Ravenna, with their rich mosaics, span the transition from the final decades of the old Roman empire, which was ruled from this city from 402 to 476, to the early flourishing of the new 'Roman' empire, based in Constantinople (or Byzantium) under the rule of Justinian. San Vitale was begun in 527, when Ravenna was under the rule of the Goths who had conquered Italy from the north, and completed in 548 after Justinian reconquered Italy from the east. It appears however that artists from Byzantium were directing its architecture and adornment throughout.

in Constantine's time – a 'basilica', which consisted of a long, high, rectangular hall, side aisles, and an 'apse' or recess facing Jerusalem in the east.

It was the radically ambitious emperor Justinian who was breaking precedents. The model held up by the bishop on the right of the mosaic shows the innovation he was aiming for in the building it adorns: in effect, a completely centralized church, a vision he would expand two decades later when his architects created the world's largest dome at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (or Istanbul, as it now is). The Ravenna church, a less time-ravaged record of early Byzantine art, was dedicated to the martyr standing on the left, St Vitalis. Its cohesive artistic programme went beyond marrying up God with Caesar and the dome with the long hall. In classical times mosaics



had mostly taken their cue from paintings, which themselves imitated the look of objects in three dimensions. But now the mosaicists' rows of tesserae (or glass chips) steered the look of the decor, studding it as if with bright beads and drilling the draperies into crisp, formal rhythms. They established a new kind of unity. In this interior there was no place for deep modelling (let alone for pagan statues), and yet the effect is not exactly flat, for the gold-leaf tesserae – a glamorous and novel product-line – have been tilted this way and that, so as to catch the window-light and to spangle. The 'imitation of nature' has made way for another kind of illusion: peering into the half-dome of this apse, you are half up there with the angels in their paradise of flowers and flowing rivers.

One hundred and sixty years on, mosaic was used to comparable effect in a converted pagan temple in Damascus [71]. Here too Greek artists may have been at work. These architectural fantasies are not that far from those once painted in Roman villas [see 58–61], though the rivers that flow past them are as if without end. What were these images meant for, running around the courtyard of the world's first monumental mosque? To represent the pavilions of paradise invoked in the Qur'an, which had been revealed to Muhammad in the early 7th century? Or to picture the endless cities captured by his followers in the ensuing decades? The first of these conquests, Jerusalem, had already been adorned in 690 with the Dome of the Rock, a unique, triumphant response to the recent architecture of the now badly battered Byzantine state. But twenty years on, Damascus had been picked by its Arab conquerors as the capital of an empire that extended from Afghanistan to Morocco and that was just preparing to overrun Spain. In the circumstances, the caliphs, Muhammad's successors, could draw on whatever artistic resources they pleased. Maybe the mosque mosaics were simply meant as a celebratory firework display, the kind of visual bonanza that makes questions about iconography irrelevant.

One distinct intention does seem clear, however. While the caliphs of this era, the Umayyads, might adorn their own palaces with pictures of bare-breasted dancing-girls, figures are distinctly absent from the nature-cum-architecture on display in the mosque. In personal comments, the Prophet had expressed an unease about images that pretended to look 'alive', much like Jewish feelings on this issue; more generally, the Qur'an asks humans to look for signs of God in all things, but not to presume to reduce him to their own level. There were to be no more statues in Damascus's former temple, only a cleared space and a *mihrab*, a marker for the direction of prayer.

In fact, at this point the tension between images and godliness was becoming much more acute in Christianity than in Islam. In a Byzantine empire still reeling from its military reverses, opinions in influential circles were

71 Mosaic of cities, trees and streams, c. 710, Great Mosque, Damascus, west portico. The Great Mosque of Damascus was the boldest architectural project of its time in the western world. It gave a majestic presence to Islam's radical new religious dispensation, but at the same time it was in many ways culturally inclusive: it incorporates columns from a former temple of Jupiter in its perimeter walls, as well as a shrine purportedly containing the head of St John the Baptist. The mosque's impressionistic mosaics of mansions and woods maintain the mood of relaxed reverie commonly seen in ancient Roman interior decoration.

radicalizing towards a position implicit in the church's Jewish origins: praying before images was mere paganism. From 726 to 842 political advantage swung between the party of the 'iconoclasts' – the image-smashers – and the 'iconodules', who felt that a picture of Jesus could point the soul in the right direction. In the resulting civil wars over art, vast swathes of earlier Christian imagery round the eastern Mediterranean were destroyed, severing old studio traditions. This is why we best know early Byzantine art from its excursions in Italy.

The iconoclast controversy was only one of many fractures befalling Christian art history during the centuries from 450 to 950. Justinian had severed the last link to classical intellectual culture when he closed down the academy in Constantinople in 529. His campaigns in Italy may have brought splendour to Ravenna, but they left large parts of the country a wasteland. Amid the ongoing military free-for-all of the century that followed, the region no longer had the economic clout to keep high art forms afloat. The bronze foundries closed, the marble-carvers put down their chisels. There was a better life to be had in farming than in town trades, and any improvements in living conditions that occurred through the following centuries came mainly through agriculture.

While city culture waned, alternative social forms and artistic formats sprang up. Literacy changed its channels. During the 5th century the papyrus scroll – the type of book accompanying the lady from Carthage – started to make way for the dearer but tougher parchment *codex*: in essence, a bound volume such as the one you are holding. Its rectangular pages of animal hide presented a compact opportunity for artists – 'illuminators', as they later became known – to invent and adorn. Naturally, their texts were most often the books of Holy Scripture. In otherwise uncertain times, these were dependable counters of truth. Tucked in a bag, the Word of God might travel swifter than other signs of culture, and new networks were at hand to speed it on its way. During the same 5th century, in a movement starting from Egypt and Syria, many individuals sidestepped society to live the radically solitary spiritual life of the hermit, all the while devising communication systems to encourage each other in doing so. One such system reached out across the seas and took root in Ireland, far beyond former imperial territory.

As a result, by the 7th century an island unaffected by classical art was switching round Europe's cultural dynamics. Teamed up in communities of monks, Ireland's Christians sent missions eastwards, around the British Isles and deep into the Continent. In the new-founded monasteries, the work of illumination itself became a prime act of worship. It drew on both the ancient traditions of Europe's far west – the love of whorled line we saw in the prehistoric Scottish ball [see 20], an aesthetic often termed 'Celtic' – and on the animal styles that had spread from the Scythian steppes into Northern Europe [see 40]. Thus self-devouring birds and beasts participate in the riotous

72 Cruciform 'carpet' page from the Lindisfarne Gospels, c. 700.



intricacies [72] invented by an illuminator on Lindisfarne, a monastery island on Britain's east coast, during the 710s. The page is one of five text-free designs adorning a book of Gospels that must have occupied its artist for more than a decade. His traditional identification as Lindisfarne's bishop, Eadfrith, may be authentic, since this was work of high status indeed. Also a work of rapt meditation: the cross on which Jesus suffered has been taken as the pivot of a complexity as rich as that of the created world itself. Linear mazes such as this, at once carefully resolved and wildly dynamic, featured in much metalwork across Northern Europe, but here they extended into delicious fluctuations of colour, as the artist splurged on costly far-imported lapis lazuli, green malachite and red lead. 'Insular art' – this art of Europe's north-western islands, which flourished until the Viking invasions of the 800s – was lavish with both time and wealth, at once intensely aesthetic and intensely devout, and the Christianity that sustained it seems a religion of wonder and joy.

Jungles and caves

Central America, Indonesia, India, China, 300–900

Meanwhile ... across an ocean, the city-states of the Maya were flourishing among the tropical jungles of southern Mexico and Guatemala, their high pyramidal temples rising above the tree-cover. To their west, on the central Mexican plateau, lay one of the world's largest and most systematically planned cities, Teotihuacán. Far to the north of these zones, the 'pueblo' communities of Arizona and New Mexico were starting to produce refined and exquisite ceramics; far to the south lay the stonemasons, potters and weavers of Peru and Bolivia. It's unlikely there was any direct network of communication between all these centres; it's not even clear how much Teotihuacán and the Maya had to do with one another, nor how much either culture owed to Mexico's original city-builders, the Olmecs, whom we met at the start of Chapter 2.

Meanwhile is the historian's absolute bottom line. It states plainly that he or she knows only one thing was happening at the same time as another, not why. By 800, most of Eurasia was bound up in a straggle of loosely connected cultural developments; but the painters of the Maya – to take one striking and sophisticated example of ancient American art – were truly working in another universe [73, 74]. Or so it would seem. Does the parallel development of fresco techniques and figure narratives via two utterly separate histories in fact tell us something about the inexorable patterns along which cultures move? David Summers, the only scholar I know of learned enough to answer that question, would probably consider any attempt to outline a world art history in straight chronological order profoundly unwise.*

But so be it. At base, my business here is simply to indicate that people have made many diverse and extraordinary things, whether or not I can spell out why. Here we see Lord Chaan Muan of Bonampak, in the big jaguar helmet, out on a raid, poaching peasant captives from neighbouring territory. This was his duty to his community: prisoners' blood must be sacrificed in order to keep its dealings with the gods on a correct basis and thus to avoid bad harvests. He was unavoidably obliged to perform these atrocities, just as the painter was obliged to follow a modular system of compacted linear units – eyes, baubles, pendants, crests – itself tied into the hieroglyphic writing of the Maya and into their overarching, unbelievably extensive theory of time. Looking at this carefully restored image, we may be almost *misleadingly* close to what the artist intended, for what he actually painted was the wall of a win-

73 Chocolate mug from Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico, c. 800 ce. Many ancient American cultures had outstanding ceramic traditions. Between the 4th and 10th centuries, Mayan artists excelled in the refined brush drawing they brought to vessels such as this mug, which was found buried among tomb goods. The scenes that roll round them can be complex and sometimes irrepressibly comical, although the deities they picture belong to fearsome myths of the afterlife. The ring of hieroglyphs below the mug's rim is a dedication describing its ritual purpose and naming the artist involved. Chocolate was a drink of sacred significance for the Maya.



* See his philosophical magnum opus, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (2003). On the development of cultural networks from the Palaeolithic to the present, see J. R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web* (2003), a brilliantly concise 320-page 'bird's-eye view' of global history.



74 Chaan Muan hunting for captives, fresco at Bonampak, Mexico, 790.

dowless ceremonial room at Bonampak, and it would never have been so evenly lit. But just as it hard not to read the Maya's turquoise pigment as reflecting their verdant environment, it is hard not to feel that within these arcane and complex constraints, Chaan Muan and his calligraphic court frescoist were wildly enjoying themselves. Take away the zany helmets, and we could almost be witnessing a pitch incident, with footballers hamming it up for the cameras.

It may be harder for present-day viewers to know where they stand in relation to the Maya than, say, to the Romans, because this civilization cancelled itself out so effectively. A century or so after the Bonampak frescoes, their cities were deserted as the population, probably in response to an ecological crisis, headed off into the woods for a smaller-scale, slash-and-burn style of subsistence. To this extent, at least, their temples had a parallel career to the

75 Corner 'gargoyle' on a balustrade at Borobudur, Java, c. 830. The gargoyles erected to drain the heavy Javanese rains off the monument of Borobudur are known as *makaras* – dragons of the sources and springs, water-sprites. They belong to an intermediary religious realm, where the abstract principles of Buddhism shade into the many-faced divinities of Hindu mythology. The stonework shown here was relaid in the 1970s in a total reconstruction of the monument. Borobudur resurfaced from eight centuries' abandonment to volcanic ash and jungle vegetation only in the early 19th century, while Java was under Dutch rule.

great lost cause of the 9th century, Borobudur [75]. Commenced around 775 and in construction until 842, it was completely abandoned to the jungle, for uncertain reasons, within less than two centuries. We are back in Eurasia – at least on its southern fringes, that is – on the equatorial island of Java. We are back with Buddhism. The kings of upcoming states in South-east Asia had for centuries found prestige in associating themselves with Indian culture and religion, rather like Northern Europeans associating themselves with Roman values. Java's Sailendra dynasty found the resources to give the incoming spiritual disciplines their biggest-ever physical expression.

In the mind's eye, a Buddhist might draw a diagram of the cosmos, a *mandala*, a maze to fix upon, to penetrate and transcend. The Sailendras converted this exercise into a 3-kilometre (2-mile) graded ascent up the terraces of a stone mountain studded with hundreds of bell-shaped stupas. The higher stupas of Borobudur are hollow lattices, holding meditating Buddhas within, and further up this titanic encyclopaedia of existence is capped by a blank ultimate pinnacle, nirvana. But in this photo we are down on a more worldly terrace, near galleries of narrative reliefs as patiently detailed as those of Trajan's Column. We are at the juncture that would be called a gargoyle in those later medieval syntheses, the Christian cathedrals. All the rain in those brooding clouds must be drained from the stone mountain, and a gross and earthly throat was the instrument to eject it. Come sunshine, he would loom over those beneath as a devourer of the wicked, a threat and a guardian. And yet his leer was also enticing, for it made an interface between the abstract intellectuality above and the lively ogres of Java's popular mythology below.

Popular mythology, however, doesn't depend on intellectual programmes. It can generate its own patterns of creativity and its own high imaginative arts. Back in the home of the stupa, among India's courts and villages, priests had been performing their rituals and bards their epics long before Buddhism's first emergence over a thousand years before, and the new doctrine's arrival hardly dented the strength of what we now call the Hindu traditions. The subcontinent had grown into an enormous, cohesive and culturally self-sustaining world, with an agricultural economy rich enough to fund the monumental schemes and religious ventures of countless local rulers. While the Gandharans and the Guptas were creating their Buddha statues in the north, dynasties in the hills to the south developed a quite different art, one that increasingly served Hindu purposes. An art of landscape, in a sense – an art, that is, that touched on and brought out the spiritual life latent in the hillsides themselves. One could even see the stupendously huge and elaborate rock temples carved in India between 100 and 900 as being essentially in sympathy with the cave art that tentatively kindled





76 The Descent of the Ganges, rock carving at Mamallapuram, India, c. 660. One marker of the Indian landscape is overlaid with another as the sacred river Ganges is made to flow symbolically down a great rock face some 1200 kilometres (660 miles) to its south. The king who by the power of his fasting has induced Shiva to bring the waters to Earth can be seen, seated, bowed and gaunt, before a sculpted shrine on the left, facing the elephant. The enormous relief also includes comical details of playful cats and mice.

animals out of the living stone back in Palaeolithic times. A granite boulder at Mamallapuram [76], on India's south-east coast, shows this sculpture at its most outward-facing; elsewhere, the carvers delved deep inside the rocks, hollowing out statued halls and rejoicing in their dimness. The elephant is almost life-size. He faces into a natural fissure in the 6-metre (20-foot) high rock face, a channel that was once engineered with a downflow of water that would stand for the sacred River Ganges. The stone would thus have become a story from the *Mahabharata* in which a drought ended when a king's fastings obtained from the god Shiva the boon of the waters' release. Watersnake spirits writhe their way up them, while other spirits, other mortals, other animals – multitudes on multitudes, an India's worth – hail the fertile event. Equally, they hail the prodigality of the Pallavas, who were ruling Mamallapuram around 650. This dynasty also sponsored Buddhist enterprises (single-faith exclusivity was not an issue in India), but in the following century, the Hindu tradition started to establish a firm dominance over the subcontinent. Java would turn in a similar religious direction after the abandonment of Borobudur.

Buddhism remained very much alive elsewhere. To the north, it had long been feeding into China's cultural mix. Monks had introduced it there in the

1st century, travelling over the Central Asian mountains where tracks up from India's plains joined the East–West trade of the Silk Road. Its doctrines gained a stronger hold during the politically unstable centuries following the Han dynasty's collapse in the year 221. Transmitted via Central Asia, China's Buddhist imagery took on some of the Greek complexion of art in that region, and behind the sinuous grace of a seated *bodhisattva* [77] from a cave shrine on the Chinese stretch of the Silk Road lies a tradition that winds all the way back to Praxiteles. A *bodhisattva* was an intermediary, lending challenging doctrines a friendlier appeal. Individuals, so the principle went, who followed the Buddha's footsteps along the 'right path' might pass into nirvana and be released from existence; but at its very doorway, a compassionate few might turn back to help suffering humanity, charged up by their renunciation with



77 *Bodhisattva* and *luohan* (disciple), a tableau from a cave at Mogao, Dunhuang, China, c. 700. Seven other freestanding figures originally accompanied these on a platform inside one of China's Dunhuang caves. Great care was taken with the finer points of costume: the fabrics worn by the disciple reflect contemporary fashions in the Tang imperial court.



78 Excerpt from a copy of a scroll by Gu Kaizhi known as the *Nymph of the Luo River*, c. 600. This shows roughly a quarter of a handscroll that accompanies a poem written in the voice of the 2nd-century Prince Caozhi. It tells of his melancholy return to court after meeting an unattainable nymph ('Men and gods must follow separate ways'). The original may have been painted in the late 6th century, while this copy probably dates from the Song dynasty (960–1279).

unique power to intercede and instruct. These spiritual middlemen, Indian in origin, transcended gender to take on an increasingly feminized form in China. (The figure of the angel would follow a similar path in the West.) The artists at the Mogao cave shrine built theirs out of clay and painted them so they would blend with two-dimensional backdrops. We are in fact looking at a multimedia tableau, one of hundreds that drew pilgrims to the caves piercing the cliffs of a river gorge.

The work dates from not long after the Mamallapuram carvings, around 700. Here, the figures seem ready to strike up conversations – starting with that inquisitive, almost comically studious *luohan*, or novice. It's a lush, urbane, eye-teasing spectacular for a public with sophisticated tastes and expectations. The empire of the Han dynasty may have broken apart politically like its western contemporary, the Roman Empire, but economically this region had proved much more robust. The Tang dynasty, who restored the nation to a new era of expansion in 618, could depend on numerous thriving cities and ongoing technological enterprises – it was here that paper had been invented in the year 105, and it was here that woodblock printing had recently begun.

It was here, in the world's most literate society, that special arts – not only devised *for* but *among* its elite – took shape. We have seen earlier (on p. 76) how aristocrats with public responsibilities during Han times might turn aside to private contemplation with *objets d'art* like the *boshan*, the mountain in a bowl; also, how the feel of brushwork was reflected in the tiles on Han tombs. Calligraphy was a practice that united refinement of sensibility with refinement of technique. The pulsing slithers, stabs and leaps of the ink-loaded brush gave the well educated a chance to flaunt their superiority of spirit in



courteous exchanges of silk scrolls bearing poems and letters. What we now think of as ‘Chinese painting’ arose more or less as an adjunct to this supreme art. Traditionally, its founder is taken to be Gu Kaizhi, a mover in courtly circles who lived from around 345 to 405. The *Nymph of the Luo River* [78], a rendition in a running scroll of a poem written two centuries before that, has traditionally been ascribed to Gu Kaizhi, although the original image may actually have been painted in the 500s and this copy would have been made long afterwards. Dates are extremely elusive where old Chinese scrolls are concerned. A fathomless labour of creative imitation and careful fakery has wrapped chronology in a thick fog, rather as with Greek-or-Roman classical statues.

Rather as in Western classical poetry, the theme of this poem-painting is an encounter between a mortal prince and a lovely immortal, a nature spirit who wafts and dances above the Luo waters; and the mood is less religious than steeped in nostalgia for the unattainable. This concluding section shows the prince sadly returning to court, alone among attendants. The rocks, woods and waters with whom he can never wholly commune are picked out in exquisite fine lines, left to float on the silk suggestively. All the components of this fey romance became subject to more rigorous scrutiny as other members of the educated elite moved in to categorize and extrapolate the pictorial issues involved. In the 540s a theorist named Xie He devised ‘six principles’ for the burgeoning art form of silk painting, a checklist demanding above all that paintings resonate with *qi* – the spirit within both nature and the artist – and that their forms should be built up clearly, mark by mark, like a Chinese character written by a decisive hand. Dimly in the browned silk a new aesthetic lies seeded.



79 Ibn al-Bawwab, ornamental page from a Qur'an, 1000. There was no stated function for ornamental or 'carpet' pages such as this, inserted in manuscripts of the Qur'an, but their designs seemingly reflect the religious outlooks of the scribes involved. Ibn al-Bawwab and his teacher Ibn Muqla played an important role in standardizing the writing of Arabic.

Word, flesh, light

Islam, Christendom, India, 950–1250

I want to steer into the medieval mainstream – a subject that will take us on an extended tour through three religions – by way of four images, each roughly a thousand years old. Each seems to mark out something original in its own time and place, although this may be partly because surrounding evidence has gone missing.

The page illustrated here [79] from a little Qur'an, smaller in size than this book, was illuminated by Ibn al-Bawwab in 1000 or 1001 – or, according to his dating, the year 391 of the new community founded by the Prophet of Islam. During that span of time this community had established itself as a norm of civilized life throughout south-west Asia and the southern Mediterranean despite political upsets and splinterings (the Umayyad family, for example, had now fled the old capital of Damascus and operated from an alternative base at Cordoba in Spain). Ibn al-Bawwab was working for the Abbasids, who had been controlling the caliphate for over two centuries from their planned circular city of Baghdad. He was their leading calligrapher. The great Islamic empire revolved around the *written* word of God, for the very first revelation of the Qur'an invokes 'the pen' as humanity's route towards sure knowledge. The Arabic script of the holy book was truth itself, and it had a flowing beauty that anyone from a mosque builder to a pot painter could pour into almost any design space, filling it with meaning. Ibn al-Bawwab did much to regularize this versatile material into an empire-wide standard of communication. Proportion and geometrical order were his guidelines. Alongside him Muslim thinkers were restructuring the old science of the Greeks and extending their investigations of mathematics and optics. Here, this grace-note decoration, inside a luxury volume intended for some important patron, has almost the boldness of a declaration. Let there be unity, let there be order, let them be *thus*.

What we are looking at seems to resemble the page from the Lindisfarne Gospels, with its interlacings and its border flourishes. For all the disparity between their places of origin – the wilds of rural Britain and the metropolis of Baghdad – there is a kind of historical logic here.* Go back to the Scythian and Phoenician harness- and chair-ornaments at the start of Chapter 3, before the Greek Classical tradition swung into view. If the ancestry of Christian art in the far west reached back to the 'animal styles' that ranged across northern Eurasia, Islamic art in civilization's old heartlands drew on a love for rich organic pattern that was equally deep in its local roots, particularly in Syria

* There is also a possibility that 'Insular art' was influenced by decorative patterns from Egypt and Syria, the birthplaces of monasticism, thus reinforcing the connection.

and Iran. The swelling, curling leaves at the centre of the Qur'an decoration speak a design language devised by the artists of the old Persian empire that the Arabs had conquered. That language found a ready home in a civilization with a broad commitment to continuous visual harmonies, whether in construction, textiles, ceramics, metalwork or glass. As we have seen at Damascus, paradise in the Qur'an is a built-up zone. The making instincts that we saw at work in the Carthage sarcophagus, the synthesis of architectural order and vegetal ornament it embodies, had by now been lastingly built into the texture of Islamic culture. What had been displaced from its centre ground was the human figural component.

In mainland Europe, Christian artists had attempted to hold together the unity of figure, nature and structure through centuries of invasions – firstly from the 'barbarian' east, later from the Muslim south, lastly from the Vikings of the Scandinavian north. Bibles and other church treasures are the main evidence we retain from a fragmented era. In 800 the Frankish leader Charlemagne, having united most of present-day France, Germany and Italy, was crowned as '*Holy* Roman Emperor' by the bishop of Rome – an arrangement that finally detached the West from the lingering political authority of the other 'Roman' emperor in Byzantium, and also boosted the Pope's own authority. During Charlemagne's reign there was a determined revival of the values of Constantine's reign nearly five centuries before, now more firmly



80 The Gero Crucifix, c. 975, Cologne Cathedral. The body below this upper section of the life-size woodcarving twists and slumps, the belly distended above the loincloth; sculpture of shocking expressiveness. Yet worshippers in 10th-century Cologne probably thought of this less as a 'statue' (like, for instance, *Laocoön*) than as an object imbued with a sacred presence similar to that of 'the Host', the bread eaten at the Mass.

corralled around the supremacy of the Word of God. There is a calligraphic feel to much art from this time (the ‘Carolingian’ era), as illuminators reimagined prototypes from older manuscripts and monuments, elegantly distanced from more immediate reference points.

But the real turn in Europe’s Christian art seems to have come during the following century, when the German leader Otto relaunched the Holy Roman Empire after further political and military confusions. We don’t fully know what led up to the Gero Crucifix [80]. Gero, who died in 976, was the archbishop of Cologne who commissioned it to stand in the apse of the city’s basilica. There are comparable Byzantine crucifixions from slightly later, but we know of nothing quite like this before. Previously, the cross had been a sign of identity and power, and if Jesus manned it he did so *triumphans*, in a mode of victory over death. This life-size oak-wood figure instead shows the Saviour (settled into his now familiar facial type) at the point where extreme suffering yields to death. Christianity had generally shunned fully rounded statues because they smacked of paganism, but here the nameless carver invented a new kind of naturalism, fit for his grim theme – the tight-pulled, swollen torso is a long way from the classical canon. Possibly his work was quite close in status to a reliquary, a receptacle for blessed objects. It is said that Gero placed consecrated bread in a crack in the woodwork, causing it miraculously to close. Centuries earlier, before Christianity, oaks had been sacred in Germany: in such an instance, their tough, crooked flesh was being revived with the very flesh of Christ.

One might seek another rationale behind this new physicality. Gero had travelled to Byzantium as an agent in the diplomacy then allying the two separate ‘Roman Empires’, and a pro-image argument from Byzantium’s iconoclast controversies may have caught on in the West. God, so it went, had taken bodily form when he was born on earth in the person of Jesus – in the formula of St John’s Gospel, ‘the Word was made flesh’. So it was when a spiritual idea was given material form in art. This doctrine of the Incarnation provided an intellectual defence for the insistently figurative character of Christian art from this point, both in the East and the West. But by itself the doctrine of the Incarnation cannot explain why an imagery that till this point had glorified Christ should plunge him increasingly into sorrow and pain. One might ask who the new work was meant for. Might its pathos have been pitched towards drama-loving urban audiences, Cologne being one of the few centres in the West where a city life like Byzantium’s was already starting to revive?

Before pursuing those developments, I turn again eastwards, briefly – and brutally. Between the German wood-carving and a near-contemporary Indian stone-carving [81], the discords are undeniably outrageous. There, Jesus buckles beneath hard nails and heroic responsibilities; here, bodies as if

without selfhood swell and bend and fuse in a warm, guiltless dream. The carving was done in the 950s at Khajuraho, capital of a smallish kingdom south of the Ganges. Pursuing his own erotic reverie, the sculptor was also kindling reveries in a courtly clientele, fine-tuning a theme that had run through Indian culture since the days of the now-fragmented Gupta empire. This delivery of *rasa*, of a particular flavour of delight, was the gift that Indian art theorists most prized, and it is what Western viewers acknowledge when they describe the tradition as ‘sensual’. But rather than simply contrasting this feel for fleshliness with the knotty moral challenge posed by the crucifix, we could aim for a broader view of medieval art by considering the positionings involved. This couple are among hundreds of sinuous figures, all ideally ripe and ideally svelte, lining one of three similar friezes around a temple, itself the first of a similar four dozen or more that were built at



81 Loving couple, carving on the Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho, *c.* 950. The erotic temple friezes at Khajuraho have often been related to the *Kama Sutra*, a book of sexual and moral instruction compiled by Vatsyayana some time during the Gupta period (250–550). Another possible influence was Tantra – an esoteric religious tradition that in some versions encouraged its devotees to seek after spiritual energies through sacramental sexual acts.

82 *Shiva Nataraja*, bronze statuette from the Chola kingdom of south India, c. 1050. The image of Shiva dancing initially appeared in relief stone-carvings on southern Indian temples during the late 10th century. It evolved rapidly into an independent symbol capable of bearing many levels of interpretation. The process was fostered by the Chola monarchs who then ruled southern India, Sri Lanka, Sumatra and Java. Bronzes of outstanding delicacy have ever since been prominent in the region's visual culture.



Khajuraho by the Chandella dynasty during the 10th and 11th centuries. Some among this cornucopia are coupling in amazingly complex positions and may have appealed to devotees of an esoteric cult interested in the mystical aspects of orgasm. Others reflect the ridiculous side of sex: further along the same façade, a man who buries his face in his hands while his friend penetrates a horse indicates that even here there are limits ...

But all that is around the temple's exterior. The sanctum within centres on a stone carving of the god Vishnu, whose three heads dream up and reabsorb all these multiplicities. This is the type of interior position for which the crucifix was intended, commanding and absolute. Like a Buddha statue, a crucifix is a main dish for the heart and the mind, while friezes are merely hors d'oeuvres. Both those figures, moreover, can be detached from the shrine and miniaturized, so as to create a spiritual focus wherever they are displayed. The Hindu tradition, now dominant throughout India, was just creating its own equivalent. The *Shiva Nataraja*, Shiva as 'lord of the dance' [82], was an image first cast in bronze in the mid-11th century in the southern kingdom of the Cholas, present-day Tamil Nadu. From antecedents on temple walls, the



83 Christ and Apostles, from the central tympanum at La Madeleine, Vézelay, c. 1120.

design soon crystallized into a portable summation of the doctrines Hindu teachers were now spelling out. Shiva – who, like Vishnu, is merely one aspect of what truly exists – dances so as to give that reality a certain appearance. Among his four hands, the drum held in his far right vibrates to stir up objects and events, while the flame in his far left blasts them away; the gestures in between promise us safekeeping and deliverance from illusion – that being the squat dwarf the dancer surmounts. By around 1050, the rapport between scholars and sculptors had forged a symbol at once so concise and so comprehensive as to be beyond further revision.

From the bronze statuette we could head back into Western history via an image designed for yet another sort of placing. From the time of the Gero Crucifix, Europe had begun to build its own stone temples at a quickening pace, new material commitments paid for by the advances that its agriculture had quietly but surely made. Monks had been coordinators of this progress, and it was for a monastic church that this figure of Christ [83] was carved some time around 1120. The church, at Vézelay in the Burgundy region of France, was essentially the same long hall or basilica that Christians had used since Constantine’s time, albeit now given stouter walls in order to bear a stone roof. Arms crossing the hall near the apse, ‘transepts’, suggested the structure’s relation to the crucified Christ – in an equally ancient analogy, the building was a body, Christ’s bride. This carving, however, stood outside that body: it was a *tympanum*, a half-circle over the entrance. With such an



84 A mêlée during the Battle of Hastings: an excerpt from the Bayeux Tapestry, c. 1080. 'Here were falling both the English and the French in the battle', reads the Latin inscription to the left. The Bayeux Tapestry is in a long tradition of war art that is essentially even-handed in its treatment of victor and vanquished. 'Here is Odo', the writing continues, naming the warrior riding off to the right who may well have commissioned the tapestry. He was bishop of Bayeux and brother to William, England's Norman conqueror.

addition, the doorway echoed the rounded arches that dominated the new stonemasonry of the 11th and 12th centuries – a revival of a typically Roman building technique that afterwards led people to term this era 'the Romanesque'. The tympanum faced outwards to the hallway and the world beyond: it looked down Vézelay's hill, past the monastery's estates, out to the duchies and counties whose inhabitants would gather to set off from this rendezvous on the months-long journey to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in north-western Spain.

It braced them. The man who is God – the one figure France's own iconoclasts, during its 1790s revolution, dared not deface – juts his tensed limbs and spreads his giant hand; like Shiva's, it flashes forth fire. But this is the Holy Spirit, jolting the disciples who scramble below, thrusting them out on their mission. They must go to the peoples in the panels above, both the close-at-hand converted and the outlandish heathen. Beyond, in an outer ring, a cycle of roundels represents the labours for each month and the signs of the zodiac, but the timeless equipoise of the dancing Shiva is not on the agenda. Christ confronts the world: the hour is at hand.

What kind of world this was we can see another way in a work made a few decades earlier. The Bayeux Tapestry [84] is not only one of the few intact fabrics of the Romanesque era but its largest surviving secular artwork. It was not woven, as its name might imply, but stitched, probably by needlewomen



in the English city of Canterbury in the 1080s. They were probably employed by the bishop of Bayeux to record their country's conquest by his own fellow Normans, a warrior clan of Scandinavian origin who had previously taken control of northern France. This excerpt shows one of the fastest-moving sequences in 68 metres (223 feet) of running narrative: we are in the middle of the Battle of Hastings and the Norman cavalry is stumbling at an English ditch. This is not so much a victors' history as a laconic ground-level view of how men spend their lives – hurtling about, hurling things and hacking at one another, bound to these duties by their Christian oaths. As in the Lindisfarne Gospels, birds and beasts from ancient heathen imagery keep a foothold in the upper border. The lower has been invaded by the slain, including a horse in the centre that has been boldly drawn as if seen from above. Earlier along this border strip, the needlewomen had whimsically brought in a couple about to have sex – rather as hags with gaping vulvas sometimes found a place propping up the eaves of Romanesque churches. This world had its own fumbling analogues to the Khajuraho friezes.

Certain ingredients of this 'Romanesque' picture language can be traced back to Roman art, but in spirit it's closer to the Maya frescoes than to Trajan's Column – reckless, ruthless, graphically bold. Local traditions from Britain and Scandinavia also informed the style here, but in fact its hard outlines and zappy blocks of flat colour were extremely widespread in the

11th century. Comparable instances could be found in the heraldries now being devised for Europe's warrior knights, in illuminations done in monasteries from Germany to northern Spain, or even in the figures being painted on pottery by Muslims as far afield as Syria and Iran.* Likewise, the prototypes behind Christ's robe on the Vézelay tympanum may stretch back into classical times, but the whorled rhythms that make it so mesmerizing were the regional invention of carvers from the eastern Pyrenees. They travelled up and down the pilgrimage routes that ran to Compostela, working their connections with monastic orders. Communication systems were fluid and international – not least because European nations as we know them now had hardly been invented. The England the Normans had captured was a rather atypical entity.

Joined by a singularly complex geography and jostled by centuries of invasions, post-1000 Western Europe had become a febrile political ferment, even while its economy accelerated. The Holy Roman Empire floated above the countless warrior fiefdoms more as one abstract ideal – currently at loggerheads with another, the papacy – than as a dependable source of power. War was at once a normal condition of brutality and a high, exciting calling. Beneath the hilltop church at Vézelay, St Bernard preached to massed Christians in 1146, sending them off on the second of their murderous crusades against the Muslims in Palestine and Syria. Meanwhile, the Normans had also been sailing south to seek the Mediterranean's rich pickings. In the 1080s they seized Sicily from its Muslim and Byzantine overlords.

Over the following century Norman rule over Sicily showed how all the clashing cultures could temporarily work together. The superstructures of the northerners' buildings in Palermo were largely Islamic in design, but the creed they obeyed was that of the pope in Rome. Above Palermo, at the cathedral on the royal hill ('Monreale') [85], the remit also remained papal. No medieval interior demonstrates on a grander scale the principle outlined by Pope Gregory back in 600 that church pictures could provide 'a gospel for the unlettered'. Here, during the 1170s, the essential stories of the Old Testament and the New were laid out on every available surface with a majestic clarity, transforming the great hall into an encyclopaedic treasure box. But who was steering this scheme? Artists from Byzantium, almost certainly – by now Rome's sworn enemy. The two religious capitals had fallen out in 1054, splitting the church from this point onwards into Catholic and Orthodox.

Despite the schism, Byzantine art retained the prestige it had long held in the poorer and less urbanized West. This mosaic suggests why. Like Jesus hoisting up the stumbling St Peter from his amateur attempt to walk the Sea of

* Figure painters still found plenty of work under Islamic rule, even if not for the mosque.

Galilee, the Greek artists kept a firm grip on pictorial tools inherited from late classical times – resplendent rolling draperies, eye-catching highlights leaping from dark backgrounds. Full of bold certitude, they could choreograph massed groupings and latch onto telling details, like the sea-spray lashing the shipload of worried disciples. All this drama would weigh on the cathedral walls no more heavily than the footfalls of Jesus on the waters. All was translated into a rhythmic elegance of greens, whites and gold.

Byzantium was a cultural powerhouse and had also been a strong political force since its recovery from the iconoclast controversies, from 842 onwards. Its church art had returned from those debates with an enhanced religious status. God, making ‘man in his image’ and himself becoming physically incarnate, guaranteed the goodness of images. Church legends provided further back-up. Allegedly, the holy gospel-writer Luke had been a painter and had recorded the living likenesses of the Virgin Mary and her child. Working in Luke’s wake, a painter in Constantinople would prepare himself with prayer before scrupulously following the lines of the saint’s original, transmitted without flaw across 1130 years. In this way, he could deliver a truthful image, an *icon* [86]. Whoever contemplated such an icon would be spiritually addressing the merciful mother of God herself.

Icons were typically placed on a central stand in Byzantine churches, under the kind of dome we saw the saint bearing at Ravenna [see 70]. This art offered worshippers intimate contact with the eternal, but that is not to say that it never changed. During the early 12th century, the great and wealthy city of Byzantium, the largest in Europe, was fashioning its own innovatory art of pathos, much as artists had been doing at Cologne and elsewhere in the West. In this icon, some master painter on the imperial payroll modulated layer upon layer of tempera glazing so as to bring alive the Virgin who feels our sorrows – and the infant God who consoles her, as she grieves for his sufferings to come.

This standard-setting panel, however, quit the pomp and sophistication of the metropolis for very different vistas. In 988 delegates from a northern tribe wishing to gain respectability in the civilized world had travelled south to shop for a religion. Of the alternatives on offer, the Church of Byzantium outshone Islam with the glamour of its ritual (‘We knew not whether we were in heaven or earth’) – and so they returned to recommend Orthodox Christianity to the Prince of Kiev, and thereby to Russia. This icon, the *Virgin of Vladimir* as she became known, was a gift that the emperor sent in 1131 in order to cement the northern alliance. Vladimir was the city in which a cathedral was built to house her. Later, she was transported to Moscow, and her presence would be invoked to save that city from invasions in 1395, and again in 1451 and 1480. It is even said that in 1941 Stalin flew her in a plane round his capital in order to save it from the Nazis. In this fateful history she



85 (opposite) Christ pulls Peter from the Sea of Galilee, mosaic in the cathedral of Monreale, c. 1180. Monreale is exceptional among surviving medieval cathedral interiors in that it was completed within a single decade: begun in 1174, the building was substantially finished by 1182. The content of Monreale's biblical mosaics ranges from abstracted cosmic diagrams, in the sections treating the creation of the universe, to touches of intimate human drama and impressionistic natural details. They come together within an enveloping ambience of gold.



86 *The Virgin of Vladimir*, 1131.

acquired and lost many a gilding and jewel-studded cover. Of the original Byzantine work only the faces now remain. How much can we really look her presence in the eye, adhering to chronology?

Gold-leaf was an important element of Byzantine art and its international allure. Gold is matter and yet, miraculously, it transports us beyond matter, seeming to give out a richer light than it receives: witness Ravenna's glittering mosaics. The highlights in the Monreale image and the icon of the Virgin send the eyes on similar journeys from darkness to transcendent radiance. Such artistic techniques paralleled a mystical philosophy formulated back in the 5th century, which claimed that all material things had the potential to reveal the divine. But this thinking, developed by a certain Dionysius, took on quite another inflection when exported west. Just outside Paris, an abbey named



87 Five Hebrew patriarchs, stone carving by the centre doorway of the north transept of Chartres Cathedral, 1205–10. A new sculpture developed around France's Gothic cathedrals, some seventy years after the tympanum at Vézelay and perhaps forty before the portal at Rheims (shown right). We see, from left to right, Melchizedek, Abraham (with his son Isaac), Moses, Samuel and David. Perched on twisting columns, the figures are themselves uprights caught up in convoluted rhythms. These Early Gothic church carvings are deeper and weightier than Vézelay's Romanesque, but lack the conversational animation of the High Gothic work at Rheims.

88 (opposite) *The Visitation*, from the west façade of Rheims Cathedral (central portal, right side), c. 1245.

Saint-Denis had held a book by Dionysius since Charlemagne's time, and it creatively identified him with its own local patron saint. Around 1140 its church was rebuilt. Its abbot, Suger, wrote an interpretation of this new and costly reconstruction along lines suggested by the ancient mystic. Suger too looked to the meaning in all material things, and to the beauty of rare substances. However, he wrote, 'Marvel *not* at the gold and the expense but at the *craftsmanship* of the work.'

The building work at Saint-Denis was only a decade and 200 kilometres (124 miles) away from that at Vézelay, but it belonged to another European milieu – not to peasants and pilgrims, but to networks of craftsmen and scholars based around the growing city of Paris. Practical know-how and the ability to make inventive connections were the prize possessions here, assets worth more than gold. Suger, who was an exceptionally capable henchman to the local boss (in the 1140s, 'the king of France' amounted to little more than that), brought together the stonemasons' workshops at Saint-Denis to produce a new architectural synthesis. We now term this synthesis 'Gothic'. In the Gothic system, the pointed arches that Romanesque builders had occasionally used became crucial, because they carried through the stress borne by the ribs that supported the stone ceiling, turning the building into an open linear skeleton rather than a solidly walled-up body.

Whether this structural revolution was launched by engineers' dialogues or steered by mystical ideals, its vision caught on during the century that followed, principally among the prospering towns of north-west Europe. Between the 1160s and the 1250s it became an astonishing popular phenomenon. A cathedral could unite burghers at once in zealous collaboration and in inter-city competition, its spires soaring past the merely material and also past rivals. These massive airy frameworks still tower over many cities of the region. Having evolved over the following centuries, many of them seem to straddle time. They remain Europe's single most comprehensive artform – and as such they are simply far too big and too encompassing to represent with a few flat images here. We could maybe just touch on one or two aspects of what 'Gothic' involved.

The couple on pedestals illustrated here [88] played a supporting role in the imagery of Rheims Cathedral. Rheims, east of Paris, was where France's kings were crowned, and these lofty figures, well over life-size, were among eight flanking the portal through which the monarch would pass after a coronation. They formed a giant chorus to him; they also performed to a proud and discriminating townsfolk, grown wealthy on the wine trade. Not surprisingly, this urbane front-of-house sculpture of the mid-13th century is poles

* Translations from Suger by David Burr, of the History Department of Virginia University (italics added).



apart from the rugged tympanum over the portal at rural Vézelay, done slightly more than a century before. At Rheims, the carvers' team deployed an expertise established by earlier artists in eastern France and the lands stretching to the Rhine (the metalworker Nicholas of Verdun, for instance). For reasons that remain not entirely certain, artists in this region were able to draw on a good working knowledge of antique classical statuary.

As a result, the swaying postures and fluted draperies perfected during the age of Praxiteles are here rewound about a Gospel theme – the Virgin's meeting with the similarly pregnant mother of St John the Baptist. This Greek-to-French translation has something in common with the Greek-to-Chinese translation we saw earlier at the caves of Mogao [see 77]: it's a drama for sophisticates, courteous, conversational, subtle yet earnest. It also opens up a developing aspect of Europe's Christian culture. It was the male who ran things and the male who made things in the medieval world, for the most part at least. But for males to consider how women might talk and feel, for males to contemplate the Virgin's compassion, was to show that their strength had spare capacity. Tenderness was a way of flaunting their 'civilization'.

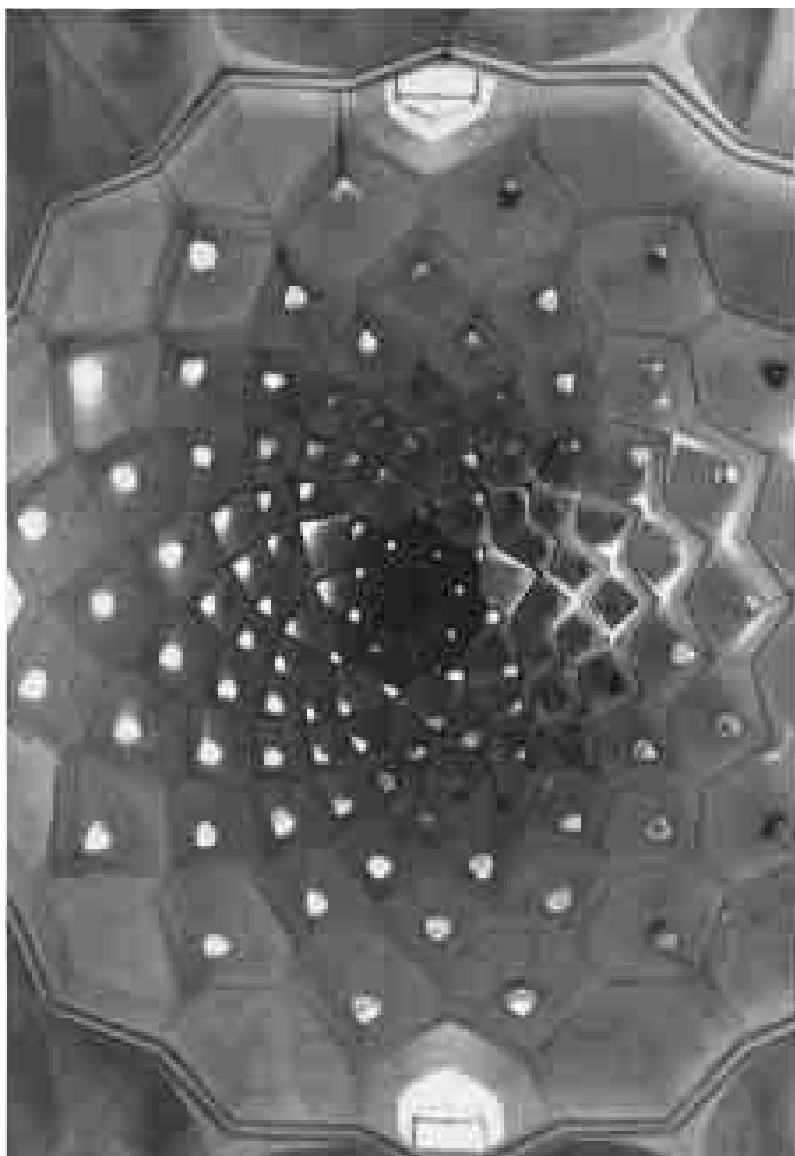
The figures all but stand free of the columned wall. One way to envisage Gothic sculpture would be to imagine independent bodies stepping forward to supply a physical presence, since the church itself, rising skeletally upwards, is almost shedding its own bodily mass. A more factual description of Gothic might be the visual language of an urban society on the rise. Could it coexist with the older rural networks of the Romanesque carvers, with their brash tattoos on the church's stone skin, so urgent, so expressionistic, so uproarious? Not really: one effectively displaced the other. By 1250 the countryside was culturally on the back foot.

But the new artistic regime had levels that went beyond statuary. Above all, it demanded that the viewer *look up*. Suger had pointed the way, wishing 'to *exalt* the soul from the material to the immaterial, *lifting* it in a mystic manner'. At Saint-Denis, his boss the king had supplied 'opulent sapphire and ready money' for teams of glaziers and painters, so that they might transmute the 'wonderful and uninterrupted light' of the tall windows opened up by the new architectural system. Stained-glass techniques had been developing since at least the 7th century. Stained-glass design derived partly from Romanesque picture-making: the artists welded the strong outlines and swingeing colour-blocks seen in the Bayeux Tapestry [see 84] into decorous symmetrical unities. Their technical prowess reached its zenith in the earlier 13th century, with the vast circular 'rose windows' set in French cathedrals – Rheims itself, Chartres, Notre-Dame in Paris – and also with the most single-minded of all Gothic projects, the Sainte-Chapelle [89], built for the palace facing Notre-Dame between 1243 and 1248.

89 *The Annunciation and Visitation*, detail of a window in the Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, 1243–48. Below, the archangel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will bear a child – a scene cherished by European artists through the following centuries. Above, Mary’s loving visit to the pregnant St Elizabeth – the same scene we saw sculpted on p. 121. In stylistic terms, this two-dimensional scene and that three-dimensional representation stand at opposite ends of the continuum of Gothic religious art.



We are looking here at a section of the holy chapel’s *walls*, since all is coloured glass between the sixteen fine columns that soar to a roof 20 metres (66 feet) above the floor. The columns are gilded, but here miraculous effects do not depend on gold. If blue is the colour of the sunlit sky, the art that can intensify it into sapphire makes it truly a heaven. It is an art, as Suger wrote, that could ‘brighten minds’, sending them ‘through the lights to the one light’, in other words to Christ. Against the sapphire the glaziers have chiefly jangled jasper, the red of Christ’s blood. This colour clash pulses up and down the giddy high window-walls and surfeits the senses. Radiant narratives climb up, beyond the stamina of the eyes to discern: another panoply of sacred stories, as at Monreale, but this time pointing up analogies between the ancient kings of Israel and those of 13th-century France.



90 View into the ceiling with *muqarnas* at the shrine of Zumurud Khatun, Baghdad, *c.* 1220. The building beneath this stepped dome is octagonal in form. From without, the roof structure bursts upwards above the surrounding cemetery like a giant pine cone. Poets in Islamic lands frequently spoke of the stars as lights in the 'dome' of the sky, and it is reasonable to infer that a roof like this represented a symbolical heaven. It is also possible that the building's vegetal form evoked the ancient Asian image of the 'tree of life'.

That subtext backs up the building's whole purpose: to serve as a grandiose receptacle (or 'reliquary') for the crown worn by Israel's ultimate 'king' – for the ring of thorns that pierced the brow of Jesus as his tormentors set him on the cross. The devout King Louis XI of France – St Louis, as he became – had newly obtained this precious item from Byzantium, paying vast sums to a vendor whose claim on the relic was arguably criminal (as we shall see in the chapter that follows).

Plunder; pathos; passionate piety; the seeds of nationalistic myth; mystical analogies vaulting over countless categories, yoking colour and meaning, ancient and modern, material and spiritual ... The Sainte-Chapelle plunges the viewer into the rich maze of High Gothic Christianity, a disorienting super-intensity that thrills and that gluts. It is possible, I think, to find a framework that elucidates not only this, but most of the art I have discussed within this section; but to do so, it might be better to step away from Paris, and outside Christendom altogether. Just as with great cathedrals, it is really impossible to seize great medieval mosques, such as those of Cordoba or Cairo, and reduce them to single photographic images of more than travel-brochure curiosity value. It is almost as difficult to represent a vast, diverse continuum of Islamic manufacture by a single, exquisite item of weaving or smithing or ceramics or glass.

I opt for a scale somewhere in between [90]. We are back in Baghdad, some two hundred years on from the calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwab. It is a capital much reduced in power, since, like the Roman emperors before them, the caliphs had long ago been obliged to cede most of their power and their territories to soldiers from the distant north. These, the Seljuk Turks from Central Asia, were in fact the patrons of much of the finest Islamic art of the 11th century. But by the time the monument we see here was built, the Seljuks' power too had waned, amid a pan-Islamic splintering of dynasties and doctrinal allegiances.

The monument is a tomb and it has long been attributed to al-Nasir, a late Abbasid caliph who attempted to settle the long-running split between Sunni and Shi'a in the 1190s and 1200s. Building tombs was not, in the Prophet's stated opinion, a particularly commendable Islamic activity. Nonetheless, the will to commemorate started to get the better of Muslims from the 950s onwards, particularly in Iran and Central Asia, and resulted in a variety of astonishing constructions. The technique employed here in Baghdad was known as *muqarna*, honeycomb or stalactite vaulting, and it seems likely that it originated in the brick-building heartlands of Iraq as an inventive variation on the making of spherical domes. In the photo, we have stepped inside a high chamber with a beehive roof. We are looking straight upwards.

It is a structured space, but also one that has clearly been designed as an image to be viewed. You could paraphrase that image in various ways. You could say something about multiplicities spreading out. After all, at least half the fascination of medieval art resides in its centrifugal complexities – the gargoyles and encrustations and supplementary ornamentations and erotic variations and outlandish monsters. ... Or you could demand straightforwardly to know what the builders ‘meant’. You’re unlikely to get an answer. Unlike calligraphers such as Ibn al-Bawwab, Abbasid architects were menial nobodies, and there is no hard evidence that they consulted books of mystical geometry. It is conceivable that they just enjoyed performing brick acrobatics. But here we have the pervasive conundrum of medieval art history, from the time of the sarcophagus in the stone-yard onwards. We have the evidence that people worked, with a love and dedication that exceeds modern comprehension; we like to think they prayed, ditto; how they conversed, how they decided things, what their names were ... gone. Nonetheless, you could also mention unity. I don’t think it would be out of place to utter Allah’s name.

Early modern, late ancient

China, Japan, Cambodia, Nigeria, 1000–1250

The remarks just made about medieval art should be taken as excluding China. Examine, for instance, the hanging scroll *Early Spring* [91]. Just under the uppermost tree on the left-hand border you will glimpse the signature of Guo Xi, professor at the imperial painting academy. He has added the date, the year 1072. These details alone should indicate that the history of the great empire had steered rather a different course from that of the West or of India: signatures, titles and painting academies were in distinctly short supply in those parts.

China was singular in that its big, resilient, inventive economy sustained an extensive leisure class. To put it grudgingly, there were a large number of landowners who had little to do but to paint or to contemplate painting. Their art, it’s true, was not exactly safe from disruptions. The emperors liked to amass the finest silk scrolls in their wooden palaces, with all too little thought to fire control: as a result we have only artists’ names, in critics’ and connoisseurs’ lists, for much of the high art of the Tang dynasty (from 618 to 906). The record gets much thicker by the time of Guo Xi. He served the Song dynasty, which held the imperial throne from 960. Yet, as with the supposed handiwork of Gu Kaizhi some five centuries earlier (see pp. 106–7), the trails of influence and imitation meander in the mist. Guo’s manner bows to that of an older master, Li Cheng, who himself quoted from some lost master. And how

91 Guo Xi, *Early Spring*, 1072.

An experiment in spatial complexity by a theorist-practitioner drawing on an already ancient tradition. Guo Xi variegated his brushwork to attend to differing types of tree and rock, commenting that each had a certain moral character – upright trees suggested resilience in changing political circumstances, gnarled trees the intumed demeanour of someone who conceals his opinions. Like many of the great masterpieces of Chinese painting, *Early Spring* left Beijing for Taipei in Taiwan in 1949, as China’s Nationalist government fled the advance of the Communist armies of Mao Zedong.





92 Animal caricatures (*choju giga*), paper handscroll, c. 1130. Who is this super-rabbit who is causing the frogs such uncontrollable hilarity? The exact butt of the satire is not known, but in all probability it was someone within the Buddhist clerisy. In the sophistication of its drawing and in its reckless high spirits, this 12th-century Japanese scroll is a bolder parallel of the cunning, derisive marginalia appended by Christian monks of the time to the manuscripts they were given to illuminate.

much creative retouching by later hands has upset the accents of Guo's own design?

It seems clear, however, that *Early Spring* is a major individual imaginative experiment, of a kind not really encountered in this history before. The mountain image in China is at least as old as that *boshan* of 120 BCE (p. 76). The painted mountain had long been a theme for refined souls, intent on Daoist reveries of nature. Seventy years earlier, Fan Kuan had invented a compelling formula to convey its grandeur, dangling a giant and solitary summit over mists before a foreground valley. But Guo's outdoor rambles and observations had been gathered up in a theory of multiple perspectives, and he set himself to scramble every impulse towards visual closure. You must wander your way through his brushwork slowly – budge right round the challenging foreground rocks to the bridge where a diminutive figure sets the scale; clamber up past the waterfall, where the homely roofs of a town await you; but now you have lost all access to the equally enticing deep valley on the left, while the dizzy peaks float out of your reach like so many dreams in the morning. All that binds the image together is the painter's responsiveness to the head-to-foot length of silk confronting him, as if its blankness were alive,

as if each brushstroke must wrest from that fabric the life infusing the object at hand. ‘Rocks are the bones of heaven and earth,’ the academician wrote; ‘mist and haze are their complexion.’

For an equivalent speculative tone and sense of personal experiment, European art would have to wait four centuries till the time of Leonardo. To jump from the sublime to the ridiculous, the *choju giga* also pack something of a surprise [92]. This flippancy, this canniness, this insouciance: can they really date from 1130? But we have hopped east from China. During the 6th century, Buddhism had crossed the seas from China and Korea to Japan, a land last seen on these pages in its distant prehistoric past (p. 26). During the 7th century, a newly proclaimed empire of Japan brought the religion and its monasteries under its protection. Rather like the Javanese importing Indian Buddhism on a spectacular scale at Borobudur, the Japanese took up Chinese forms of religion and politics with spectacular energy: in the 740s they consigned the entire national supply of copper to the casting of a gigantic bronze Buddha for the Todaiji, the main temple in the then capital of Nara.

Japanese behaviour patterns, however, remained bound up with the *kami* – the indigenous spirits that pulled at the patterns of daily life and that lurked within the land, among its woods, hills and waters. Shinto, as this body of belief later became known, made a god of the emperor, and yet it remained a uniquely dispersed, doctrine-resistant, almost guerrilla spirituality. The political situation soon became internally entangled: the emperor retreated from the overbearing influence of the monks to a new base at Kyoto, while families of nobles gained ascendancy, creating complex networks of refinement and etiquette. There was all the more cultural space for the fluid and the subversive to flourish. Irony informed these *choju giga*, or ‘animal scrolls’. The art form was launched by a Buddhist abbot named Toba Sojo, who sought to criticize the unbecoming conduct of his co-religionists – so that elsewhere among these satirical sequences a saucy monkey is seen hailing a squat frog-Buddha, sitting lotus-style on a parody altar.

Here, lightness had force. In Japan, the most beautiful action was the most minimal, and the preferred material for scrolls was paper, not silk. Chinese visitors were at a loss to comprehend the lack of philosophy and ‘propriety’. It was here that Lady Murasaki wrote the *Tale of Genji*, the first modern novel, shortly after the year 1000 – the first extended prose narrative, that is, to depend on everyday circumstances and psychological nuances. Much early painting ‘in the Japanese style’ (brightly coloured, as opposed to the monochrome ‘Chinese style’) was devoted to its illustration.

How, though, should historians approach Ungyo [93], made for a temple in Nara some seventy years after the sketching of the *choju giga*? He and his

93 (opposite) Jokei, *Ungyo*, wooden statue at the Kofukuji, Nara, c. 1203. Ungyo and his open-mouthed colleague Agyo are twin *kongo-rikishi*, guardians of a Buddhist temple in Japan's ancient imperial capital of Nara. They protect the building from trespassers of evil intent. The artist who made them, Jokei, belonged to the 'Kei' school of sculptors, who were famed during the 12th and 13th centuries for their techniques of bonding and painting multiple wooden blocks to create startlingly realistic figures. Eyes of crystal were inserted into their sockets from behind and backed with white paper, so as to make them glitter with life.

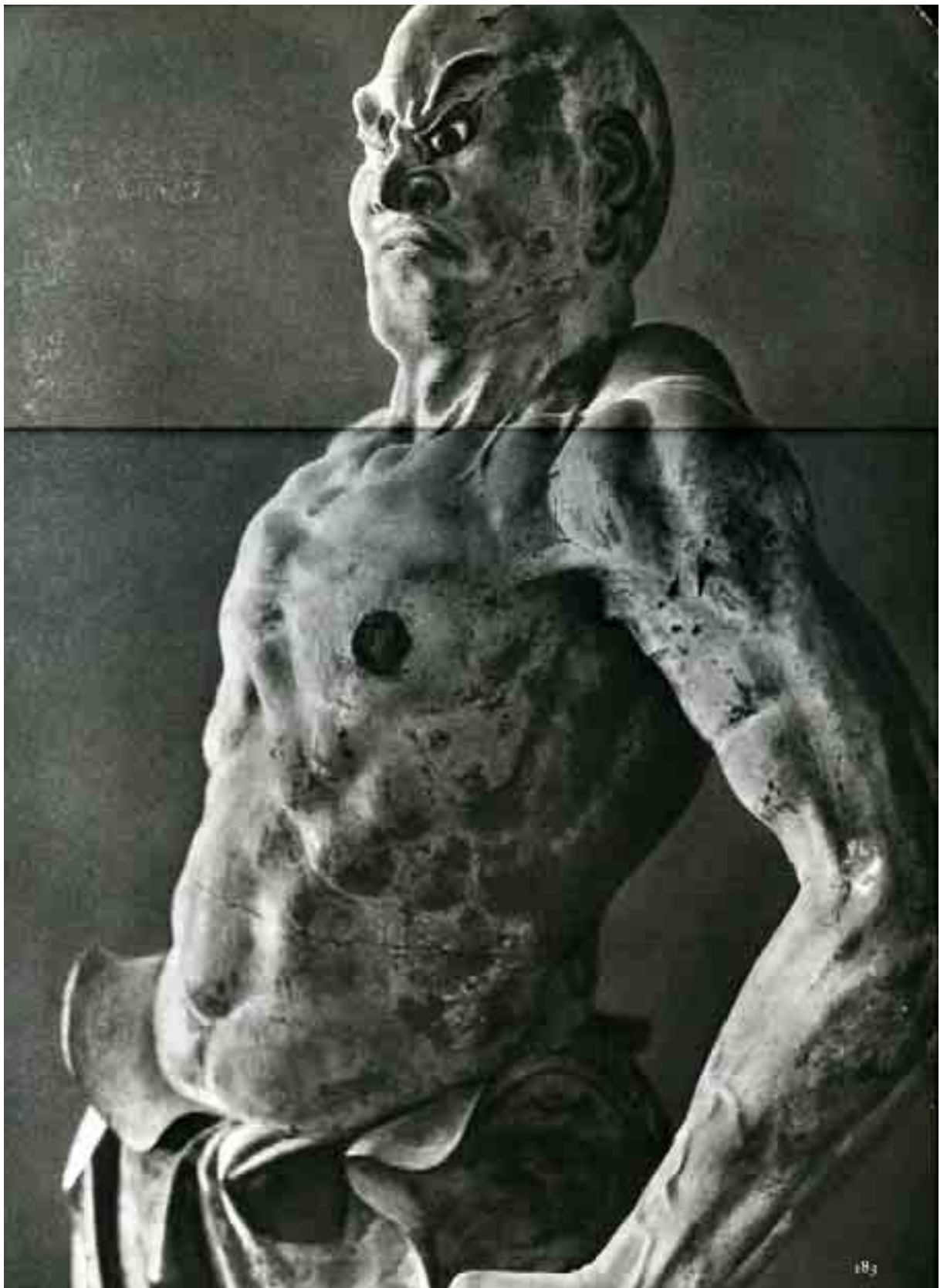
94 Jayavarman VII, sandstone head, c. 1200.



yelping companion Agyo were the giant 'thunder-bearers' threatening any malefactor who approached the temple portals – bit-players in Buddhism's by now vast and intricate cast-list of demigods and demons. They backed onto the abysses of terror and punishment that many a creed promising salvation seemed to need to invoke. (Romanesque devils are no less extreme.) They might be regarded as the culmination of a magnificent tradition of Buddhist sculpture that had rolled from the plains of India, through Gandhara and the high central mountains, down into the prosperous cities of China and Korea, and now to this quick-minded island, picking up a naturalistic touch here, an idealization there. Equally, the technique they display, like that of the Gero Crucifix, is rooted in a local reverence for wood – Japan's chief sculptural material, carvable stone being thin on the ground. In all these ways, they read as *ancient*.

Jokei, the sculptor wielding those techniques to such sensational effect, was one of a new breed of artistic innovators. The 'Kamakura Renaissance', they have been called: people who picked up the initial impetus of Buddhist sculpture's arrival in Japan and recharged it, under the patronage of the powerful men who were seizing control of state politics. By 1190 the dainty fabric of mannerliness and impertinence under which Toba had flourished was giving way as the tough guys, the samurai, moved in. Jokei and many another 'Kei' sculptor, notably the great portraitist Unkei, gave a visual expression to the ethos of disciplined individualism that the samurai embodied. Perhaps the *kongo-rikishi*'s swagger is not so much supernatural as maniacally macho. Through the next four centuries, Japanese history would turn around castles, vendettas and savage civil wars, in approximate parallel to the politico-military confusions of feudal Europe. 'Ancient'? 'Modernizing'? 'Medieval'? Insist on any of those categories too firmly and they will all fall apart. Only one thing is certain: further uncertainties lie ahead.

The word 'unity' was used a few pages ago but, in this chapter and in the millennium it clutches at, incoherence will have the last say. We shall simply glimpse as another stupendous civilization retreats into the jungle, leaving us with the head of its last great god-king. Jayavarman VII [94] ruled Cambodia's Khmer empire from 1181 to 1219, a Buddhist who was building on the Hindu-leaning foundations laid by another Jayavarman four hundred years before. This smooth-planed stone, suavely dreaming of its own mass, will have to stand for the fifty-seven forest-topping towers of the Bayon, the colossal stone monument he erected at Angkor Thom – each of them carved with his own outsize likeness, serenely presiding over reliefs of his people at their myriad daily activities; and they in turn will have to front for the slightly earlier Angkor Wat, a religious complex yet vaster than Borobudur. There is no way we can integrate so much within a forward-driving narrative.

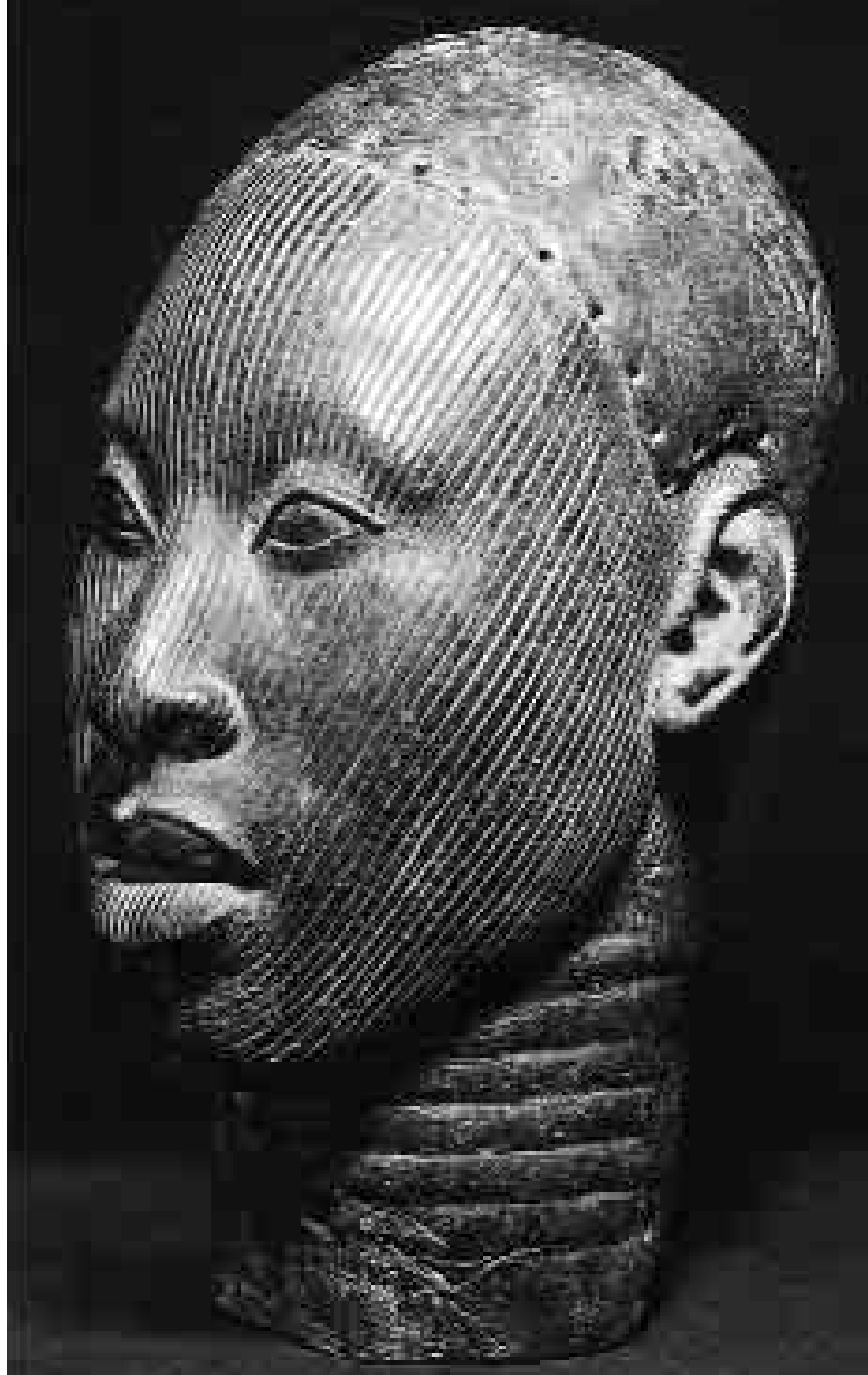


95 Bronze head of an *oba* from Ife, c. 1200. The *oba* was a priest-king in the sacred city of Ife, in what is now Nigeria's Yorubaland. He was descended from the creator-divinity Oduduwa and would have passed his reign in the innermost sanctum of the palace, his person unseen by common mortals. Ife was the great centre of Nigerian metalwork between the 11th and 14th centuries; slightly earlier in the south-east, Igbo-Ukwu had produced works of a technical sophistication unmatched at that time anywhere in the world. Just how these centres were connected remains unclear.

Gazing on sublime Jayavarman, we could temporize with that timeworn word 'timeless'.

We wind up at another clearing in the historical woods, which turns out to be another centre of the world. Ife in western Nigeria is where the mythic king Oduduwa came down from above to create humanity in the form of the Yoruba people, and this life-size brass head [95] was found in a central ritual compound of the sacred ancient city. We are now way across the Niger River from the Nok terracotta king with whom we began this chapter, and it is just over a thousand years later – 1200 or so. How are they connected? That remains uncertain – as does so much in Africa at this point. To account for the wealth of inventions that would eventually emerge, one has to posit an ocean of submerged wood-carving between the coasts of Senegal and South Africa, with rare atolls of ancient terracottas breaking the waves here and there. But in Nigeria there does seem some formal continuity, at least, with Nok culture. Ife's bronze-casters worked from clay models and retained the same accents on uprightness, symmetry and dignity, the same delight in consecrating a surface with grooves.

Very likely those grooves portray the actual scar patterns etched into a certain king's skin. The Ife heads stand out in ancient Africa not only for their technical sophistication, but for their idealized naturalism. And yet this quality, which seems to align them with ancient Egyptian and Greek sculptures – simply as some of the most serenely beautiful human images ever made – slightly dislocates them. West African cultures tend to *pair* their images. The pair to this, the king's outward likeness, would be not the queen's (although equally fine queen portraits do exist), but a diminutive upright cylinder, an abstraction poked with eyes – the likeness of the *inner*, the spiritual man. Both provided a whole other account of reality than those which obtained from Europe to China. Consider also the holes at the bronze's hairline and neck. Hairpieces and regal jewellery might be attached to it as it stood on an altar in some innermost chamber. West African art tends to hook together richer meanings by hooking up diverse objects. Maybe these diverse images can help us to hook together our own.





DOORWAYS AND WINDOWS

Banquets and bare trees *China, 970s–1370s*

The courtesan peeking her head round the door into Han Xizai's private apartments could be standing in for us: we are being given an eye-witness view of the shocking goings-on inside [96]. Government officials indulging in wine, women and song! Scandal, scandal! The scene comes from a handscroll first recorded in the Chinese imperial collection around 1100, and one can imagine prim courtiers frowning as it unfurled, their notions of Confucian propriety outraged. For all its gorgeous colour harmonies, it is the equivalent of a paparazzo's party shot. Today we get the dress that wouldn't stay up and the drunk half in shadow behind the star's hairdo; in those days the cues were a rapt, boozy interplay of gazes and gestures around the singer, and a select furnisher's catalogue of porcelain, bamboo and tasteful landscape screens. Either way, the message spells out: *Someone saw this happening. We're telling you, it was like this.* The painting is supposed to be a documentary produced by Gu Hongzhong, who was sent by an emperor to spy on the misdeeds of his minister Han Xizai. As with any type of representation, it has certain constraints to obey. For instance, if everything in the scroll recedes at 45 degrees, then the sequence will read more smoothly as it runs before the eyes. That's not 'the way things look' – but then nor is the flash glare of paparazzi photography. Both are means to an end. How else will we get to view the disgraceful realities?

This is a type of 'realism', in other words – not *necessarily* the same thing as 'naturalism', which I take to mean a lively interest in 'the way things look'. What else realism might involve will be a recurrent issue throughout this chapter. It is a chapter that will compress the unruly themes of the previous one, squeezing them into a tidier, less angular package. The chief reason for this is that the two centuries from 1290 are the period in which the modern format of the detachable picture effectively takes shape, and that happens to be the format around which this book is based.

But first, to outline the historical context. It would be good to start with firm facts about the handscroll's origins, but Chinese art history is reluctant to yield up such things. Han Xizai was a minister in the last days of the

96 Gu Hongzhong, *Night Revels of Han Xizai*, c. 1070 (?). This is the right-hand third of a scroll that treats with sparkling panache the high life as lived in the capital of the world's wealthiest empire. Elsewhere in the party, a bench of flautists in lovely dresses play while courtesans cavort and civil servants relax, flirtatious, blasé or drunk.

old Tang dynasty, back in the 970s, but the posh landscapes adorning his salon look more like work done a century later,* under the succeeding Song dynasty. Quite possibly this was a retrospective smear-tactic, designed to discredit the memory of an opposition figure – a very devious sort of realism indeed! At all events, the work was itemized in the encyclopaedic catalogues compiled under Huizong, Song emperor from 1083 to 1125. This ruler got scholars to collate bronze and jade traditions stretching back over millennia. Turning to contemporary enterprise, he oversaw the production of the most highly prized porcelains in China's long and matchless ceramic tradition (the so-called 'Ru ware'). Indeed, he not only composed poetry but dabbled in painting, with considerable panache (or at least knew where to find the right ghost-painters to supply product for the imperial signature).

Yet the outcome of all this enlightenment was harsh. Huizong combined his devotion to the nation's culture and tradition with lousy political judgment. He ended his reign being outmanoeuvred and captured by the Jurchen, non-Chinese invaders from the north. In a foretaste of Mao's war against the educated elite during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, the Jurchen exiled the imperial dilettante to chilly Manchuria, where he ended his days cleaning the sties on a pig farm.

The Jurchen invasion was also a harbinger of more immediate misfortunes. Here is a summary of the patterns of plunder and conquest that engulfed most of Eurasia from the late 12th century onwards:

- Clans of Turkic Muslims rode down from the Afghan mountains to take advantage of the many rich little Hindu kingdoms on the river plains below. They had not only treasure to grab but idols to smash, by way of religious duty; as a result, the history of 13th-century northern India is littered with a vast swathe of wrecked temples and statuary. They set up their Sultanate of Delhi in 1206.
- The city-state of Venice, originally a political and cultural satellite of Byzantium, redirected a Crusader fleet, meant to attack Muslims, to attack Byzantium itself, so that Western Christians ended up sacking the capital of Eastern Christendom. After these events of 1204, Venice's Byzantine-designed basilica was adorned with looted bronze horses that had been preserved since classical times in its parent city, while a puppet Western 'emperor of Byzantium' flogged off one of the city's most valuable relics, the Crown of Thorns, to the king of France.
- Like the emperor Huizong, the final caliphs of Baghdad were inept appeasers trying to buy off a massive threat from the north. It arrived

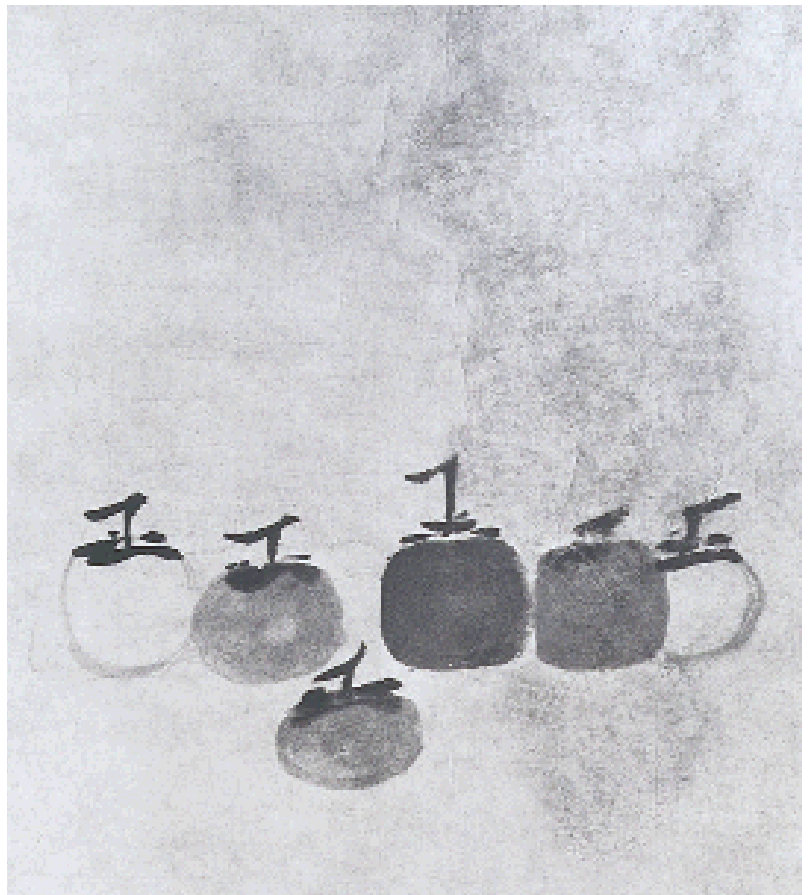
* The point is taken from a chapter by Richard Barnhart in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, 1997.

all the same, in 1258. The Mongol army that had already littered Central Asia, Russia and Iran with pyramids of skulls broke in and razed Islam's metropolis amid further massive slaughter. Islam's sense of political and cultural direction suffered for centuries from the blow.

- By comparison, the Chinese themselves were lucky. While India, Byzantium and Islam lay shattered, the Mongol invasion that followed the Jurchen incursion was a relatively gradual and property-preserving process. A remnant Song state lingered on in the south till 1279, before being absorbed in what became the world's largest-ever land empire.

No religion comes out attractively from this sequence of events. (The massacring Mongols had a fondness for Buddhism, while in Cambodia a Hindu king smashed the Buddhist temples of his predecessor, Jayavarman VII, hastening the kingdom's decline.) But spirituality was mutating and expressing itself in new, potentially subversive forms. As we'll see, the 13th century was the time when the cult of St Francis captivated Western Europe, and when Sufi mysticism gained a major foothold in Islam, encouraged perhaps by the collapse of political authority. In China it was the time when one of Buddhism's various sects, the 'Chan' or 'Zen', came to flourish artistically, particularly in the southern Song state. Mu Qi's *Six Persimmons* [97] is a painting in some sense indebted to Zen influence.

97 Mu Qi, *Six Persimmons*, c. 1250.
The minimal array of brushmarks invites viewers to do their own mental work in reconstituting the image, a strategy that parallels the terse, deliberately incomplete teaching pronouncements of Chan (or Zen) Buddhism. Mu Qi, a professionally trained artist, also painted screens with studies of birds and monkeys. His work became more appreciated in Japan than in his native China.



In what sense? What was this sect about? A text written from a Zen perspective might look to those questions to supply their own answers, terse paradoxes being a favoured Zen tactic. From a historical perspective, this is a smallish sheet, sliced from a roll of paper on which Mu Qi, an artist of high professional skill who became a Zen monk in the mid-13th century, left a record of some two dozen hand movements. A minute's brushwork, possibly, delivered after a long gestation perfecting the image's intervals and tones in the mind. Could we say that Mu Qi thought about nothing *if not* the six fruit? That would be further wordplay – another way of suggesting that emptiness and fullness have each been brought alive in the course of a sudden startling dance.

From an artistic perspective, the Zen variation on Buddhism took to its furthest point a dynamic interplay between naked marks and bare space that was already ancient in China. And yet after the 13th century China found little room for it. We know 'Chan' as 'Zen' because that was its name in Japan, where Mu Qi's art was collected and where the ethos took root, overseas from its homeland. Sudden, perfectly decisive actions suited the warrior code of the samurai who dominated politics there during the following centuries. Zen painting was a visual *spirituality* for a culture in which formal *religious* art saw little further development.

Back in China, cultured taste did move away from the realism of much Song painting, but in a less abrupt and uncompromising manner. Cultured taste, that is, among the 'literati' – the body of educated landowners versed in art history and theory as well as in calligraphy and pictorial techniques, a community that had taken shape since the early 11th century. They found themselves disdainful of the incoming Mongol regime, like many more recent intelligentsia ill at ease with a vulgar and indifferent government. The more the court of the 'Khans', as the rulers styled themselves, sponsored gaudy portraiture and ornate Buddhist statuary, the more the literati cultivated a stance of internal exile by fixing on themes rooted in 'authentic' Chinese tradition. The virtual monochrome of former Song masters like Guo Xi [see 91] became a certificate of moral integrity. To devote brush and ink to rocks or trees was to denote a discreet resistance: my heart is rugged, it may bend with political winds but it refuses to break.

Ni Zan, author of *The Rongxi Studio* [98], was practised in this ethos of demure dissent, and his career became one of the legends of 14th-century culture. He was numbered among the 'Four Great Masters of the Yuan [i.e. the Mongol] dynasty' in one of the classifications favoured by Chinese art historians. Ni Zan was a wealthy landowner who fled his home in middle age, possibly to avoid tax demands, and took to roaming

98 Ni Zan, *The Rongxi Studio*, 1372.
All the components of a river scene are represented, but for Ni Zan the rocks and trees essentially stood as cues for self-expression. Talking about another of his paintings, he commented that he painted 'merely to sketch the exceptional exhilaration in my breast, that's all. Then how can I judge whether it is like something or not?'



the waterways of central China on a houseboat, exchanging offerings from his brush for evenings of cultivated hospitality. On the one hand, a life of shambolic dissipation; on the other, an art of utter sparseness, emptied out like the fisherman's hut at the heart of his scroll. (The title and the inscription thank the friend who loaned the studio where he painted it.) A near-dry brush rasps at the silk, evoking an idea of an idea of a desolate nature: it's an almost sensual cherishing of wintriness and abstinence. *The Rongxi Studio* was painted in 1372, four years after an indigenous dynasty, the Ming, had overthrown the Mongols and taken control of China. But by this point of national restoration, a range of idealizing landscape manners had become the acceptable repertory of the high-art tradition. The parallels with what happened to later avant-gardes are intriguing, and any modern painter might sympathize with the *bons mots* attributed to Ni Zan. Sceptical viewer: 'Bamboo? That doesn't look anything like it!' Ni Zan: 'Ah yes. That total lack of resemblance is quite hard to achieve. Not everyone can manage it.'

Earth colours

Germany, Italy, 1240–1350

Hey, Thomas, get that thumb out your mouth! Jesus and a select group of disciples, eating their *Last Supper* [99] in a rood-screen relief, supply one possible lead into European realism. Jesus was flesh and blood as we are. Still more so his disciples – foolish, as the Gospels insist; greedy, boozy. We can relate to them, and they to us: this bluff and burly dinner company does not so much exchange glances as confront the audience. In other words, the model here is theatre. We are inside one of the new city cathedrals that were springing up in the mid-13th century. The high arched screen dividing the nave is topped with six tableaux, in which the rough-and-tumble of the passion plays staged on the streets outside during Holy Week has been gripingly visualized in stone and paint. Beneath them, Jesus on a central cross (the 'rood') stretches his bleeding hands over the archways leading into the upper nave or choir: we are made to participate in the terrible drama of his final days. The sculptor's sharp observations and forceful modelling tug us into belief. *Yes, that is just how it would have been.* But also they might trip us into doubt. *So very dim, those disciples. So very clever, this art ...*

This double-edged realism comes from an unnamed master working at Naumburg, in the Saxony region of Germany. Like the Chinese party exposé, it has its conventions of display: since the tableau was placed overhead on the rood screen, the dinner-table has been tilted for easier reading from below. The same sculptor also gave Naumburg Cathedral something



99 *The Last Supper*, carving on the choir screen at Naumburg Cathedral, c. 1250. In this pared-down rendition of one of the Gospels' central scenes, Jesus is pointing to Judas who is about to betray him. The arresting touch of the licked thumb surely suggests that the disciple in question is 'doubting' Thomas, who later needed to probe the truth of Christ's resurrection by inserting a finger in his wounded flesh. The realist masterpieces at Naumburg follow slightly earlier programmes of German Gothic sculpture at the cathedrals of Bamberg and Strasbourg.

unknown in Europe since Roman times – life-size, lifelike portraits showing its aristocratic founders, even though they had already been dead for two centuries. (Was this the kind of historical conjuring trick intended by the Chinese character assassin?) All this telling detail was projected at a town congregation. It was one way to command the attention of merchants and nobles and workmen alike, the kind of urban community that had become a major feature of European society by 1250. There were others, as we have seen: Naumburg's *Last Supper* is in effect a rowdier cousin to the graceful *Visitation* produced at a similar date in Rheims [see 88]. By this point, the 'Gothic' language of art, launched in Paris a century before, spanned Northern Europe from Poland to the Christian parts of Spain and had many diverse regional accents. To talk about 'elegant classicism' or 'earthy realism' is simply to clutch at aspects of this continuum.

Switch the focus south, however, and the terms' meanings shift. Up to now, Italy has appeared in this story mainly in relation to Greece. In the 13th century that connection remained important – not least because of Venice's looting of Byzantium in 1204, which encouraged a taste for Greek artistic manners among other wealthy city-states in northern Italy, such as Florence and Siena. These states, however, were linked to the



lands north of the Alps by the common authority of the papacy or the vaguer overlordship of the Holy Roman Empire, and they had grown rich by banking for those two institutions. Accordingly, Gothic fashions from Paris, which remained a leading nexus for art production, reached Italy also. But there was another, more local factor: the highly visible monumental legacy of the Roman Empire. The half-abandoned, half-recycled columns and arches erected a thousand years before acted as a challenge and a spur to artists, politicians and businessmen now that wealth was flooding back. Here, much more than in the north, ‘Romanesque’ had truly meant reviving the old techniques – notably at Pisa, where the late 12th-century campanile was clad in marble from the nearby ancient quarries of Carrara. In the 1250s, in the city baptistery two hundred metres away, a sculptor called Nicola Pisano carved marble panels for the pulpit that re-created the deep relief methods used on ancient sarcophagi (see, for example, p. 90). Classicism was being sought out as a language of civic pride, moreover an accent in which to assert individual dignity; it’s not coincidental that in Italy, unlike in the north, we know the names of many of the artists involved.

Here, art involved personal prowess. In the 1280s Giovanni Pisano – ‘the son of Nicola, and blessed with higher skill’, in his own description – pitched his talents to install a hyper-drama on the façade of Siena’s cathedral. *Haggai* [100] is a weather-worn fragment from his scheme. This was one of ten over life-size Hebrew prophets set to loom over the cathedral’s piazza, jutting out from on high, turning their heads this way and that to engage in a thunderous overhead colloquy. Zooming in on a mere arm’s length from the marble, we can catch the new tone of exultant fury that seems to drive the carver’s chisel. This was an artist who had learnt from classical statuary (he could not have seen the *Laocoön* [62], but he may as well have), but who was no more constrained by classical norms than he was by the façade’s architectural unities. His rhythms dynamize, and indeed distort, at will. The pulse of the statue seems to come from the carver’s wish to inhabit this stone from the inside, to get it to shout out for him. It bristles, it strives. It stakes out a supremacy in a world of pushy contenders: like Jokei, with his macho wood-carving in samurai Japan [see 93], Pisano was reflecting in a religious format attitudes that bound the society around him to quick-draw feuding and blood-spilling.

And yet this jostling Italy was fervent in its longings for harmony. In the 1210s it had been gripped by the career of St Francis of Assisi, who preached a love of nature and of minimal simplicity that transcended social hierarchies. Franciscan communities of brothers, or ‘friars’, committed to poverty, swiftly spread through urban Europe. Suddenly, a

101, 102 Giotto, *Joachim Expelled from the Temple* (top) and *Joachim Among the Shepherds* (bottom): frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, 1303–6.

populace with lingering memories of its rural past was coming to and realizing that its fate lay in the alien grip of King Money. It duly poured money into building a shrine to Francis's memory in Assisi. In the 1290s the walls of this shrine became one of the test sites for a new artistic strategy. Aspects of this innovative art had been hatched slightly earlier by various artists in Rome, Florence and Siena; but to see it at its most complete is to visit a chapel built in Padua in 1303 [101, 102]. That chapel was paid for by Enrico Scrovegni, a money-lender's son anxious to make spiritual amends for his father's ill-gotten gains.

The interior of the Scrovegni Chapel is the most cohesive and best-documented work associated with Giotto – the man subsequently acknowledged as the founding father of Western painting. Like Monreale and the Sainte-Chapelle, albeit smaller and plainer – a windowed hall with a rounded ceiling – this structure encompasses the viewer with an encyclopaedic Christian narrative: it spells out the stories you need to know for your salvation, as it were. As at Naumburg, the storytelling is at the hands of a master dramatist with an unerring eye for gestures and glances. But one of those hands clutches a brush, the other the rest-stick that steadies it; the brush is dipping at a pot of watered raw umber and returning to an expanse of bright wet plaster, swiftly laying stains in it before it dries. We are back with the fresco technique last mentioned in the days of ancient Rome (p. 78). In the intervening thirteen hundred years this type of mural painting had never died, but it had been devalued while more glamorous pictorial media – mosaic, stained glass – came to the fore.

Now, in a Franciscan context, fresco's very cheapness and earthiness gave it a moral advantage. And with this incentive came the opportunity to mimic, with swift-building stains, not only the surface textures of classical buildings (as we see in the first of these images), but the deep volumes that a Pisano might deliver with his chisel. Cheap visual tricks, but extraordinarily potent; intellectually compelling, too. Padua hosted one of Christendom's early universities, importing Greek sciences from the Islamic world. Alongside St Francis, talking of spiritual values in terms of physical realities, the learned were now turning to Aristotle and his interest in observable evidence. The solid bodies and co-ordinated light effects of Giotto's storytelling were experimental demonstrations. Here is what nature is like.

Imagine, visualize: such was the accent of the Franciscans' preaching. What Giotto pictures in these scenes, from the chapel's opening sequence, is a legend concerning the father of the Virgin Mary. His name was Joachim. He was a shepherd, he was a good man; he and his wife, Anna, were getting old, and they had no children. He went to offer sacrifice at the temple and the priest said, Get out, God does not favour you, you childless





103 (top) Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Effects of Good Government*, fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, 1339.

104 (above) A detail of *The Effects of Good Government* showing daily life under the porticos of Siena. A citizen parks his donkey to buy some shoes; behind, a schoolmaster lectures to his class. The space-construction of the vast fresco is adapted to a viewer who keeps peering in and moving on – not unlike the perspective in a Chinese scroll (e.g. 96).

man [101]. And he walked out among the hills where he had tended the flocks [102]. Following this episode, an angel will come to Anna as she prays in her house and announce that she will conceive: so all may be for the best, in Giotto's all-comprehending scheme. And yet I must admit that there are no pictures in this book that bring me so close to tears. I blame Giotto's unerring instinct for social cruelty (those muttering shepherds) and his heart-gripping sentimental stagecraft (Joachim's worried dog). But at the same time, insofar as 'Western painting' has been my own business, I suppose I read these primal moments in the tradition prophetically. There stands the temple – the great structure that the medieval world was about, if it was about anything. And painting starts where it ends – in the void, outside. It stalks the land, it broods, it dreams of the land; but it has no fixture in the land, just as it has no fixture in the temple. It is bound nowhere; it is mere mind-stuff, mere images.

Bad feelings about money paid for this art. Giotto himself was good with money, investing his profits in property in his native Florence. He was a big-time travelling workman with large teams of assistants, and like other such masters in Italy his activities extended to designing sculptures and buildings. As often happens with founder-figures, he was later credited with more work than he can actually have put a hand to, and how much he had to do with the depictions of St Francis at Assisi remains an unresolved conundrum. Fourteen years after his death in 1337, a fellow Florentine, the poet Boccaccio, wrote of him as a glory to their city, whose painted illusions had 'brought back to light' an art outshone by flashy alternatives since ancient times. During the early 14th century, however, Italian art took its lead just as much from the rival banking centre of the Tuscany region, Siena.



105 (top) Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Effects of Good Government*, fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, 1339.

106 (above) A detail of *The Effects of Good Government*. Daily life in the Tuscan countryside, with peasants cutting and threshing the corn as dignitaries ride past.

Here, culture clashes and pushy personalities were tempered by the most politically cohesive of the various city-state republican regimes. From 1287 Siena was run by a rotating council called ‘the Nine’, who consistently channelled banking profits into public works and promoted a corporate ethos. A generation on from Giotto, Ambrogio Lorenzetti interpreted this in frescoes for the city’s Palazzo Pubblico [103–6]. *Good Government* was one vast prospect for the council, *Bad Government* (later defaced, or censored) was another. The former seems the most ambitious single image created in 14th-century Italy, and also the most optimistic. We see the middle section of a mural some 3 metres (10 feet) high and 14 metres (46 feet) long. All manner of things, all manner of people can now be rendered in this infinitely versatile medium of paint. Ambrogio* thinks in patchworks of hues as he follows the traffic passing through streets of Gothic brickwork, peering into a shoeshop, a classroom behind, and up past saloon windows to the tower-builders, forever taking the city higher; a three-tone zigzag vaults him over the city wall and down among the harvesters, who are picked out in freehand dabs as the road winds downwards and out to the rolling Tuscan hills. This is how things should be in the republic, as the winged classical allegory of public ‘Safety’ proclaims, with her warning gibbet; only how things should be, for as of 1337 the idyllic street dance would have contravened fussy civic regulations. Yet on a poetic and visionary plane, this is how things truly are: painting has made the world known to itself.

* I call him Ambrogio partly to distinguish him from his brother Pietro, another Sienese master; and also because it was the Italian custom to call most artists by their forenames.

Texts and textures

Iran, Italy, France, Spain, Russia, 1330–1420

European art had seen no such landscape panoramas before Ambrogio. The only known predecessors to these grand unrolling vistas lie in Chinese handscrolls. Might he have seen such things? The hypothesis is unprovable, yet surprisingly not impossible; and it deserves at least a roundabout excursion from Siena. Ambrogio's dancers are dressed in exotic silks because East–West trade routes had been flowing more quickly since the mid-13th century, under the trans-Asian control of the Mongols. This was the era of Marco Polo's famous voyage from Venice to Beijing, the time when an Italian town despot in Verona could pose as 'the Great Khan'. The glamour radiated by the great economic hub of China was also pulsing out along other pathways of the Mongol imperial system. Chinese fires – we saw their like on p. 76 – crackle across a page illuminated at Tabriz, in Iran, in the 1330s [107]. An artist was lifting a motif common in the flood of exported prints, ceramics and scrolls in order to illuminate a manuscript for a Mongol 'khan' who ruled over south-western Asia.

This is the point at which the tradition known as 'Persian painting' effectively comes into view. 'The veil was lifted from the face of depiction', as one of its later chroniclers* expressed it – even if only to reveal further veils. This painter in Tabriz was catering to northern conquerors with a taste for Chinese effects by creating a type of book with miniatures for which the main models had come partly from Baghdad and partly from Byzantium. His city lay at the western end of a Persian-speaking world that ranged far into Central Asia and Afghanistan. Now, under the new regime, the emphases of the arts in this region were shifting, with the pre-Islamic traditions collected by the poet Ferdowsi becoming more prominent. Ferdowsi's *Shahnama*, his epic of kings, is the text illustrated here – served up so as subtly to flatter the khan. Those invincible techno-warriors, charging in behind their science-fiction iron horse-tanks, are wearing Mongol armour. But just to compound the complexities, the epic names them as the army of Alexander the Great, who had overrun ancient Persia from Greece sixteen centuries before. Setting the Eastern world-conqueror at a tangent to the Western, the Persian painter incorporated both within a cohesive, crystallizing vision, rather as a kaleidoscope makes harmonies from shuffled colours through a system of angled mirrors. Quite likely the aesthetic roots of this vision ultimately stretched back to ancient Persia, though records are far from continuous. But from this time onwards at least, a

107 *Iskander's Iron Cavalry*, page from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, illuminated in Tabriz, 1330s. In order to spread confusion among the enemy in his conquest of India, Iskander (Alexander, in Persian legend) has constructed robotic horses of iron. The manuscript of Ferdowsi's epic from which this sheet originated has often been known as the Demotte *Shahnama*, after the Paris bookdealer who chopped it up in 1906 to increase his profits by selling the pictures piece by piece. It is rather as if Michelangelo's *Pietà* had been renamed after the madman who attacked it with a hammer in 1972, smashing the Virgin's face.

* Dost Muhammad, writing in the 16th century.





108, 109 (opposite) Simone Martini, *Annunciation*, 1333. The swirl of the Archangel's cloak suggests that he has just touched down in his flight from heaven, yet he and Mary have been crystallized in a radiant flat surface without air or depth. Simone's altarpiece is at once tensely dramatic and imposingly hieratic. By the 14th century the cult of the Virgin was central to European Christianity, and the *Ave Maria* lettering transcribes the worshippers' constant prayers in the cathedral for which the work was destined.

figurative art of high poetic intricacy was emerging within the fractured world of Islam – even if only within volumes intended for its rulers' eyes.

Texts were hardly less crucial to 14th-century Christian picturing, for all the vivid powers it had recently acquired in Italy. A line of embossed lettering shoots across the centre of Simone Martini's *Annunciation* [108, 109], over and against the exquisite renderings of lilies and robes and marble. *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.* The Gospel story of the archangel Gabriel announcing to the Virgin that she would bear God's child was one that 14th- and 15th-century Europeans loved to invest with their keen yearnings for the miraculous. Preachers and painters turned it all ways, probing its nuances. Here, Simone has Mary shrinking from the speech-caption's shock-blast. Concave against the jutting archangel, she is very much the timorous maiden and very little the penetrating presence conveyed two centuries earlier by the Byzantine *Virgin of Vladimir* [see 86].

Behind this turn towards interpersonal drama lies the gradual expansion of the format known in Western Christendom as the altarpiece. Byzantine icons, 'true images', had been placed mid-church to connect the worshipper on a direct line to the divine. But take such a picture and set it like a crucifix, at an endpoint of worship behind an altar – as Western Christians increasingly did, especially after their 1204 looting of Byzantium – and its meanings might mutate. It remained a link to the saint to whom the altar was dedicated, but it might also serve as a noticeboard

on which to pin visualized narratives. A showcase, moreover, for the spending power of pious communities, as we see in this altarpiece of 1333.

We are back with Siena: originally these gilded panels were placed on an altar inside the cathedral whose streetfront already boasted Giovanni Pisano's statues. In the 1330s Simone was painting alongside Ambrogio Lorenzetti, using a tempera glaze technique much indebted to Duccio, the first great master of Sienese altar painting. And if we seek a guide to the direction that European art would take for the remainder of the century, what we are looking at is probably more indicative than Ambrogio's fresco – particularly since a 19th-century restorer reframed Simone's panels less in the manner of the 1330s (relatively plain, like Giotto's temple) than of the 1390s (highly ornate). A text lies at the heart of the *Annunciation*, and a psychological tension; the gildings and glazes embalm them in artifice, while the punctilious itemization of the lilies in their vase lends them grace; and the accumulation of peripheral saints, painted by Simone's collaborator Lippo Memmi, dissipates them. It was along such lines that the patterns of 14th-century European art production tended to wind. Arguably, the creativity of the era was devoted to furnish-



110 *The Park in Spring*, folio 103 of Guillaume de Machaut's *Le Dit du Lion*, c. 1350. The backdrop of gilded fronds on azure is characteristic of 14th-century illumination; later on, the naturalistic detail would extend to atmospheric renderings of the sky. We do not know the name of the artist here, but Guillaume de Machaut, author of *Le Dit du Lion*, a book about differing qualities of love, was the outstanding French composer of his day.



ing and finessing structures already erected. Most cities by now had their cathedrals substantially under way.

What stands out in the European art of these times, among a myriad madonnas and misericords,* devised for an ever more elaborate maze of religious, aristocratic and mercantile networks? Paris and its environs remained the centre of production that they had been since the beginning of the Gothic era, and one way to trace the era's underlying currents would be through the manuscripts illuminated there. Besides the growing trade in 'books of hours' to assist private prayer and in fiction-cum-information (for instance Marco Polo's account of his travels), there was a thriving

* The carved undersides of choir-seats, a nicety of 14th-century church decor.

category of romance. Poring over countless spindly knights and maidens and lewd marginalia, one suddenly comes across what is possibly the earliest independent landscape in European art [110]. Independent, in the sense that no human figure intrudes on the lovely parkland that Guillaume de Machaut spies from the window of a castle that he is visiting one fine spring morning in 1342. It is true that Machaut, a leading French poet and musician, is yearning after his lady as he gazes upon the songbirds, beasts and flowers, and that this nature serves as a psychological maze, deferring and complicating his desire. But his illuminator, working perhaps eight years later, itemizes each species with a zealous particularity, not unlike the rendering of the lilies in the *Annunciation*. The connection may be fairly direct, for after finishing that painting Simone Martini went to work in Avignon,* midway between Siena and Paris, and artists in French courtly circles, like the present nameless illuminator, probably visited there too.

On another scale completely, here is a sample of the era's most massive pictorial project: the tapestries woven in Paris between 1373 and 1382 for Louis, Duke of Anjou, brother of the king of France [111]. They were designed by an immigrant Netherlander, Jean Boudolf. Exceptionally dense in their threading, they are over 4.5 metres (15 feet) high and originally stretched some 130 metres (427 feet) – a colossal outlay for the duke, given

111, 112 (overleaf) *The Second Trump*, from the Apocalypse tapestries at Angers, 1373–82.

* In 1309 Avignon had become the home of the popes, decamped from Rome for political reasons: the fortress-palace they built themselves is decorated with frescoes that further celebrate the pastoral vein seen in Machaut's manuscript.



that tapestry was the most highly valued and labour-intensive of all the region's media. They visualize the Apocalypse, the prophetic revelations of St John in the Bible's last book. The text here is Chapter 8, verses 8–9: an angel blows a trumpet and a mountain of fire crashes into the sea, destroying every third ship. Terror is tempered by compassion, for St John on the left is as stricken by his vision as the shipwrecked sailors within it [112].

Why did Duke Louis choose to adorn the hall of his château at Angers in this way? As with many questions regarding this period, firm answers are hard to find. But just as the duke was seeking out grander media than mere paint, Boudolf was evidently seeking out loftier manners than mere naturalism. In fact, his frozen cataclysm is even less concerned with the everyday look of things than the Byzantine mosaics created at Monreale two centuries before [see 85]. And this is not simply because tapestry crystallizes an image more firmly than mosaic. This ornate delirium, those searing red skies and sad, set-upon figures find echoes far and wide among late 14th-century altarpieces – notably those painted in Prague, a flourishing artistic centre at this point. The robust certitude of the 13th century was long gone, making way for speculation and disquiet.

But maybe we could approach 14th-century Europe from an alternative tangent – in fact, from beyond the borders of Christendom. Its most ambitious three-dimensional artwork was the extension added to the Alhambra citadel of Granada [113] between 1360 and 1390, during the rule of Muhammad V. Muhammad's emirate was a small strip of southern Spain that had escaped another of the 13th century's map revisions, the Christian reconquest of the former Muslim realm of al-Andalus. It was a defensive statelet, sustained by memories of past glories, on a long communication line from the current major centres of Islamic culture in Egypt and Iran. And yet Muhammad's buildings, preserved by the Christian Spanish when they finally overran Granada in 1492, are at once the finest extant relic of late medieval Islamic palace architecture (elsewhere incoming rulers would raze and rebuild) and an extended parallel to what was happening in Western Christian design at this point. Like the Late Gothic styles of filigree masonry that took hold in Northern Europe from the mid-14th century, the plasterwork in this photograph from inside the 'Hall of the Kings' dematerializes the building's mass. The same belief in geometrical order that we saw in the art of Baghdad – Ibn al-Bawwab's design and Zumurrud's mausoleum [see 79, 90] – underpins this astonishingly intricate surface, but the *muqarnas* or honeycomb vaulting has been indented so as to crumble it away, dissolving it in sunlight. Beyond lies a garden with a glittering fountain at its centre, but the palace's centre and boundaries are everywhere, or nowhere – by implication, infinite.





113 Stucco ornamentation over the arcade of the Sala de los Reyes, giving onto the Court of the Lions, 1360–90, in the Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain. The buildings of the Alhambra citadel range in date from the 1230s, at the beginning of the Nasrid dynasty of rulers, to the 16th century, when a Catholic king of Spain added a Renaissance palace. Across a courtyard from the ‘Hall of the Kings’ stands the ‘Hall of the Two Sisters’, whose dome translates the light-dissolving effects seen here onto a yet more visionary plane.

While earlier Islamic art relishes Qur’anic texts, it rarely spells out its own meanings. Yet in a sense that is just what the Alhambra does. A long poem by Ibn Zamrak, who probably played a major role in the palace’s design, is inscribed to interweave through its fabric. ‘*You would think they are the heavenly spheres*’, he writes of these archways. ‘When the sun’s rays brighten them, *you would think they are made of pearls*.’ And so, with many an acknowledgment to the munificent emir, the entire structure urges itself into being something ‘other’. A religious heaven may be the endpoint of the metaphors, but the poetic journey towards it, through the subtle elaborations of Sufi mysticism, becomes the essence of the exercise. A slightly earlier writer from Muslim Spain, al-Qartajanni from Cartagena, had asserted the value of originality: to achieve it, an imaginative creation must offer ‘strangeness and wonder’. A turn towards similar values of novelty and singularity was arguably now inflecting the Gothic art of Western Christendom.

By comparison, the Christian art of the East kept lucid and sober. *The Trinity* [114], painted in the 1410s by Andrei Rublev, an Orthodox icon painter working in Moscow, has all the clarity of outline that Simone



gave to his altarpiece but none of the prickly tension and factual detail that disrupt it: instead, an enclosed and self-sufficient serenity reigns. There are various historical factors in common, however. If Italian painting gained a new heftiness and emotional force in Giotto's era, this mirrored a shift of tone that had already occurred in monastery frescoes in Serbia, where Orthodox painters who had trained in Byzantium operated. This fresh impetus appeared some time later in the city itself, after a Greek dynasty called the Palaiologoi regained it from the Western invaders of 1204. (Palaiologan art appears in force in the early 14th-century mosaics and frescoes at what is now Kariye Camii, in present-day Istanbul.) The flow of artists in and out of Byzantium also extended to the principalities of Russia. Rublev himself had trained under Theophanes the Greek, a celebrity in late 14th-century Novgorod and Moscow.

However, it was another 14th-century personality, St Sergius of Radonezh, who gave Rublev his personal direction. Sergius, like St Francis, spurned worldly riches and preached stark simplicity and sharing. Unlike St Francis in Italy, his message influenced a movement towards national unification. It was taken up politically as the Grand Duchy of Moscow defeated the Mongols and subjugated other principalities. It is this concept of unity, with its resonances for Russians, on which *The Trinity* meditates, in the symbol of the three angels who ate at Abraham's table in the Book of Genesis. They stand for Father, Son and Holy Spirit, inseparable in mutual love. Their single dish of meat foreshadows Christ's final communion, so differently realized by the sculptor at Naumburg. Here, all is luminous, minimal and inward-directed. It is an icon – a 'true image' – but one of a mystic's prayer; also one that almost immediately made its painter famous. From the 15th century onwards, Rublev's art became a linchpin of Russian national self-belief.

Opening the windows

Northern Europe, Italy, 1390–1460

Anyone at all familiar with 14th-century history may be surprised that, up to now, the extermination of a third of Europe's population has not figured in this account. Shortly before Guillaume de Machaut's illuminator painted his enraptured meadow in 1350, bubonic plague ('the Black Death') gripped the continent, decimating its close-packed, insanitary cities, and it would sweep back repeatedly through the following century, creating economic reverses and social crises. Surely this catastrophe is more than enough to account for the accents of tremulous desperation in the Angers tapestries of the 1370s? Very possibly. The problem for art

historians who wish to make such claims is that much of the imagery of disease, death and hell that runs through the 14th- and 15th-century record gains a firm foothold well before the plague's advent. Perhaps art has prophetic powers; alternatively, it may be naive to suppose that it directly reflects historical events.

The *pleurants* or mourners [115] carved around 1405 to flank the tomb of Philip the Bold of Burgundy seem stepping stones, at least, into an era of ongoing crisis that was also one of momentous artistic change. Duke Philip, an outstanding politician of his time, was a brother of the Louis who commissioned the Angers tapestries. His own Duchy of Burgundy was less a geographical entity than a cultural one. It consisted of a quasi-independent scatter of landholdings stretching from central eastern France to the Netherlands in the north, the latter a region renowned for high craft specialization that supplied not only Louis's tapestry designer but Philip's sculptor, Claus Sluter. The tomb was the last of a few powerfully individual projects that preoccupied Sluter from the 1380s onwards. Whereas Philip himself died at a ripe old age of a chest infection, it is hard not to see the tomb's knee-high retinue as part of a wider continuum of the macabre. In the next alcove from these faceless ones, another of the forty *pleurants* pinches his nose at the stench of decay; further down the line of 15th-century fashion, sculptors would represent rotting carcasses, worm-chewed, toad-gnawed. But for Sluter's own art, it was just as significant that no two of these gestures of grief were identical, and yet all these expressions of the inward soul shared a common language of volume and mass. Perhaps no other sculptor has ever given drapery more gravity.

Delegating the tomb project to his son-in-law in 1406, Sluter took a cowl himself, joining a monastic order. Godliness in the new century was increasingly a matter of such personal commitments. The Catholic Church was currently split between rival papal headquarters in Rome and Avignon, and individuals looking for responses to the age's anxieties turned instead to mystical writers and forms of spiritual self-help. At the same time, Sluter bequeathed to art production in the Duchy of Burgundy his benchmarks for high technical finesse and for factual naturalism. All of these factors would take on a new relevance from 1425 onwards, when the duchy, by this time Europe's most prosperous state, took Jan van Eyck into its employ.

Van Eyck, who soon became the continent's most famous painter, was based at the duchy's northern end, in the Flemish city of Bruges. His 1434 portrait of its chancellor, Nicolas Rolin [116], paying his respects to the Virgin and her Child in her palace, breaks away from anything seen up till now in this book. Everything before suddenly looks out of focus in relation to this astonishing radiance, so deep, so rich, so microscopically

115 Claus Sluter, *Two Pleurants*, from the tomb of Duke Philip the Bold, c. 1405. Above the niches occupied by these and thirty-eight other *pleurants*, or mourners, lies an effigy of Duke Philip of Burgundy attended by angels. The fusion of heavy, sumptuously ornate forms with a corresponding moral gravity is characteristic of Burgundian art, and indeed of Gothic art in 15th-century Northern Europe more generally.





116 Jan van Eyck, *The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*, c. 1434. Van Eyck here proclaims the power of his innovative oil techniques to comprehend the entire visible world. His lucid curiosity, ranging from the refraction effects of stained glass and of the Virgin's crown jewels to the blur of distant mountains beyond an imaginary town, is matched by his emotional steadiness and his capacity to blend all aspects into a cohesive atmosphere.

modulated: it is as if an uncleaned window had opened.* The main technical facilitator to this pictorial revolution was the mixing of pigments with vegetable oils rather than with eggs (the 'tempera' technique) or with water and glue. Glazed over a white ground, oils can carry through as much light from behind as other media; but they can also build up a far heavier darkness, against which further lights can be set down in opaque

* Or, the painter David Hockney suggested in his 2001 book *Secret Knowledge*, as if a projector came in focus: he conjectured that one prompt for this pictorial revolution was the image a concave mirror can throw back on a screen, offering van Eyck a detail-by-detail replication of the look of things. His hypothesis fell foul of many, though not all, period experts. I suspect that he overstated it, but that it contains a kernel of truth.

‘*impasto*’. Being slower to dry, they lend themselves better to fine modelling. All these potentialities are exploited to the limits of visibility in a picture that – as the little gazer from the parapet at its heart suggests – is possessed by the delights of vision.

Oil painting was a method that had been employed occasionally by northerners for some time: a little before van Eyck, a fellow Flemish painter called Robert Campin had led the way with similar techniques. Naturalism had long been a vein in European painting, and its quick rise to the fore during the early 15th century can be traced in a wealth of manuscript illuminations. The question remains what drove the transition from picking out a daffodil or a plover in Machaut’s little landscape to representing *everything* (each strand of Mary’s golden hair, each burgher crossing the city bridge, the ever fainter blues receding to the snow-capped mountains beyond) on a panel 66 x 62 centimetres (26 x 24 inches). It is hard to answer, because Burgundian culture is as thin in artists’ statements as it is rich in visual facts. But it undoubtedly involved a whole new spiritual understanding of what it means when the eyes drink in the light of appearances. For despite its obsessive naturalism, this bestilled vision of the Virgin’s palace is not a realist picture of how things happen in this world. Still less is van Eyck’s most complex work, a 24-panelled altarpiece for a church in Ghent, completed in 1432. His sight is rather in the nature of mystical insight.

When it comes to the innovations happening simultaneously in Italy, art history has more purchase: there is an interplay of personalities, bound up with a fractious politics of little republics and duchies and a loquacious literary culture. When Simone Martini went to Avignon in the 1330s, he made friends with a fellow Italian resident, the poet Petrarch. The famed writer of sonnets was also a public intellectual, urging his countrymen towards a fresh engagement with their classical past. It was an issue that had already played some part in Italian culture, as we have seen, but Petrarch turned it into one of ‘humanism’ – of systematic recourse to the *litterae humaniores*, the ancient texts that could make citizens ‘more humane’. Come the 15th century, the two friends’ legacies would start to clash. For while the manner of Simone’s *Annunciation* fed into and merged with the broad, Europe-wide currents now called ‘International Gothic’, a few intellectually inquisitive Italians took up Petrarch’s initiative to create the visual language we now label ‘Renaissance’.

A gilded bronze panel made in Florence around 1416 reflects the new departure [117]. Like its Tuscan neighbour Siena, Florence was a republic dependent on banking and the cloth trade. But, sited on a river rather than on hills, it came to outstrip all other Italian cities in scale, and by the late 14th century it was at once the busiest and the tensest of capitalist centres,

117 Lorenzo Ghiberti, *The Flagellation*, bronze quatrefoil plaque for the North Doors of Florence Baptistery, c. 1416. Ghiberti's working life was dominated by two lengthy projects to make panels for separate doors of Florence's Baptistery. This is from the first, done when the visual language we now call 'Renaissance' was just starting to form. Ghiberti congratulated himself on both sets of doors in an early artist's autobiography, the *Commentarii* of 1450: 'I executed them with great diligence ... the greatest ingenuity and proficiency.' It is noticeable nonetheless that the casting of one column has been mistakenly overlaid over a flagellator's arm, as it were trapping his hand.



threatened by workers' revolts and by warlords from the duchies of Milan and Naples. Its ruling oligarchies liked to use Petrarch's rhetoric as a steering inspiration. In 1401, in a move new for its time, they invited artists to compete in submitting designs to decorate doors to the city's baptistery. The requirement was to match panels made for a neighbouring doorway back in the 1330s. Thus the quatrefoil moulding of this panel is a characteristically Gothic format, of a sort often used by cathedral sculptors and indeed in the paintings of Giotto. But here, the competition's winner, Lorenzo Ghiberti, has planted a potentially explosive mechanism inside it.

On two levels. Christ, tied to a column to be whipped before being crucified, is neither the pain-racked flesh imagined by crucifix artists ever since the time of Archbishop Gero [see 80] nor built up through the draperies that otherwise held sway over sculpture: he has been treated as a balanced and modulated system of bones and muscles, beautiful and self-sufficient. In other words, Ghiberti has not only studied the poses of classical statuary (see the styles of Skopas and Praxiteles: 48, 49), but has picked up the analytical method that underlay them. Such an approach to

the nude could again, possibly, become art's norm. It matched inward logic with outward observation (the tormentors either side of Christ are some of the earliest sculptural figures for which preparatory drawings are known).

And then, with his own inner architectural framing, Ghiberti has picked up a cue from one of the competitors he beat, Filippo Brunelleschi. The doorway commission, which was for twenty such panels, took Ghiberti from the age of twenty-five to forty-eight, and his contemporary meanwhile switched from sculpture to investigating construction systems. Brunelleschi, who had come to practical work from the minor nobility – a new style of social move, in terms of European art – became the most innovative intellect in structural engineering since Abbot Suger back in the 1140s. His crowning achievement was to cap Florence's cathedral with the largest dome in Western Europe, in 1436. But here, with these Corinthian columns, Ghiberti was responding to the study of the orders of classical architecture made by Brunelleschi, and to his colleague's emphasis on lucid, minimal, repeatable units – an aesthetic opposed to the complexities that Gothic now involved.

Ghiberti went on to spend another twenty-seven years producing a further set of baptistery door panels, which abandoned the quatrefoil format and took up Brunelleschi's ideas wholly. Florence's major artistic figures were intent to learn from one another and thus participated in a new dynamic – almost that of an avant-garde clique, albeit one blessed with official patronage. A third party to the process was the slightly younger sculptor Donatello. A relief he made for Siena's Baptistry around 1425 [118] is the earliest witness we have to another of Brunelleschi's ideas. Some time in the preceding decade the engineer had demonstrated a geometrical system for showing structures on a flat surface as they would appear in three-dimensional space. His 'artificial perspective' dovetailed with an illusory effect that Giotto and Pietro Lorenzetti had occasionally played with, making the frame of a picture stand for the frame of a window and opening up an eye-deceiving view beyond. Bringing all the picture's lines to a single vanishing point lent the trick a new intellectual rationale, relating it to a theory of optics outlined five centuries before by the Arab scientist Ibn al-Haytham.*

Donatello, the most restless and wide-ranging creator of the group (his reinventions of the figure preceded Ghiberti's, and I shall return to them later), here applied Brunelleschi's principle in two-and-a-half dimensions. Relief vanishing away to a level of evanescent subtlety was one of Donatello's specialities, although in this exploratory venture the figures do not quite diminish into the distance with the same coherence as the arcades. He tells the biblical tale of Salome (in the right foreground), who so pleased

* Known in Europe as 'Alhazen'. It might be said, of course, that van Eyck's picture also opens up a view; but this is one over which the eye is invited to wander, with no particular attention to its framed limits nor to a geometrical system.



118 Donatello, *The Feast of Herod*, c. 1425, Baptistry, Siena. Donatello was in his late thirties when he executed this bold demonstration of Brunelleschi's new perspective technique. He had already made a major impact in Florence with the statues of saints and prophets he created to stand in niches above street level. His figures displayed remarkably lifelike postures, and each had a startling, almost caricatured individuality. The same power to fix a memorable image in the mind is applied here.

her stepfather Herod with her dance before his dinner guests that he promised her whatever she wished: she then asked that the head of his prisoner, John the Baptist, be brought in on a plate. It's a grim story, and Donatello plays up its nastiness. His feel for the shock of Herod (on the left) and of his fellow diners (including two shrinking, transfixed little boys) is savage – and acute, one might say, recognizing its realism. This disruptive immediacy, also apparent in the statues he created for Florence's street façades, made Donatello one of the town's celebrities. He made new art look *dangerous*.

A similarly harsh touch came from the youngest and shortest-lived of the group, the painter Masaccio. Before his death aged twenty-seven in 1428, Masaccio created an illusory chapel for a Florentine church, S. Maria Novella, where he gave perspective its first trial in fresco (*The Trinity* of

119 Masaccio, *Expulsion from Eden*, fresco from the Brancacci Chapel, S. Maria del Carmine, Florence, 1427. This painting by Masaccio – ‘big Tom’ – matches a *Temptation of Adam and Eve* painted by his older working colleague Masolino – ‘little Tom’. Masolino had none of Masaccio’s bold, modernizing severity, painting instead in a gentle Gothic manner. It would seem that both the artists and their patrons felt the two contrasting styles complemented one another.



1427). In the actual chapel of another, S. Maria del Carmine [119], he effectively relaunched the tradition that had stemmed from Giotto’s work over a century before. Here we hit a process increasingly evident in art history the more it becomes a matter of personalities – one artist declaring through his work what the *real* legacy of a predecessor consists of, as opposed to rival claims. Compared with the many elaborations on Giotto developed by Florentine artists through the 14th century, Masaccio’s fresco of Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise isolates the qualities of solidity, sparseness and emotional truth. It seizes on them and takes them further. The light diffusing from the right in Giotto’s *Joachim* scenes [see 101, 102] becomes a strong glare, casting shadows on the ground. It firms up bodies that hold a dignity unknown in earlier naked figures. Humanity’s sinning ancestors had long been nudity’s foothold in church decor, but here their shame shades into strength. Giotto’s *Joachim* tries to turn back to the temple, fearful at the edge of the void: this wailing couple proclaim that there is nowhere else to go.

That is one possible interpretation; equally, some writers might see them as striding forth into the light of ‘the Renaissance’. Art history has a strong tendency to treat all artists and their works as stepping stones towards some future outcome, desirable or undesirable. ‘Renaissance’ is a 19th-century coinage, extrapolated from the programme of cultural rebirth projected by Petrarch and later humanists. It joins forces with the *Lives of the Artists*, a highly influential history of Italian art written by Giorgio Vasari in 16th-century Florence, in encouraging the concept of the ‘real legacy’: Giotto leads to Masaccio, who together with Donatello will lead to the ‘divine’ Michelangelo, who will surpass the ancients.

Is this the best way to look at the evidence? Here [120] is an equally ‘forward-looking’ reinterpretation of Giotto’s figure- and landscape-language. If Masaccio’s fresco seems to predict the heroic nudes of Michelangelo, or even ‘humanism’ in its modern sense – the view that we humans are alone in this universe – this diminutive panel from around 1440 lays open a badland of psychic damage that would otherwise await the advent of 20th-century expressionism and Surrealism. Its full title, *The Temptation of St Anthony by a Demon in the Form of a Woman*, paraphrases but does not dispel the shudder racing from figure to bat-winged figure and the chill of the ominous twilight. The birds have flown from the hostile forests and the hut might be one more trap. Someone with a sure command of pictorial means* has evoked a terminal loss of control over an alien, unknowable world. Who is itself unknown, as is the layout of the altarpiece from which this and other *St Anthony* panels were detached. The

* The current attribution for these panels of the *Life of St Anthony* is to ‘the Master of the Osservanza’.



120 Master of the Osservanza, *The Temptation of St Anthony*, c. 1440. Forests come to the fore in 'Late Gothic' imaginations (following the idyllic park seen in the 1350 manuscript illumination: **110**). This panel is roughly contemporary with two magically poetic dark woods, one painted by Paolo Uccello in his *Hunt at Night* and the other by Pisanello in his *Vision of St Eustace*. Here, however, the enticing shade of the leaves turns into a zone of cosmic malice.

painter probably worked in Siena, where 15th-century artists mostly stood apart from the developments represented by Donatello's panel in their Baptistery. As a result, Renaissance-oriented art histories tend to sideline them. That way the tale becomes neater, but duller.

In fact, most of Italy's wealth of early 15th-century painting could be placed somewhere between these two diverging versions of the tradition. The imaginative creations of artists like Fra Angelico or Paolo Uccello did not cleave to one sole 'tendency', and Masaccio himself shared the fresco work at S. Maria del Carmine with a less radical, more 'Gothic' painter named Masolino. Yet there was a technical dynamic at work. The *St Anthony* painter deploys a reeling horizon line (compare the Angers tapestry) to evoke a cosmos thrown out of kilter; the perspective of Andrea Mantegna creates an effect almost as powerfully disorienting, with the

121 Andrea Mantegna, *St James on his Way to Execution*, fresco in the Ovetari Chapel, Eremitani Church, Padua, c. 1450. St James stops to bless Josiah, a converted scribe, before Roman soldiers lead him off to execution through a triumphal arch erected in the very Italian-looking streets of Jerusalem. This photograph of Mantegna's innovative fresco was taken in 1944, a few days before a warplane dropped a bomb on the chapel where it stood, almost entirely destroying it.



added asset that every component is geometrically coordinated [121]. When he painted this large fresco in 1450, Mantegna was a young artist in Padua, probably fired up by Donatello's current presence in the city (where he was creating the first bronze equestrian statue since ancient times) and perhaps by *On Painting* (1435), the book in which the theorist and architect Leon Battista Alberti explained the new perspective system. Here, Mantegna was depicting *St James on his Way to Execution* in a chapel where viewers' eyelines were level with his baseline. They, like the kneeling suppliant, could look up for the saint's blessing; they too could come under the heel of the mighty Roman Empire. St James was its victim: nonetheless, Mantegna worshipped its power. He was a true visual humanist in his archaeological researches into ancient armour and ornament, and a remorseless realist in his urge to cast us down in the gutter, to hit us against the hardness of things and people and fate. (How strange the saint's halo becomes from such a viewpoint!) An artist with such faculties at his command could go far, and in his long career Mantegna became an

122 Piero della Francesca, *The Resurrection*, c. 1460. At dawn, while the Roman guards are still asleep, Christ rises out of his tomb, bearing the banner of the Resurrection. Christ is presented frontally, but the guards are seen from a different perspective, as if from below. To the painting's left, the branches of the deciduous beeches seem dead; to the right, the evergreen cypresses burst with life. In Piero's contemplative vision, observable facts are *naturally* symbolic. This supreme image of the transition from night to day, sleep to waking, winter to spring, death to life was painted for the town hall of Piero's native Borgo San Sepolcro, with a landscape echoing the surrounding Umbrian hills.

eminent courtier, the owner of a mansion constructed on Brunelleschian lines. For his noble clients, the Gonzaga family of Mantua, he took the perspectival possibilities launched here to their logical conclusion. Around 1470, frescoing the ceiling of a palace room, he painted an illusory light-shaft that seemed to go straight through to the sky. From that technical breakthrough further possibilities would soon spill forth.

The painter who pondered Brunelleschi's new systems most deeply had a less quantifiable impact on art history. Piero della Francesca left various unsigned contributions to mathematical and perspectival theory on his death in 1492. His sensitivity to his native Umbrian landscape in the fresco of the *Resurrection* [122] of c. 1460 presaged the mood-music of subsequent painting in this region. But, working mainly in these hills between Florence and the Adriatic, Piero steered away from the major thoroughfares of





123 Rogier van der Weyden, *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1455.

later 15th-century art. A tanner's son, he went from training in Florence to painting his most extended frescoes for a church in upcountry Arezzo and later appearing as one of the intellectual eminences at the Urbino court of Duke Federico da Montefeltro. It's a career pattern that suggests a personal bent for contemplation rather than for social engagement.

The *Resurrection* was painted for the town hall in Borgo San Sepolcro, Piero's birthplace. His own archaeology – researching the armour for the guards before Christ's tomb – has led him to give them Byzantine headgear, for in the mid-15th century the ancient culture of Byzantium, about to fall to Ottoman conquerors, was much in the forefront of Italian humanist consciousness. The guard throwing his head back against the tomb may be a self-portrait, making this Piero's dream; his art abounds in such quietly cryptic touches. In such a dream, the noble body and the classical columns that appear in the Ghiberti relief come together in a single dawn light, with the bare beeches and evergreen cypresses as echoing subordinates. Everything is of a piece, being natural; but being art, it can symbolize a supernatural transition from death to life. A single alert face stares down the world, from the centuries-old plastering of a provincial wall – just as an icon might, just as if this image were the truth.

Private passions

Flanders, Italy, France, Iran, Indonesia, 1440–1520

New techniques for representation such as oils and perspective took hold as Western European society was atomizing. Whether because of capitalism or the plague, the Christian communality of the great cathedral-building age was eroding by the beginning of the 15th century. Look to yourself. Look *at* yourself. Portraits started appearing in a thin trickle during the 14th century, following the ancestor-effigies made at Naumburg in the 1250s. A few artists began adding their own likenesses to their commissions in the 1380s. The self-important piety of van Eyck's Chancellor Rolin was followed by a swelling flow of donor portraits on altarpieces. Profiles on medals become a humanist fashion after the great Italian draughtsman Pisanello struck one depicting the Byzantine emperor in 1438. They would be joined by head-and-shoulder busts, in the ancient Roman manner, from the 1450s.

From the 1420s Flemings made a speciality of small panel portraits. Rogier van der Weyden's [123] probably shows the illegitimate daughter of his master, the Duke of Burgundy. Van der Weyden was van Eyck's successor as court artist, and by the 1450s, when this was painted, he too was an international celebrity. His art likewise explored the deeper tonal range and

124, 125 (opposite) Niccolò dell'Arca, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, S. Maria della Vita, Bologna, c. 1463. We witness the shock of viewing Christ's corpse, dramatized in life-size terracottas that display an astonishing split-second analysis of motion. These sculptural values belong to an international style epitomized by Burgundian artists like Sluter rather than to a Renaissance style that as yet remained local to certain Italian cities and courts. Soon afterwards in northern Italy, teams of artists would begin developing the multi-tableau hyper-realist installation known as the *sacro monte* ('holy hill') – a format that continued into the 19th century (see 224).



subtler modelling made available by oils. But he made his painting proclaim its own artifice: this formal arrangement of a few bold shapes within a rectangle, almost as refined as Mu Qi's still life [see 97], asks us to consider what a remarkable object a *work of art* can be. For this composition is also a feeling about a girl, about her pale sensual bloom, her pride and her pathos.

Pathos, alien to the contemplative van Eyck, would settle in as a prevailing mood in Flemish painting in his wake. In fact, the tremulous, tear-stricken look of this art was one aspect of a wider European trend. Preaching of the 15th century encouraged people to make religion personal: to see Christ's sufferings in the mind's eye, to test them out upon the heart. Intimate, soul-searing appeal went hand in hand with the increasing acquisition of private works of art such as books of hours and figurines for house altars. The same agenda might also put pressure on the Church to provide more potent spectacle. Hence the life-size screaming women [124, 125] rushing to the feet of the dead Christ in a church in the north Italian city of Bologna.

These and their fellow mourners, all dressed like citizens of Bologna, were created by Niccolò dell'Arca, probably in 1463. Even without the

paint that once covered it, his startling terracotta tableau provokes a question or two. Just as we may not understand all van Eyck's techniques, are we sure we know just how life-casts and other studio sleights-of-hand could be combined to freeze split-second movement with this uncanny bravura? Is there a point where such radical realism parts company with 'art'? 'Art', that is, on the Piero or van der Weyden model: composed, accepting of its own limits. Art historians seem to have felt this, sidelining the work – of whose creator we know little – into a no man's land between the more refined and mannerly church tableaux being produced in late 15th-century Northern Europe and what counts for 'true' Italian Renaissance style. Yet compare it with Donatello's *Feast of Herod* [118]: its fierce emotionality is closely in line with that of the celebrity who for his contemporaries epitomized whatever was new and exciting in Italian art.

Donatello's range, however, exceeds neat stylistic categories, and it is the *David* [126] at its other end who has come to epitomize the full advent of a Renaissance style. He is first recorded standing on a central pedestal inside a Florence courtyard in 1469, three years after the sculptor's death at the age of eighty. How long before that he was made is uncertain, though he would definitely have followed the street-façade statuary that made Donatello's name back in the 1410s. The courtyard lay inside a palace of the Medici, the family of bankers who from 1434 effectively held control of the Florentine Republic. Standard republican rhetoric determined Donatello's subject: David, the youth in the Bible who slays the giant Goliath, stood for Florence defeating some bigger enemy. But Donatello's innovation – a freestanding statue, designed to be admired from all angles – was most likely devised for a private space, owned by a dynasty of power monopolists with humanist tastes. It was doubtless meant as a *renovation* of the ancient art of the nude. Without much available evidence to go by, Donatello dazzlingly reinvented the alternating rhythms of slack and tensed limbs that can be seen in the Praxitelean bronze boy on p. 68 – the effect that Italians called *contrapposto*. His surfaces, however, are entirely novel. They tickle: the burnished pubescent flesh is brushed by long locks, metal war gear and a wildly kinky trail of feathers reaching from Goliath's helmet up the inner thigh. They coax, drawing the viewer in an unprecedented manner into the aura of the artist's sensuality.

All indications suggest that master-and-boy relations in Florentine workshops were frequently sexual, though 'sexual orientation' was hardly the issue it is now. The aesthetic epitomized by *David* would also be nurtured by the painter Filippo Lippi, celebrated in Vasari's *Lives* for his seduction of a nun, and by his pupil Sandro Botticelli – in anecdotes a





127 Sandro Botticelli, *Allegory of Abundance*, drawing, c. 1482. Infants in medieval Christian art are most often treated as diminished adults. The Christ Child, in Bellini's painting opposite, may have a baby's proportions, but he retains a remarkably shrewd self-possession. Fifteenth-century Florence, however, brought the *putto* to the fore, revived from ancient Roman art – the pudgy little boy who may help swell an allegory but who spices it with a spirit of lighthearted mischief. In other contexts, the *putto*, fused with the originally Hebrew figure of the cherub, may bear wings.

boy-lover and in his art [127] an obsessive dreamer of femininity. It was an aesthetic of fine lines and shimmering surfaces, one that became associated with the Medici's rule over Florence during the latter half of the 15th century. Cosimo and then Lorenzo de' Medici were shaky bankers, but they were smart diplomats who established relative peace among Italy's small but quarrelsome states and whose patronage consolidated their city's artistic reputation. Like other rulers, notably Piero's patron Federico da Montefeltro at Urbino, they invited humanist scholars to court, and Botticelli, a leading presence there during the 1480s, enmeshed his art in the arcane schemes of symbolism that the humanists devised.

The exact purpose of this drawing by Botticelli [127] is as uncertain as that of the *Primavera*, a large and intricately sensual allegory of 1482 with a closely similar figure style; but the drawing's finesse suggests it was done with at least half an eye to the incipient culture of 'art collecting'. Its symbolism is relatively straightforward. The grapes in the putto's hand and the lightly sketched cornucopia proclaim that the nymph personifies Abundance, or maybe Autumn. Naked infants, horns of plenty and gauze-clad maidens had lain on Italy's studio shelves as slightly dusty templates ever since the country became Christian; other pagan props, the Venuses and Jupiters, had likewise maintained a modest afterlife, admitted here and there into all-inclusive allegorical schemes. Now, in a vogue that spread out from a few scattered palaces, they were all being dusted down, overhauled, re-embroidered in rippling reveries, fretted over. The metaphorical possibilities, the ambisexual implications, were giddily fascinating.

What had this to do with Christianity? Well, Botticelli's studio never stopped taking orders for madonnas: in fact, it was one of Italy's supreme suppliers of this perennially popular product, alongside the Venice studio of Giovanni Bellini [128]. If Botticelli unfurled a linear delirium, Bellini's panel of 1487 exhibits a firm underpinning of linear control. Mantegna was his brother-in-law, and early in his career, back in the 1450s, Bellini had picked up some of his rigorous exactitude. But local conditions modulated it. Venice was a centre for trade from the north-west. By one route or another, the technique of oil painting reached this region of Italy from Flanders around 1460, gradually supplanting egg tempera. Bellini adopted the new medium a decade or so after, and in this work he was plumbing oil glazes for all the translucent glow and gentle blunting of edges that they could deliver. For its own citizens, Venice existed as a claustrophobic warren of built-up islands inside a lagoon. Nothing could be sweeter, from their perspective, than to dream of broad country estates stretching across the plains to the Alps – a taste to which the little flanks of

128 Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna degli Alberetti*, 1487.

landscape cater. Oils helped Bellini give his clientele a semblance of air to breathe, as in this subtle interplay of interior and exterior lighting.

From another angle, Venice was also the centre for trade from the south-east. The basic model for madonnas such as this remained the icons that the city had taken from Byzantium long before. But Bellini's calm, warm grip, which ensured him supremacy in Venice until his death in 1513, dissolves the issue of whether to place this lovely pensive face in the Virgin-of-Vladimir or else in the van-der-Weyden mode. If the former's gaze was meant to pierce the heart, this downcast glance was meant to carry it away.

Being the great centre for trade from the south-east, Venice needed to ensure that such trade continued now that conditions had changed. The Ottoman Turks had capped their conquests in Anatolia and the Balkans by taking Byzantium in 1453. Many Greek scholars fled the invasion, conveying their learning and their ancient manuscripts to welcoming humanist courts in Italy. Meanwhile, the Venetian Senate was keen for constructive engagement with Europe's greatest political success story. Giovanni Bellini had a brother named Gentile who lent much of his energies to factual depictions of urban life.* The Senate shipped him off to Istanbul (as Byzantium had become) in 1479, in response to a request from Sultan Mehmed II. Now that he was a European potentate, the sultan himself was keen to engage with the Western art of royal portraiture – just as, being an Islamic monarch, he had also equipped his court with the desirable accoutrement of a workshop of Persian manuscript illuminators. By this time the tradition that started back in Tabriz in the early 14th century [see 107] had spread, diversified, devised its own intricate rules of procedure. Persian painters acquired niches in many such courts.

Gentile's visit was a success in government circles, resulting in an imposing portrait of the sultan – although outside the palace most Ottomans, like most of the Arabs they would shortly afterwards conquer, probably held to their suspicion that art containing human figures was impious. Gentile also left behind a sketch of a youth with a pen poised above a blank sheet of paper [129], a work that displays his appreciation of the refinement and the joy in floral pattern that would long mark the Ottoman court. The Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk has written feelingly about it.** Guessing that the youth is about to paint in the Persian manner, Pamuk infers that 'he is thinking of the world inside his head ... recalling, with almost metaphysical inspiration, a poem he has learned by heart'. With this inwardness Pamuk contrasts the activity that Bellini himself was

* The terrain opened out by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, which was also occupied in the late 15th century by Vittore Carpaccio in Venice and Domenico Ghirlandaio in Florence.

** *Guardian*, 8 April 2006. Also, on the same theme, much less succinctly, in the novel *My Name is Red* (1998).

129 Gentile Bellini, *Seated Scribe*, c. 1479. The drawing of the scribe, seemingly done from life, has been delicately adorned with fabric patterns in bodycolour. The sheet has been cut down for pasting into an album and an Arabic inscription subsequently added. This image was evidently much admired in Islamic courts, since several Persian copies and variations exist.



engaged in: making pictures from what lies before the eyes, extracting art from ‘the world itself’. While his sympathies are captivated by the turbaned idealist, Pamuk equally insists upon realism’s shocking forcefulness and on the cultural advantage it would eventually supply to the West.

The kind of picture that Pamuk would have the youth dream of, as he sits there with his pen poised, would ideally be something like *Yusuf and Zulaikha* by Bihzad [130]. Bihzad’s masterpiece was actually painted a few years after Gentile’s watercolour, in 1488, but it stands as one of the pinnacles of the Persian tradition and its creator soon became legendary. At the time he created it, Bihzad was a youngish artist working for a local prince in the city of Herat, in what is now Afghanistan. Some of the picture’s inscriptions quote a senior figure in the city’s cultural life, the poet Jami, bouncing his verses off others by an earlier poet named Sadi – an interplay of allusions like the one we saw in the *Shahnama* from Tabriz. Both Jami and Sadi had written variations on the Qur’an’s (and the Bible’s) story about Zulaikha (or ‘Potiphar’s wife’), the rich lady who lusted after Yusuf (Joseph), her husband’s God-fearing manservant. Zulaikha hired an



130 Bihzad, *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, from the *Bustan* of Sadi, 1488.

artificer to construct a sumptuous mansion of seduction, and lured the beautiful youth through all its chambers, locking the doors behind; finally, just as she thought she had him, Yusuf remembered God and with his assistance burst free from her clutches. The chambers were ‘vast as human hopes’, wrote Jami. Bihzad imagined their splendours with all the passion for visual delight that his civilization could conceive: the closer the eye moves in, the more it feasts on flowers and geometries that glow in brilliant, jewel-like pigments. Standing in for Zulaikha’s hired artist, he offered a demonstration of all that art could deliver – including the desperate drama at the heart of this treasure maze. And yet his wry, idealistic imagination built in an implicit demur on all this visual seduction, insisting on

blockages and dead ends as if this mansion of art were itself merely a snare and a delusion. Desire, lovely appearances and the ungraspable, invisible reality behind them: such themes were the stuff of the Sufi thought in which high Persian culture by now was steeped. There was always a certain ambivalence as to how far the surface pleasures were good in themselves, or merely allowable as metaphors. Some anxious later owner of the picture, fearful of impiety, would scratch out the features of Yusuf's face.

Was all this contemplative poetry the preserve of a civilization destined for eclipse, as Pamuk's argument suggests? Its assailant would thus be 'the art of the Renaissance' – the power to put the world in a picture, as if in a portable window, and hence to take command of it, the origins of which we have traced in Northern Europe and Italy between 1250 and 1490. Historically, I can see the force of that line of reasoning. *Artistically*, I think the suggestion that European art during that period heads in some 'progressive' – or for that matter 'oppressive' – direction tends to foreclose our looking. I can't resist introducing, as it were in parentheses, an illumination made somewhere in France around 1465 [131]. It comes from a book written by (or ghosted for) King René of Anjou: the painting, also claimed for his hand, was most likely done by a Netherlander called Barthélemy d'Eyck.* As much as anyone in mid-15th century Europe, René was attuned to 'what

* No relation, as far as I can discover, to Jan van Eyck.

131 Barthélemy d'Eyck (attributed), *Desire Takes the Heart*, folio 2r from *Le Livre du cuer d'amour espris*, c. 1465. Strange intruders steal up on King René as he slumbers in his luxurious four-poster bed, tiptoeing over the Turkish carpets and the rush matting: winged *Amour*, deftly lifting away his heart, and *Ardent Désir*, on hand to convey it to the lady of the king's dreams. The parted canopy over the empty attendant's couch slyly heightens the sexual temperature.





132 Sultan-Muhammad, *The Court of Gayumars*, page from the *Shahnama* of Tahmasp, c. 1525.

was happening' in the Renaissance: a duke in France and a king in Naples, he was thoroughly versed in Burgundian culture and at the same time a friend of Cosimo de' Medici in Florence. The illumination incorporates influences from both directions, for instance in its stunningly rich perspectival treatment of the carpets that Bihzad lays down flat. But the tale it has to tell is more surreal than Bihzad's. René dreams that, as he lies sleeping, the winged god of love plucks his heart from his chest and hands it to a pageboy named Burning Desire (little flames fan his skirts). In the allegorical adventures that follow, his heart will reappear as a valiant knight in armour.

What if the European Renaissance rotated around this, as Persian painting rotates around Bihzad? It might get more interesting. There would be more place, for instance, to talk about the fascinating experiments made with perspective by another French illuminator, Jean Fouquet. I recommend disorientation.

Another pinnacle of Persian painting is *The Court of Gayumars* [132], by an artist named Sultan-Muhammad. It was painted about forty years after Bihzad's sheet, in the western city of Tabriz rather than in eastern Herat: the two pictures, the one so scrupulously constructed, the other so boldly fantastical, epitomize the contrast between these twin poles of Persian pictorial art. This, like the earlier Tabrizi painting for a Mongol khan, was made to illustrate a manuscript of Ferdowsi's world historical epic. The commissioning patron was Shah Tahmasp, the second monarch of a native dynasty called the Safavids who had assumed control of Iran in 1501. Tahmasp cherished his nation's cultural traditions and indeed wielded a paintbrush himself, rather in the manner of China's Emperor Huizong. Here, on the opening sheet of a *Shahnama* intended as a gift for the Ottoman court, his artist depicted Ferdowsi's account of the origins of history, taken from ancient Iranian myth. Atop the rocky primal wilds of the world sits Gayumars, its first king. All about him – human, animal, vegetable, mineral – is in free-flowing harmony; and yet at his right hand stands the angel Surush, warning of future discords in which Gayumars' son, sitting on his left, must die. Sultan-Muhammad allegedly devoted five years to his microscopic re-creation of what we would now think of as the Big Bang, the state from which everything originated. Sly jokes – faces hidden in rocks, whisperings among courtiers, perkily greedy lions – evolved out of his geological drizzles of pigment. A compact dainty for a monarch's eye bursts its frame, releasing a virtually cosmic generative potential.

To reach back beyond human divisions and religions was an abiding aspiration of Sufi Islam. It is as if Sultan-Muhammad had struck a vein of formal fertility also explored, far to the east, by the bronze-caster of a Hindu lamp [133]. The flames from its oil pans would once have silhouetted Garuda within a bower of fiery tendrils. Garuda was a demigod with an eagle's attributes, also known through the sun's rays – a creature of light and sky, set to hang from a temple ceiling and to beam forth healing. This marvel of evaporating metal was made some time in the 15th century on Java, an island where Hindu rule was in fact coming to an end. Muslim navies were moving in to seize from the Majapahit empire control of one of the world's richest trading zones. An alternative history of this period might have focused on the busy sea routes that ran from Japan and China, through these 'Spice Islands', to India, Arabia and East Africa. It was for this other world of legendary wealth that Columbus was headed when he sailed westwards from Spain in 1492.

133 Bronze hanging lamp from eastern Java, 15th century. This exquisite metalwork comes from the same cultural milieu as the figure of the *Shiva Nataraja* (82), created by Chola artists in south-eastern India some four centuries earlier. Chola influence reached Java and the dynasties who ruled there between the time of Borobudur and the establishment of Islam by the end of the 15th century. Many majestic Hindu temples were erected there.





RE-CREATING THE WORLD

Birth pangs

Mexico, Northern Europe, 1490–1520s

‘I have seen the things brought to the king from the new golden land. ... In all my life I have seen nothing which gladdened my heart so much. For I have seen among them wonders of art and have marvelled at the subtle inventiveness of people in foreign lands. Indeed, I cannot express all that they made me think.’ With the travel diary of the German artist Albrecht Dürer, visiting Brussels in 1520, a new style of personality confronts a newly connected world. Dürer’s ‘golden land’ was Mexico, just seized by Spanish troops, who had shipped back plunder to be displayed at the court of Charles V. Following Columbus’s American landfall in 1492, Western Europe was fast becoming the centre of a global economic system. Meanwhile, its own cultural systems were reshaping around bolder and broader notions of art, a process in which Dürer was a leading figure.

The four decades around 1500 are commonly held up as ‘the High Renaissance’ by Europe’s art historians because of the crucial place these changes still hold in the continent’s artistic heritage. How much were they uniquely European? The first half of this chapter will approach the question from the ‘New World’ of the west, tracking new developments until Italy comes into view as their central nexus. I shall then go on to trace connections and contrasts within the so-called ‘Old World’ during the later 16th century – for European art history the era of ‘the late Renaissance’ or of ‘Mannerism’.

The Spanish explorers who had hoped to reach eastern Asia via the Atlantic encountered a civilization just as complex and rich after they made their way through the sparsely populated Caribbean islands and reached the Mexican mainland in 1517. Tenochtitlán, the capital from which the Aztecs had expanded their empire for a hundred and sixty years, was probably larger than any European city. Yet in technology and outlook this outgrowth of human culture seemed terminally distant, not just in space but in historical development. The only metals it knew of were gold and silver, used for ornament; the only foreigners it knew of were trading partners for a few hundred miles to the north and south. We have already glimpsed some of art’s common features throughout these ancient

134 Tlazolteotl giving birth to the maize god, Aztec carving, c. 1500. This polished granite of the ‘goddess of filth’ stands a mere 20 centimetres (8 inches) high. The hole at the ear is where votive items might be attached by threads, as prayer offerings to the goddess. Aztec sculpture has a shocking instantaneity and even a brashness that can sometimes seem a foretaste of 20th-century marketing products: other, much larger stone-carvings simulate outsize squashes, corncobs, insects, dogs and rabbits.

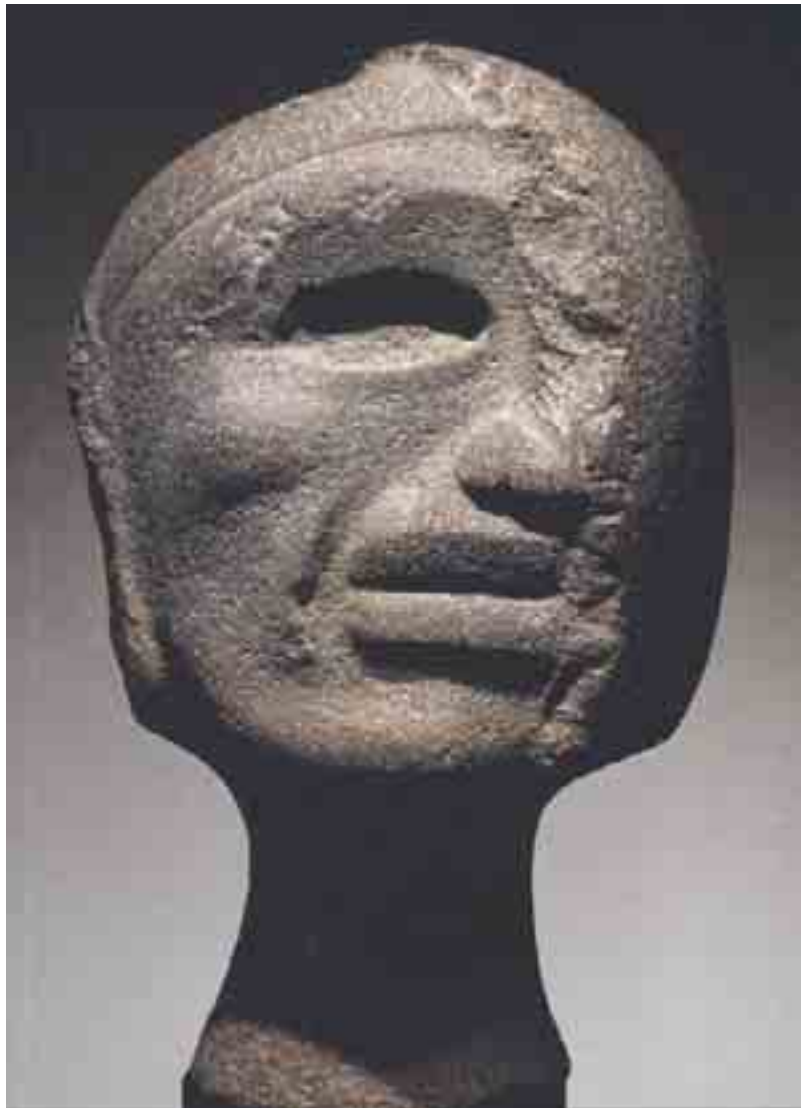
American societies. At root, across a dozen or more millennia, art here was connected to eastern Asia through a shared belief in shamans' visions and cosmologies. But it had long developed its own tensed and compacted forms – for instance those of the 'Holy Spirit' rock paintings in Utah [8], the head sculptures of Mexico's Olmec kings [21], or the carved monolith at Chavín in Peru [22]. The Aztecs, conscious of a long history of monarchies looming behind them, were anxious to prove their own right to rule by co-opting many of these ancient art traditions – not only the Olmecs' jade-carving, for instance, but the fluid and supple clay-working we saw in the Tlatilco acrobat vessel [39] and the florid hieroglyphic picture styles used in the frescoes of the Maya [74]. However, their conquering empire, bigger than any before in the region, was driven by a novel extremism.

Tlazolteotl [134] was their 'goddess of filth', who hearkened to unclean desires, soaked up dark thoughts and fomented madness, with the moon as her attribute. Yet having seduced her brother, foul Tlazolteotl gave birth to the wholesome child-god of the maize-harvest. Little bigger than a fist, this moon-pale stone-carving packs all the emotional ferocity and decisiveness of late Aztec art into its punch. Behind it lay the idea that all aspects of time, nature and behaviour interlock, and that each spawns its contrary. It was a principle that led to yet harsher images, such as the clay figures of the spring god Xipe Totec, chanting exultantly in wrappings of flayed skin that had been ripped from human sacrifices. That the sun might continue to shine, it was needful that thousands of captives be slaughtered in Tenochtitlán's great temple. The ceramic sculptures serving this mass city cult revelled in convolutions of gore as a matter of gross spectacle. On this more intimate scale, however, a kind of sober realism rules – even if no human child has ever burst forth quite as the harvest god bursts forth. A kind of tragic wisdom. One being is avid for life: that entails another living in agony.

Mexico had its great poets, and a line from an elegy about transformation and transience – 'Is it only here on earth that we come to know our faces?' – seems to paraphrase another carving made shortly before the Spanish Conquest [135]. The switching mask – half-face/half-skull, half-human/half-beast – was found far and wide among ancient American cultures, but this strikingly philosophical piece lines up the theme of being versus not-being with what the sculptor himself was doing with his stone chisel, creating form from formlessness. It emphasizes that artists in ancient Mexico were not only in command of a fearsomely powerful tradition, but also self-consciously aware of its power.

The piece comes from the Caribbean coast lands where the Totonac lived. They were among the peoples terrorized by the Aztecs' captive-taking, and they had ample reason to side with the new Spanish invaders

135 Totonac carving of a face emerging from facelessness, c. 1500, Jalapa, Mexico. The Totonac were a people of eastern Mexico with artistic traditions closely related to those of their Aztec neighbours and conquerors, both ultimately deriving from the Olmec culture two thousand years before. This basalt carving is one striking variation on the theme of the switching two-sided face that occurs in Native American cultures ranging as far north as the Haida and Tlingit of Canada's Pacific coast.



of 1519 against more familiar murderous foes. With shocking swiftness, all the meditations on transience turned prophetic. The Aztecs' system collapsed, its physical and conceptual underpinnings proving fatally brittle when confronted by firearmed, plague-bearing horsemen. In the seismic crunch of cultures, the high arts of ancient America soon buckled out of sight. Tenochtitlán and its pagan temple were razed to make way for the Mexico City of the zealously Christian conquistadors, while newly shipped-in diseases decimated the indigenous population. In 1532 a similar fate would overcome the Inca empire of Peru, although here the figurative tradition represented by the Moche ceramics [see 66] had proved much less robust than in Mexico, the premier arts being those of masonry and weaving. From both prize colonial trophies, the Spanish avidly grabbed at items of gold- and silversmithing, and it was probably these that caught the wondering eye of Dürer in Brussels in 1520.

136 Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait with Head Resting on Hand*, pen-and-ink sketch, c. 1492. Making records like this – a few minutes spent peering in a convex Venetian mirror, scribbling on the back of a design for a woodcut of the Holy Family – Dürer created a visual form for the solitary, private self. The preaching of his day encouraged the inward turn: rather than rely on an uncertain Church, each individual must perform his own spiritual self-examination. A training from childhood in line-cutting lent Dürer’s exercise in disquiet a calligraphic, even a dandyish air.



Just what he looked at is uncertain: everything of value was soon melted down to fatten the coffers of Charles V, who through his Habsburg dynastic connections was now both king of Spain and emperor over Austria and the Netherlands. Hard-nosed asset-stripping dominated Europe’s relations with its new transatlantic possessions. Yet among its inner circles – its courts and urban elites – the large-handed curiosity voiced by Dürer had become the style of the new century. The 1520 travel diary of Germany’s artistic celebrity, here breathlessly awed (‘I cannot express all that they made me think’), there blurtily vain (‘I was deemed a great man at once’, he brags at one point), represents a sensibility that would take on anything, an individual overflowing full of himself. Over the previous thirty years this brimming egoism had spilt out in visual form. Self-portraiture had become a regular point of pride for workshop masters during the 15th century, with likenesses slyly inserted at the edge of a painted crowd or carved in the form of a pulpit’s crouching supporter. But the open-ended brooding with which Dürer puzzled away at his own youthful features around 1492 [136], on the back of a practice-sketch Holy Family, was something novel. His dissatisfaction was a form of ambition. In his mirror lay a pathway to the soul, which the era’s preachers urged each Christian to probe in private, outside of Church rituals – a route of inner exploration opening up to an artist who made it his business to master all he surveyed, both technically and intellectually.

The graceful rhythm made by the hatchings across his wrist gives a taste of what Dürer achieved in printmaking, the practice that earned him his fame. Here again he was moving into recently charted territory. Woodcut printing, used for pictures in Buddhist texts in the Far East from at least the 8th century, reached Europe before 1400, soon establishing a market (and defining a look) for playing cards. It combined with Johann Gutenberg's new technology of movable type from 1461 to deliver the first mass-produced illustrated texts. Simultaneously, craftsmen began engraving sheets of copper in order to print images – a technique quickly seized on both by German artists and by Mantegna in Italy. Dürer, a goldsmith's son from Nuremberg, moved in on the expanding field of print and gave it fresh glamour, notably with his woodcuts for a 1498 edition of the Apocalypse [137], the biblical Book of Revelation. His glittering,



137 Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, woodcut, 1498. Dürer's text – Chapter 6 of the Book of Revelation – only names one of the horsemen: Death, the skeletal rider at the bottom left. The two figures on the far right are commonly identified as War and Conquest. War, by his headgear, would appear to represent the Turks who were advancing on Christian Europe as the 15th century ended. Famine was their customary companion. Here, the burly bigwig swinging the empty scales could easily be read as some avaricious German corn merchant, literally trampling on the poor.

138 Wolf Hüber, *Landscape with a Large Tree*, 1529. During his youthful travels in the 1490s, Dürer had taken to sketching landscape views direct from life in his own notebooks, and the innovation prompted a new generation of more self-conscious exercises in landscape, such as this sketch of Hüber's. Hüber and the Swiss artist Urs Graf specialized in fine penmanship during the early 16th century, while the slightly older Albrecht Altdorfer painted vistas of increasingly panoramic ambition.



crinkling black and white offered print-buyers the high-wrought visual refinement purveyed by contemporary German limewood-carvers. Compare the texture with that of Botticelli's drawing from the 1480s [127]: both in Germany and in Florence the mannerliness of the late 15th century carried overtones of authorial prowess. It is of a piece with Dürer's prominent signature: Only I could make this.

That stance might entail another: whatever my hands and eyes devote themselves to has value. Studying a clod of grass with pen and watercolours, Dürer could at once be humble in his reverence for God's creation and imperious in his re-creation of it. Soon after, in the 1510s and 1520s, the artists Albrecht Altdorfer and Wolf Hüber started, for the first time in Europe, to treat figureless landscape studies on panel or paper as an independent speciality. Through frisky pen-and-ink scribbles, a specimen of Hüber's handiwork from 1529 [138] projects a world infused by a single energy. His view shows the Danube valley in Austria (Hüber and Altdorfer have been known as 'the Danube school'), and from such panoramas it was not a great leap to the new mapmaking of this age of exploration. Various cartographic and perspectival experiments were straddling the territory in between. Chinese predecessors like Ni Zan [see 98] probably remained unknown to Hüber. Structurally, his landscape is closer to the receding vista that van Eyck [116] glimpsed through his painted window a century before, for its unifying principle is a dazzling sunlight unseen in Chinese art. But, like some scroll among the literati, this sheet was meant as a *recherché* item for elite discrimination, a curio to be passed between manicured hands. As yet, landscape remained at the margins of European art.

Dürer's *Apocalypse* had a wider remit. Printing created a new communal phenomenon – multitudes in separate rooms simultaneously reading the same narratives, satires and preachers' admonitions. Quite how far a costly volume like Dürer's could tap into this market is debatable; nonetheless, it addressed it. Somewhere among those folk being trampled down by the biblical Four Riders – Famine, War, Conquest and Death – the readers of 1498 might find their own estate represented, and reflect on the nature of 'these times'. Mass communication quickened the always-simmering mass anxiety that the prophesied last days might be imminent: would 1500 be the fateful figure, or must the date once again be revised? It helped promote an imagery of horror in Northern Europe almost as frenetic as that in contemporary Mexico. Here, too, leering and mouldering cadavers featured as a stock artistic prop. And, as in Mexico, the macabre might have tragic dimensions. Grünewald, a poorly documented artist but one evidently driven by a fiercely personal religion, turned his Crucifixion panels of the 1510s [141] into nightmare challenges to Christian compassion. The pain-wracked Jesus, whose scabs and blood-streaks are echoed by tattered drapes and broken rocks, might be the plague-sufferer you avoid on the street: tomorrow his sores might be yours, yet already your Saviour has known them physically from within. This panel meant for private reflection compresses imagery first devised for a hospital for skin diseases at Isenheim in Alsace.

Grünewald was pushing to its furthest limits a trend that had run through Church art since Gero's crucifix [see 80] over five centuries before. Meanwhile, all that had been swept to the margins of medieval imagery was being stirred into a heady stew by Hieronymus Bosch [139, 140]. This great fantasist appears to have been a respected independent artist in a small Netherlands town, from which base he kept up a healthy trade in panel paintings and drawings. But by the early 1500s such a situation offered an astonishing freedom for manoeuvre. Bosch's pen and brush dissolved and recomposed bodily forms both natural and artificial – birds and bottles, metal and pale flesh – into a whole new biosphere of frail mutants, mulled in a fine luminous fluctuation of colours. Much arcane reading, proverbial wisdom and individual spiritual enquiry must have informed his altarless 'altarpieces', with their fond derision for foolish naked humanity. What exactly might Bosch have meant when he painted his infernal phantasmagoria in the *Garden of Earthly Delights*? The sheer volume of scholarly speculation that has been devoted to the issue partly answers its own question: the panel surely carries an intention to bewilder.

It is the work of a religiously alert individual working for patrons who sought not only devotional aids, but also imaginative diversions.



Customary aids to piety remained of course very much in demand, but alongside them artists might kindle a new elite taste for portable visual poetry. Rather than soul-searching, their inventions might prompt the type of response articulated by Dürer: ‘I cannot express all that they made me think.’ The Netherlands could sustain an innovatory specialist like Bosch because throughout the 15th century it had been Europe’s most highly regarded artistic centre, its pictorial expertise being exported across the breadth of Northern Europe and also to Spain, Portugal and Italy. By the century’s close, Italy too was cementing an international reputation, with its artists travelling to serve courts in Turkey (as we have already seen) and also in Hungary and Russia. By 1510, art production in Venice could comfortably nurture little ventures like *The Tempest* [142].

Here is another flare-lit invitation to bafflement, created by the painter Giorgione shortly before his early death. What relates the lightning,

139, 140 (opposite left) Hieronymus Bosch, *Hell*, from the triptych *Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1505. It forms the right-hand panel of a stupendously complex altarpiece-like creation, conjuring up a riot of visual invention out of humanity's desires and follies and fears. From the rise of the salvation religions to the Renaissance, hell's everlasting sufferings offered the imaginative irresistible pleasures. Homely moral saws and the old carnival principle of 'the world turned upside down' informed Bosch's repertory. A proud and violent knight, clasping a stolen church chalice, falls prey to hounds-turned-dragons (below).

141 (opposite right) Matthias Grünewald, *The Small Crucifixion*, c. 1510. 'The Word was made flesh', it is written in the Gospel of St John. No paintings have explored the terrifying implications of that statement further than Grünewald's. Flesh twitches, writhes, smarts, pulses with agony; flesh is a vile sensation, a hideous inescapable burden. In all that, there is to be found the divine. Grünewald's mystical insights were addressed originally to the inmates of a hospital, although this panel may have been painted for a private patron.

142 Giorgione, *The Tempest*, c. 1510. This smallish canvas – 78 centimetres (31 inches) high – has intrigued and bemused interpreters ever since it was itemized as a 'landscape with a tempest, a gypsy woman and a soldier' in an inventory twenty years after the artist's early death. X-rays reveal that the soldier was originally another female figure, but the imagery tallies with no known text. At least part of Giorgione's intention must have been to create an inherently ambiguous image – the kind of product his successor Titian would term a *poesia*.

the soldier and the nursing mother? X-rays by art historians seeking clues, revealing the ways in which Giorgione chopped and changed these components, tend to confirm that the answer lies purely in their inherent power of poetic suggestion. Impending storm and flickering shade effectively take the place of legible narrative. This radical vagueness goes along with the entire grain of Giorgione's brushwork – which, for the first time, exploits the unevenness of canvas, a support for paint used some time before in the Netherlands but only recently adopted in northern Italy. The definitiveness of brushmarks made on a perfectly flat wooden panel is gone, but something more alluring replaces it. A loaded brush quickly traversing canvas leaves traces on its 'teeth', not its valleys: the viewer, induced to complete the intended line in the imagination, also enjoys by proxy the sensation of the action that produced it. This subliminal equation, which has since given the medium much of its distinctive appeal, finds its origins in the chancy on-the-canvas improvisations of the short-lived prodigy of the Venetian art scene.



A thing of the mind

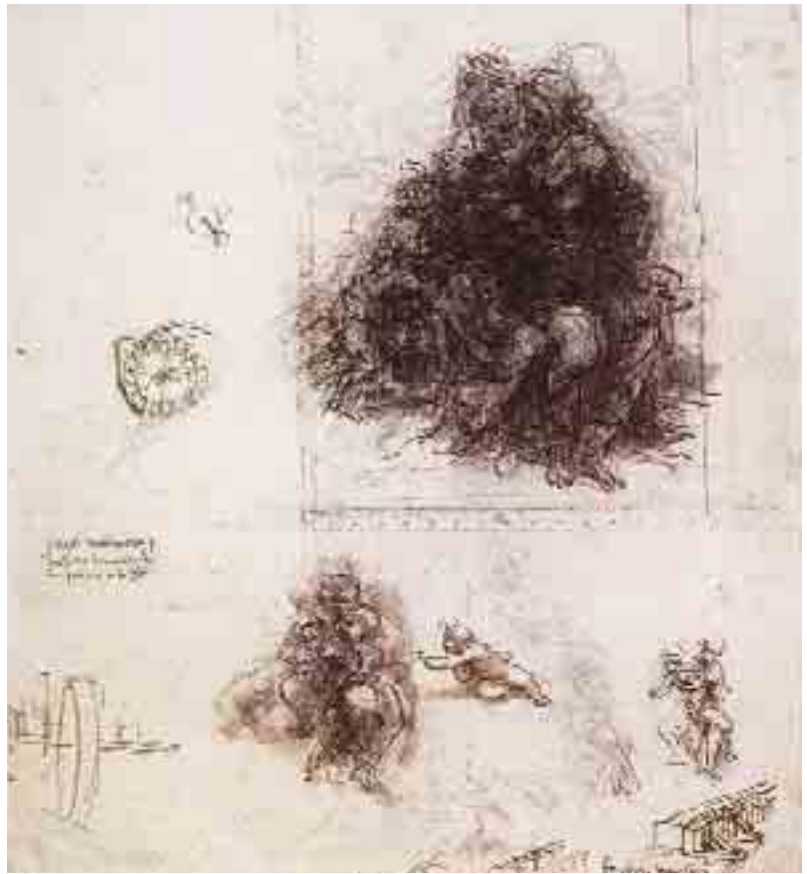
Italy, 1480–1520

Giorgione worked in the shadow of Giovanni Bellini, some forty years his senior. The master of atmospheric madonnas [see 128] had secured a position as painter to the Venetian Republic in 1483 (unlike competitive Florence, Venice favoured monopolies of artistic power), and with the tenacity of a skilful elder statesman he modulated his own manner to meet that of the challenging newcomer, whom he then managed to outlive. It was as if the broader, more sensual effect Giorgione was starting to get from oils confirmed what Bellini had learnt in his own move away from the hard line-drawing of his brother-in-law Mantegna. This change of emphasis would have enormous influence on future painting. But a third party was involved in the transition to a new 16th-century style: Leonardo da Vinci.

The most charismatic artistic personality in late 15th-century Italy was to be found at the court of Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan. Leonardo had secured a place in the Sforza retinue in 1482, with offers to design new military hardware. He stayed on to devise ephemeral displays, lend his intellect to formal debates on the arts and, eventually, to give an exemplary demonstration of what painting could deliver in terms of spatial logic and dramatic narration in the *Last Supper* he completed in 1498 for the city's S. Maria delle Grazie. For all the uniquely supple and incisive draughtsmanship that went into it, Leonardo's experimental fresco technique led to the paintwork's flaking almost as soon as it was finished, leaving another tantalizing stupendous wreck to join the large panel of an *Annunciation* that he had abandoned when he left the Florence of his youth for Milan. In fact, only some ten completed paintings of his are extant, and there cannot ever have been many more. But with Leonardo, what held and what still holds people in awe is less the delivery than the promise. The product, exquisitely subtle as it is, yields to the project.

Throughout this history, art has been a transaction between visible and invisible, but Leonardo substantially changed the meaning of the equation. Starting out among the common run of Florentine workshop apprentices in the 1470s, he early on developed a passion for intellectual exploration. Disdaining the customary vehicles for learning – Latin and the university – he more than compensated for them by translating enquiries of every kind into graphic form in his notebooks. The question of perspective had already become a matter for theory in treatises by Alberti and Piero della Francesca, but Leonardo went far beyond them, treating all the incidental snags that had held up previous painters – how to render flowers, musculature, emotions, shadows – as open-ended issues

143 Leonardo da Vinci, *Study for a Virgin and Child with St Anne*, c. 1499: a fragmentary glimpse of the workings of the most inquisitive mind in European art history. Leonardo seems to be asking himself one sort of question – about spinning motions – in the mechanical diagrams, and another such question in the figure sketches – particularly the group towards the lower right. This sheet from Leonardo's notebooks appears to date from the late 1490s, when he was in the employ of the Duke of Milan. Compare the painting on the following page.



of speculation and experiment. He used his drawing pen to probe phenomena down to their roots. How do the cheek muscles distend when someone yells? How does water bubble when it pours into a pool? How does the child grow in the womb? The attempt to discover answers turned him into a kind of hands-on Aristotle, someone asking why the world was as it was but relying for information on immediate visual experience – aided by the anatomist's scalpel – rather than report and precept. It was a radical philosophic stance, one that would hardly become common until a century after Leonardo's death. In his debating-point defence of it, painting is asserted to be 'a thing of the mind', not mere manual craftwork. Indeed, he claims it as a science: that is, a route to certain knowledge.

Leonardo's science typically works in terms of shifts of energy. The growth, structure and operation of things can be analysed in terms of forces transferring and diffusing. One way to think about this was through cog-wheels and screws; another, which increasingly possessed him, through flows of water. The former generated proposals for unbuilt machinery such as occupy the left of this sheet from a notebook [143], whereas the latter would transform the whole look of 16th-century Italian

144 Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin and Child with St Anne*, c. 1508. Three generations of the Holy Family, with the infant Jesus toying with the animal that symbolizes his sacrifice to come. A decade or so intervened between the sketch on the previous page and this almost door-sized oil painting on wood, which introduces exquisite studies of geological detail in both the foreground and background. Under Leonardo's fastidious, never-completed layers of glazing, the original design congeals as an unearthly reverie. It would create a prototype for the 'pyramidal' figure compositions adopted by painters in Leonardo's wake.

painting. On the right of the sheet, the liquid weight is in effect his own obsessive imagination. He is treating the figures in terms of mobile, struggling currents. As the Leonardo authority Martin Kemp points out, no one had 'brainstormed' this way before, plunging the images they were drawing into a writhing organic tangle. When recomposed after this dissolution [144], painting was a changed art. Bodies were not so much separate objects as parts of a fused slippage of masses. Most strikingly, these masses were formed from a pool of liquid, indefinite potential: they were made to recede into what Leonardo called *sfumato*, 'smokedness', a dimness where the viewing eye loses hold and must speculate instead – the ambiguous zone over which his *Mona Lisa* presides.

This is where Leonardo's anatomical analyses reach out to meet the atmospherics of Bellini and the suggestion-rich paintwork of Giorgione. From the early 1500s, the overall light-level of Italian painting appreciably diminishes, with a corresponding increase in its power to convey mystery. Here might be one place to start speculating, as one casts about for what logic really binds these three generations – the Virgin Mary, her son and her mother – together in so strange a fashion. Surely it cannot be merely the commonplace biblical symbolism of the sacrificial lamb; surely we are glimpsing some arcane meditation in the mind of a magus ... (Everything we know about Leonardo suggests that the fascination he continues to provoke would have pleased him immensely.)

Coincidentally, Italy's political self-sufficiency was starting visibly to diminish. The armies of the king of France had started to move in on the fractured and fractious peninsula in 1494. The intervention resulted in the downfall of the Medici regime in Florence, where a popular movement led by the preacher Savonarola briefly turned to burning their suspect paganistic art – a further symptom of the religious jitters we have already seen in Northern Europe. In 1499 the French captured Milan, and Leonardo fled. He lent his pretensions to military wizardry to the service of Cesare Borgia, the warlord son of the outstandingly corrupt Pope Alexander VI, then came back to Florence to start a battle fresco for the council hall of the increasingly insecure republic. But in 1516 he threw in his lot with the incoming power, and ended his days as an ornament to the French court.

Michelangelo Buonarroti and Raffaele ('Raphael') Sanzio, the two artists who by this time had come to dominate Italian art, may each have watched the senior figure as he painted his fresco in Florence: in fact, the former was painting another battle fresco in the same chamber.* Michelangelo's long career as a sculptor, painter and architect – he lived

* Neither was completed. Ironically, they seem to have disappeared during the 1550s under some graceless frescoes by Giorgio Vasari. The man who would write the lives of these great personalities was himself a painter of assiduous mediocrity.



from 1475 to 1564 – began in a Florence dominated first by the Medici’s humanist tastes for the antique nude and then by Savonarola’s pious zeal, a conflict of interests he would transmute through his own extraordinary inner energies. He initially attracted attention for his skill in simulating ancient marble statues, but his arrival as a successor to Donatello, Florence’s most famous artist of the 15th century, really came in 1499 with the completion of the *Pietà* [145], a carving for a French cardinal’s tomb in Rome. The theme of Mary contemplating the death of her son naturally belonged within the emotional terrain explored by sculptors like Niccolò dell’Arca [see 124] and, indeed, often by Donatello himself. This particular configuration – a grown man’s corpse laid across a woman’s lap – had previously been rendered by French and German artists who emphasized its jagged discomfort. But here, the relationship between a life-size Jesus and a subtly distended Mary is turned to one of heavy, majestic harmony, and all the emotion has been suspended in the inner space between two serene and immaculately burnished surfaces of marble. Mary’s lovely face

145 Michelangelo, *Pietà*, 1498–99.



is like a spotlight beaming down on beauty itself, namely the flawless physique of the son of God.

At home from his earliest years in the revived idiom of the nude, and like Leonardo a devotee of the new practice of anatomy, Michelangelo proclaimed that art could revolve around a single, perfect, infinitely expressive object: the male human body. *David*, the three-times life-size marble that he went on to deliver as a public monument for the Florentine Republic in 1504, demonstrated the proposition on an unprecedented scale, with an unprecedented muscular tension that pulsed and bristled as if from within. While Leonardo was opening art to unseen dimensions of speculation and philosophy, the startling, quasi-supernatural bodily presences that Michelangelo could create gave art a different stature in the world. The idea of art that Western culture has tended to favour – Art, that is, with a capital ‘A’ – gathered momentum from this point onwards.

One of the main catalysts in creating such an art was Julius II, the frenetically ambitious pope who ruled from 1503 to 1513. His military schemes to rid Italy of foreign powers were less successful than his projects to relaunch Rome as its artistic metropolis. Long half-ruinous, the city was shaken up by his decision in 1506 to rebuild St Peter’s, the heart of Western Christendom. Its original 4th-century nave was demolished to make way – in his dreams at least, for plans would in fact halt and change over the course of another 120 years – for a symmetrical, centralized dome with towers. The Milanese architect Bramante devised the scheme, which reflected partly the humanist admiration for Greek ideas (compare the design of Byzantium’s Hagia Sophia) and partly the thinking of his friend Leonardo. It was an analogy on a grand scale of the small-scale symmetry of the human form, which, as Leonardo sought to demonstrate in his celebrated diagram of ‘the Vitruvian man’, bore a natural relation both to the square and to the circle. A new age for the Church might thus be founded on an idealist vision of humanity. Equally, the future Rome would reanimate the Rome of antiquity. Humanism gave an incentive to archaeology: a marble excavated from Roman ruins in 1506 was identified as the *Laocoön* [see 62], mentioned by the ancient writer Pliny as the supreme masterpiece of ancient art.

Lured to Rome by the grand schemes of Julius in 1508, Michelangelo received a further spur to his artistic ambitions with the work’s rediscovery. The *Laocoön*’s heroics lay behind a never-completed project for a monumental tomb to Julius and a four-year labour of frescoing the ceiling of a chapel in Rome’s Vatican Palace built by Pope Sixtus thirty years before. Illusionistic painting had developed fast since Mantegna had opened up a first false skylight in a Mantua palace ceiling: Michelangelo adopted framed openings of this type and built up around them, devising his own imaginary

146 (this page) Michelangelo, *Separation of Day from Night*, framed by four *ignudi*, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome, 1511. 'And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.' This was the final panel of Michelangelo's four-year progress across the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, working his way backwards to the beginning of time – the most metaphysical, and perhaps also the most personal. There has long been discussion about what meanings the *ignudi*, the surrounding male figures, were meant to bear. The outsize acorns they clutch probably allude to the family heraldry of Michelangelo's patron, Pope Julius II.

147 (opposite above) Raphael, *School of Athens*, Vatican, Rome, 1511. The lofty imaginary halls of the ideal university have been modelled loosely on the architecture of the 3rd-century Baths of Caracalla in Rome. At their centre, the doctrines of idealism and naturalism are summed up in two concise and memorable gestures: Plato's hand raised vertically, pointing towards the divine, and Aristotle's spread horizontally, towards the breadth of worldly appearances. In the foreground the marvel of the age has been included: Michelangelo, sitting brooding on his block of marble.

148 (opposite below) Raphael, *Madonna della Sedia*, c. 1516. The *tondo* (that is, *rotondo*, 'round picture') became a favoured format during the 15th century in Florence, where Raphael worked before reaching Rome. Here, Mary and Jesus are joined by the infant St John. Part of Raphael's abiding popularity lies in his willingness to represent the Madonna as a woman of the people, a homely girl in contemporary dress clutching a plausibly pudgy youngster. Yet the cunning of the design resides in the way Raphael keeps this naturalistic image as self-contained, as elegant and as direct in its emotional appeal as the earlier madonna by Bellini (128) and the still earlier Byzantine *Virgin of Vladimir* (86).

classical architecture [146]. It provided the structure for a sequence of scenes showing the Bible's account of the beginnings of time, heralded by a retinue of prophets from the Hebrew tradition and sibyls from the pagan. Eventually, it generated little less than a whole new mythology, shimmering in vibrant, unearthly pigments. The demigods of this new art-heaven were variations on the *Laocoön*'s writhing nudes, which have since become known as the *ignudi*. (Compare the top left figure here with that on the right in the ancient marble.) As the succession of inset panels made its way back towards the world's primal moments, Michelangelo's designs increased in boldness and their epic possibilities came clearer. God making Adam became a cosmic analogue of the artist conceiving his work; and in this ultimate image of the Bible's fourth verse – God dividing the light from the darkness – creativity created its own image.

This framed rectangle of frescoed plaster might almost be a block of marble from the quarries of Carrara: the artist projects his spirit inside that mass, a mighty force to shear away unrealities and to reveal the bright





reality of the figure within. Michelangelo's intuition surrounding his sculpture, also expressed in the poems he wrote, gave his art the fierceness of that humbler, though no less philosophic, Totonac vision of the emergence of form. But before tracking its impact further we must leave him on his scaffold in the Sistine Chapel and ascend a few flights of stairs in the Vatican to the Stanza della Segnatura. In this papal office Raphael, eight years Michelangelo's junior, was at the same moment giving shape to the entire cultural universe that Julius wished to command. Originally from the Umbrian town of Urbino, lately resident in Florence, the young painter made his reputation by covering the three semicircular walls between the ceiling vaults with summations of the realms of theology, poetry and philosophy. The last of these, the so-called *School of Athens* [147], groups all the names of pagan thought around the central arch-framed figures of Plato and Aristotle. Unlike school photos in general and unlike most 15th-century altarpieces, it finds something for every participant to do. The naturalistic, variegated bunching of the intellectuals as they listen and argue was a feature that drew immediate acclaim and made the image a schoolbook for subsequent 'classical' artists. Just as this fresco encapsulated the humanist cultural project started by Petrarch nearly two centuries before, it fulfilled the prescriptions for a 'perfected' painting out-



lined by 15th-century theorists such as Alberti. Its insistent architectural perspective invites the mind to enjoy its own capacity to rationalize and organize space. (Behind this there may also lie the secondhand influence of Piero della Francesca: that other exponent of perspective and lucid naturalism had worked in Raphael's native Urbino.)

Raphael could summarize, and he could synthesize influences from all directions with a seemingly effortless grace. In a madonna from around 1516 [148], he combined Leonardo's vision of masses welling from darkness with the gorgeous rich hues of Giovanni Bellini. They fuse to deliver a new kind of Christian icon, one that is almost cloyingly sweet yet underpinned by a steely strength of design. By way of its encircling coils, it snags the attention on a tightly sprung ratchet of gazes – the mother drawing the heart downwards and inwards, the son sending the mind outwards and upwards. Painted just as the Catholic Church was about to face its greatest crisis of authority, a picture like this offered it a potent new manner of disarming persuasion.

The formats of both images seem like magnified echoes of the artist's own hand movements. With its encompassing, inclusive lines, attending to awkward particulars but resolving them with a steady clarity, overcoming ever-larger thematic challenges, Raphael's draughtsmanship functioned both as the motor driving a growing team of workshop assistants and as a prized trophy of his genius. In the course of the 1510s, his operations expanded to become a virtual industry. Trainees gradually took over the execution of further frescoes for the pope's rooms, while Raphael lent his interest to Rome's ongoing archaeological investigations. His team launched a major 16th-century fashion as they frescoed bankers' villas. Ancient decorations (compare 58–61) found in a 'grotto' of Nero's palace inspired the 'grotesque' – the airily fantastical assemblage of human, animal, vegetable and architectural components that would become a key subject of subsequent paint- and plasterwork. In demand from all quarters, the master climbed stratospherically through Roman society. In 1520, aged thirty-seven, he suddenly caught fever and died (exhausted by too much love-making, so Vasari alleges in his *Lives of the Artists*).

Difficulties

Western Europe, Africa, 1520s–1550s

Michelangelo – who sits brooding alone on his marble block before the Roman-inspired architecture of the *School of Athens*, the age's answer to the ancients – shed no tears for the boy wonder, whom he had suspected of trying to steal his thunder. He had also quarrelled with Leonardo when they were painting side by side in Florence. Moreover, he was embroiled in



149 Michelangelo, *Day*, statue from the Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence, 1524–34.

a three-decades-long battle of attrition with the heirs of Pope Julius over the never-to-be-completed tomb project, fragments for which – an awesome statue of Moses and some half-carved marble blocks, the so-called *Slaves* – remain as tantalizing witnesses to the creative process we have already seen imaged on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Michelangelo's feuds – not to mention his arduously chaste love affairs with beautiful youths – matter in so far as they became woven into the fast-growing fabric of discussions internal to 'art'. Never before or since has so much in art revolved around a single personality. This dynamic, world-altering power of Michelangelo's had a visible aspect that his contemporaries termed *terribilità*, 'fearsomeness'. We confront it as nakedly as anywhere gazing at the back of an allegorical figure [149] carved from 1524 for another uncompleted project, a chapel in the Florence church of San Lorenzo built to the memory of the Medici. It is as if the male body, Michelangelo's mainstay, had become a conduit for something surpassing humanity, some dread subterranean energy. What was this figure supposed to represent? There is no unequivocal answer, although the carving's, and indeed the whole chapel's, foreboding demeanour most likely relates to Michelangelo's pessimism about the fate of the Florentine Republic. The focus of his work was now shifting from sculpture to architecture; its mood was shifting from the exultantly creative to the sternly religious.

Another term that seems made to fit the mature Michelangelo is ‘difficulty’. It was a concept and a quality embraced by artists working in his wake, starting from the 1510s in the studios of Florence and Rome. The *Deposition* [150], completed by Pontormo in 1528, is steeped in such an ambience. For three years this artist – a noted eccentric in an age rich with them – let no one else enter the Florentine chapel where it still hangs while he painstakingly refined his expanded variation on Michelangelo’s *Pietà*, drawing out fresh languorous contortions and modulating the eerie shimmer of his otherworldly hues. The commonplaces of the tragic story of Christ’s death were almost left behind; in their place, the artist pursued a private reverie over the colours, the tones and the rhythms that might convey tragic emotion. The artist’s own face, staring in from behind the Virgin’s blue cloak, bears witness that this is his pious testimony, and that the challenge of making art is itself a religious ordeal.

Equally, Pontormo’s generation was drawn by contrast to the air of effortless grace epitomized by Raphael. Between this *sprezzatura* of Raphael and the difficulty of Michelangelo, between competing formulae for beauty and for variety, a whole new rhetoric of style (*maniera*) arose, developed by ambitious Italian artists through most of the remaining 16th century. ‘Mannerism’ is the term that has since been applied to a parade of rivalling ingenuities, including Pontormo’s. In 1526, for instance, the technique of ceiling-piercing was picked up and expanded by the north Italian painter Correggio, who dissolved the whole dome of Parma Cathedral in heaven-borne recessions of leggy angels, fused and glowingly vague in a manner that had been made possible only by the work of Leonardo. Four years later, in a chamber of Mantua’s Palazzo del Te, Raphael’s pupil Giulio Romano used comparable pictorial ingenuities to bring the ceiling illusionistically crashing down in a frescoed *Fall of the Giants*. Spectacular conceits like these naturally depended on patrons willing to compete in displays of innovative luxury. While the independent military and political power of Italian aristocrats might decline gradually over the century, plenty of disposable wealth was on hand to satisfy their increasing craving for distinction through art. If artists were seeking the *recherché*, so were clients.

Meanwhile, this clientele was spreading beyond the Alps. Italian Renaissance art, which had previously travelled east – Hungary, Turkey, Russia – started after the French invasions at the end of the 15th century to travel north and west. Talent emigrated: for instance the Florentine Pietro Torrigiani, who as a student had broken Michelangelo’s nose in a fight, went off to England to cast the tomb effigy of Henry VII around 1510 before moving operations to Seville, where he died in jail after falling foul

150 Jacopo da Pontormo, *Deposition*, Capponi Chapel, S. Felicità, Florence, 1525–28. It is one of the most ambitious paintings of its time, and one that gives a definite face to the otherwise slippery art-historical label of ‘Mannerism’. Pontormo portrays himself as the bearded man on the far right at the rear, staring inwards dolorously. The image of the dead Christ mourned by his mother is what *he*, Pontormo, and he alone sees in his mind. The unique colour harmonies and the slow pavanne of limbs and robes indicate that outward, natural appearances are irrelevant here. Painting has been



of the Inquisition. The Spain of the 16th century, while purist in religion, was happy to include Italian classicism in a visual culture that already embraced trenchantly emotional Flemish realism and the decorative language of the recently conquered Muslims of Granada. (All these elements soon reappeared in its New World colonies.)

‘Italian style’ was securing the international prestige it has maintained almost permanently ever since. The French monarchy dallied with imported *maniera* at the palace of Fontainebleau, while the adaptable Netherlandish workshops started dressing up their picture-making with Italianate nuditities and architectural classicisms. Dürer took himself from Germany to Venice in 1506 to investigate Italy’s reputed new sciences of painting—an encounter that led eventually to a mysterious allegorical print, transposing the frown we saw in his self-portrait onto a figure of Melencolia, engulfed by symbols of interminable intellectual tasks ahead.

During the 16th century Venice, while on the wane politically and commercially, came to the fore in this international art trade. Florentine artists tended to align their interest in the nude with intellectual and religious concerns, but Venetians were more ready to compartmentalize. Here, a painting could be at once grand in scale and boldly secular in intent. Everything about Titian’s naked lady [151], from her ladies-in-waiting to her pearl earring, denotes elegance. Nothing, however, deflects from the warm, pervasive sexual stimulus that the painter was offering to Guidobaldo della Rovere, his noble client. (‘Naked lady’ was the description initially given her in an inventory of 1538; it was later owners who tagged her the ‘Venus of Urbino’, in line with the mythological work for which Titian was also renowned.) This fleshly immediacy was produced by running brushloads of lead white over the canvas grain, then glazing the resulting glowing impastos with tints that harmonized them. In these techniques Titian expanded and consolidated the oil-on-canvas experiments of Giorgione, with whom he had worked in his youth.

From Giorgione and from Giovanni Bellini, whom he succeeded as painter to the Republic in 1516, Titian developed the approach to painting that has come to be called ‘Venetian’. Bodies and everything around them (the rich fabrics in this painting, the glow of its evening sky) are fashioned out of colour: the paint itself stands for what it feels like to look at them. It was a vision that grounded art in physical experience rather than in the spiritualizing line-drawing that was the common language of Florence-trained artists (Botticelli, for instance, or Leonardo). This vision conformed happily enough with the continuing demand for religious art – altarpieces for Venice’s churches had been steppingstones in Titian’s early career, and they remained a staple of his studio from the 1510s through to the 1570s. But

what levered him to a position of international celebrity was not so much a religious imagination as a level-headed toughness, as formidable in its way as Michelangelo's *terribilità*. Whatever the task at hand happened to be – a martyrdom, a mythology, a portrait of Charles V – he committed his energies to it more fully than any immediate rival could, all the while adapting himself to incoming fashions, such as the spread of prints of Raphael's designs or the Mannerist figure contortions pursued by Pontormo. He applied himself to the subject like a good lover, knowing when to be strong, when delicate. Coaxed by the affirming, larger-than-life touch of his brush, at once lyrical and substantive, the aristocratic clienteles of 16th-century Europe were transported to a plane where they could forget their cares.

These were many. In 1517 the German preacher Martin Luther publicized his protest against papal abuses of power: the big-spending worldly recklessness of popes such as Julius II came up against the soul-searching individual seriousness heralded by Dürer and Grünewald, and religious battle commenced. In 1527 an army sent by the devoutly Catholic Charles V to fight the French in Italy ran amok in Rome. Its troops were largely Germans who had listened to Protestant preachings. While the pope cowered in a fortress, lootings, fires, massacres and rapes convulsed what for twenty years had been Europe's most exciting cultural milieu. The Sack of Rome abruptly curtailed the city's Renaissance, quickening the exodus of its artists abroad. Meanwhile, the turmoils occurring north of the Alps led to far-reaching purges of Church art, including episodes of image-breaking. Protestant worship, as projected by a growing number of reformers, had less and less to do with the mother of God, the body of God and the face of God: it swung towards the Hebrew roots of Christianity, it put all its trust in God's word.

The lack of further altarpiece-work in many parts of Germany and Switzerland pointed painters towards portraiture instead. Hans Holbein abandoned his native city of Basle for London at the end of the 1520s since work for painters had dried up with the reform of the city's churches. Connections through the international world of literary humanism secured him work at the court of Henry VIII. His portrait technique, cool, crystalline and linear in contrast with Titian's warm and breathy brushwork, was equally able to confer a flattering aura of distinction. (Notoriously, King Henry divorced one dynastic bride sent from overseas when he found that she failed to match Holbein's alluring pictorial advertisement.) That technique may well have included the use of lens projections:* certainly, some of Holbein's drawings have the look of tracings from projected

* If so, was this a legacy of Jan van Eyck's technique? See note on p. 159.



151 Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538.

This is a painting that bypasses common social assumptions. The model, one must assume, was a young woman paid by Titian. She enjoys her own beauty, she enjoys – quite literally – her own sex; yet nothing about her suggests that she is a prostitute, or that this is mere pornography. On the contrary, she is alert and in command, saluted by Titian as the mistress of a mansion with servants. And at the same time this serene presence remains a distinct individual rather than some idealized Venus. Titian's canvas was probably intended for his client's marriage chamber. How would they have lived with her, how would they have loved?

images, and in the biggest and most complex of his surviving panels, *The Ambassadors* [152], he seems keen to associate himself in every way with contemporary high technology.

In fact, the pair portrayed here, French representatives in an England that was currently poised between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, preside over a résumé of modernity in general as it looked in 1533. Statesman and churchman, they flank a celestial globe above and an earthly one below, besides astronomical and mathematical instruments and politically teasing props – a Luther hymn-book, an Ottoman carpet, a broken lute-string. And then into the encyclopaedic array, a riddle to cancel all its other riddles, falls a great disruptive slash: a skull distorted by another recent innovation, the technique known as ‘anamorphosis’. Possibly the panel was meant to stand at a stairhead under which sideways steps would have given the skull its own viewing position. Undoubtedly, this *memento mori* (‘reminder of death’) belonged to a repertory of the macabre of which Holbein had previously made himself master.

Even so, the clashing perspectives refuse to settle and compose into a single coherent image – a point that might be applied on several levels.

152 Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533. Jean de Dinteville, a young French noble posted to London, posed with his friend Georges de Selve for a huge panel painting in which Holbein demonstrated all the tricks at his command to his recently established English clientele. One of these was the 'anamorphosis' or shape distortion that streaks a skull across the foreground. In his *Dead Christ* of 1515, Holbein had earlier painted one of the most disturbingly grim images in Christian art.

Perhaps we cannot look straight at death while our eyes remain fixed on the world. Perhaps Holbein's adopted country could not focus on God's word while visual art distracted it: in England, Protestantism would become an image-smashing religion, leading to a radical break in local artistic traditions. If we turn to the up-ended globe that sits above the skull on the ambassadors' shelf, is it possible to combine a view of what was happening in that packed little yellow patch, the Europe of the Renaissance, with a view of what was happening in the big blank Africa above?

The possibilities for art historians remain relatively limited. South of the Sahara, a dearth of written records combines with the already noted



153 Sapi salt-cellar, c. 1500–30. Some sixty of these *objets d'art* remain as testimonies to a remarkable cultural fusion. Portuguese and African traditions also cross-fertilized in the kingdom of Kongo (in present-day Congo and Angola), where Christianity gained a foothold during the 16th century.



fact that the leading tradition in Bantu lands was wood-carving, and that termites have all too keen a taste for it. Piecing together the evolution of the bewildering artistic riches that eventually would be itemized by European colonists four centuries later is an ongoing task for archaeology. But Holbein's newly mapped globe reminds us of the fact that in the late 15th century, while Spanish sailors were heading west to America, Portuguese sailors were heading south round Africa – driven by the same incentive: the hope of finding a new route to the riches of Asia or 'the Indies'. And, at the coastal bases they established along the way, quite another pattern emerged from the conquistador policies of the Spanish in Mexico, who for the most part tried to suppress the indigenous tradition.

This ivory salt-cellar [153], from Sierra Leone, is an early 16th-century example of what we might call 'tourist art' – or, more politely, 'cultural collaboration'. The clients for such items were Portuguese traders who wanted to offer rich Europeans not only the prestige of ivory to impress their dinner guests, but also the cachet of exotic workmanship. Their specifications to the Sapi carvers, inhabitants of that stretch of West African coast, evidently included detailed design material, for the salt-cellar's beaded twists of gadrooning echo the exuberantly convoluted style of stone-carving developed in Portugal during the early 1500s under the reign of Manuel I. But what looks like a miniature monument has been treated as an upright post, of the sort that African wood-carvers still continue to embellish with their chisels and varnishing oils; the tense, stiff-backed vivacity of its perching figures and its unfolding fantasy of snakes and dogs are likewise distinctly local. Another continent enters into the equation with the pipe smoked by the sailor-trousered king of the mountain: tobacco must have reached Africa from America at the same time it hit Europe. The window of opportunity that allowed these hybrid spectacles to flourish was relatively brief. After some sixty years of trade, the Sapi were overrun by the Mande, their neighbours to the east.

At Benin, in present-day Nigeria, the cultural interplay reached court. The city was the capital of a kingdom that from the 14th century had inherited the sculptural tradition of its Ife predecessors to its north. Like Ife, Benin made monarchs' heads cast in brass a fixture of ceremonial life, though here they were sandwiched between crowns and stacked neck-rings that multiplied to ever greater post-like effect. But the arrival of the Portuguese and their prints spurred the royal foundry into new lines of production. The exotic white men became subjects for brass sculpture themselves, and in a change of mode for a region where figure imagery was overwhelmingly in the round, Benin's artists fashioned plaques of pictorial relief. Among the massed reproductions of soldiery on guard that

154 Master of the Leopard Hunt, bronze relief panel of a man shooting at a bird, c. 1600. Note the foliage engraved into the flat of the bronze plaque, giving the tree a backdrop of forest. The works of this master and of the other royal artists of Benin have been scattered far and wide, following the looting of the Benin palace by British invaders in 1897.



adorned the palatial compound, the reliefs of a 16th-century court artist who has been dubbed the ‘Master of the Leopard Hunt’ stand out [154]. Crisp, stout forms whose antecedents stretch back as far as the ancient Nok terracottas [see 65] evoke the sensations of stealing through the verdant savannah – in this case, to aim a Portuguese crossbow at an ibis. The influence of European landscape prints has been transmuted into an indigenous African poetry of the land.

Philosophic heights

The Netherlands, India, Italy, Spain, 1540s–1600

Landscape was one speciality (or ‘genre’) emerging from Europe’s expanded picture-making; another was still life. Van Eyck in the 1430s had made close descriptions of objects a point of pictorial skill, quite

155 Pieter Aertsen, *Meat Pantry of an Inn, with the Virgin Giving Alms*, 1551. 'Behind here are 154 rods of land for sale immediately', the board nailed on the barn roof reads, directly alluding to a civic real-estate scandal that would have been on every Antwerper's mind in 1551. In other words, Aertsen's provocative upending of priorities – dead meat before live people – was motivated by political indignation: we see here an early version of the art aimed for public discussion that became important in subsequent centuries.



possibly spurred on by the look of mirror projections. The habit caught on wherever his influence spread – across most of Europe's cities, in fact. Around the turn of the 16th century little panels of flowers or birds, originally painted to back altarpieces, began to be treated as independent commodities. But with one panel of 1551, Pieter Aertsen pushed the techniques of piece-by-piece observation into shocking new terrain [155]. No one before had focused on butchers' meats, let alone on such a large scale; and few since have matched this evocation of their queasy sensual diversity. A zoom perspective engulfs the viewer in the bloody display, yet pocketed in its network of dead flesh we glimpse not only the butcher, but a distant Virgin Mary distributing alms to the poor. Is she there to lend the outrageous display a flimsy cover-note of piety; or to serve as an arch analogue, one giving-out of flesh for another; or has her saintliness been pitted against the baseness of the street stall? Like Holbein, Aertsen seems to be juggling with irreconcilables. In that sense, both their pictures can be seen as Northern European variants on Mannerist Italy's cult of difficulty. But the 'land for sale' sign in the top right-hand corner strongly suggests that Aertsen intended a topical satire on the commercial greed driving his adopted city of Antwerp.*

This Netherlandish port on the mouth of the Scheldt had become in Aertsen's day the commercial hub of Europe, after the opening of the new shipping lanes to America and the Indies outshining the eastward-facing Venice. Behind its bustling quaysides, which are evoked on the right of

* I owe this point to a brilliant article by Charlotte Houghton: *Art Bulletin*, 1 June 2004.

Pieter Bruegel's *Tower of Babel* [156, 157], Antwerp housed hundreds of studios and printing presses, much of their product couched in the Italianate decor then prevalent across the breadth of Europe. Bruegel, who trained in this environment in the 1550s, edged his way around the fashion by modelling his early work on the example of Bosch, dead some forty years before. From the journey to Italy that was now becoming a standard certificate of artistic education he brought back sketches of the Alps as sparkling as Hüber's to inform his figure-filled landscapes, and studies of Rome's Colosseum on which to model his great satire on the Renaissance project of building a 'tower to heaven'. But the workmen crouched before the tower, as well as Nimrod, their lord, are constructed on a model in blunt contrast with the idealisms of Raphael and Michelangelo. In Bruegel's interpretation of Bosch's vision, human beings are clothed tubes that eat and shit, lust and fight as they work their foolish ways across the earth's surface. In the course of the 1560s, moving through comic variations on folklore and Bosch-like devilry to a series of panoramas, he developed a comprehensive pictorial sociology of human activities to stand alongside the geography of his Antwerp friend Abraham Ortelius, author of a famous atlas of 1570.

The deft, enraptured drawing that underpins Bruegel's light brushwork winds through crowds and clutter, reaches into distances and recesses, and returns with a concise visual aphorism. Wit was highly prized in the Northern European intellectual world that connects him, across a generation, with that other great mine of quotations, Shakespeare. As with the playwright, it kept company with a sense of tragedy. As Bruegel painted,

156, 157 Pieter Bruegel, *The Tower of Babel*, 1563. 'Let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.' At once the Antwerper seems fascinated by mankind's proud project in the Book of Genesis (Chapter 11) and aware of its grand futility. In another, smaller version, vain King Nimrod and his workforce have quit the scene; the skyscraper is further advanced, heading way past the clouds, and the outlook is more baleful, more alien.



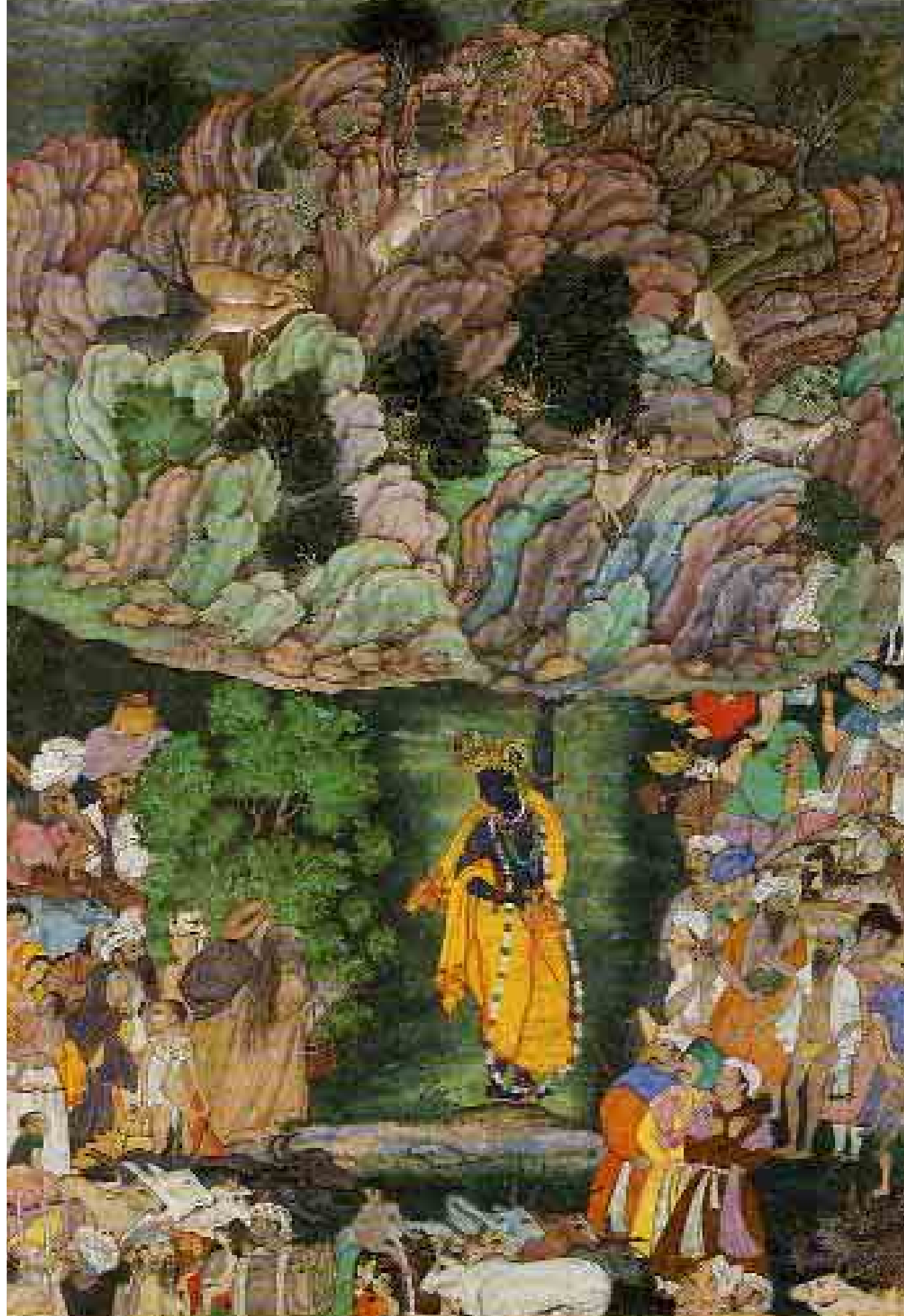
Flemish Protestants were being hacked down or tortured by troops obeying his Catholic patrons – a reality beyond the studio door on which his 1563 *Massacre of the Innocents* (a biblical tale depicted, as custom allowed, in contemporary garb) threw a terrible compassionate glimpse. *The Blind Leading the Blind*, painted two years before his early death in 1569, was starker still in its dismay over human dealings. Babel, the tower built to give humanity a God’s-eye view, in a sense parallels Bruegel’s own panoramic art, doomed to be dispersed in a world of discord.

Bruegel offered his patrons an elevated plane from which to survey and surmount the fractious religious discords at ground level. In strange ways his project compares with another then in process at the far end of those shipping lanes. India, which the Portuguese mariner Vasco da Gama had reached in 1498, had passed much of the previous three centuries in hostilities between Hindus and the incoming Muslims (we noted their arrival on p. 136). Nonetheless, the Sufi dream of reconciling religions was taken up in the subcontinent by the 15th-century poet Kabir and, following him, by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. In 1556 Akbar became the third of northern India’s Mughal emperors – a Muslim dynasty (Mongol in ancestry) that had arrived there from Persia. During his hugely energetic fifty-year reign, Akbar made the project of reconciliation his own. For many of the Muslims surrounding the emperor, the challenge became how to resist a merging of religions – a rather different problem from that faced by Europe’s Christians.

Akbar’s father, like so many Muslim rulers, had introduced a workshop of Persian painters to court. Akbar recruited locals, both Hindu and Muslim, to train under them. These newcomers to the art injected a new spirit of turbulent energy into manuscript illumination during the earlier part of his reign. Manuscript production had gone into decline in Christian countries after the introduction of print, but not among Muslims, who revered ‘the pen’ with which the Qur’an proclaimed itself written. The succession of projects on which Akbar’s workshops laboured shifted in style, however, after some Portuguese priests came to his court in 1580 and presented him with an Antwerp-printed illustrated Bible and two altar panels. From this point on, the illusionistic ‘magic-making of the Europeans’, as a courtier put it, fed into a dialogue with the Persian masters of a century before (see pp. 174–79).

For Akbar’s circle, to paint all matters truthfully was to relate them to the God all religions had in common. This, not surprisingly, proved a far from simple project. Miskin, one of the leading artists of the 1590s, was commissioned to illustrate an epic from his own Hindu traditions for the benefit of a Muslim court readership [158]. His blue-skinned Krishna

158 Miskin, *Krishna Govardhandhara*, c. 1590–95. Akbar, Mughal emperor of India between 1556 and 1605, created and directed major imaginative projects to a degree unique among patrons. Here, a Hindu court painter was interpreting Hindu myths, not for his own religious community but for an audience of Akbar’s fellow Muslims, whom the emperor hoped to steer toward an inclusive pluralism. Miskin depicts Krishna holding aloft a mountain, to protect villagers from a storm raised by the wrathful Indra.



159 Titian, *The Flaying of Marsyas*, c. 1575. Titian's recent paintings, Vasari wrote in the 1560s, 'are executed with broad, sweeping strokes, and with blobs of colour, with the result that they cannot be viewed from nearby, but they appear perfect from a distance': a method that Vasari called 'judicious, beautiful and astonishing'. This agonizing mythological scene, with its uncomfortable echoes of the Crucifixion, is among these radical works of the master's old age. Whether it was ever 'finished' is hard to say.

hoists up a very Persian-looking mountain over a highly naturalistic crowd of villagers in order to save them from Indra's wrathful thunderstorm. Who was the author of this image? It probably makes best sense to call it Akbar's: the top-down autocracy that the Mughals had developed allowed the emperor a greater role in determining artistic direction than that of any European patron. The richly laden syntheses that he commissioned established a new niche for painting in Indian court life from this point onwards – a less transient legacy than Fatehpur Sikri, the palace city of religious unity that he built then abandoned within two decades, his own tower of Babel. Symptomatically, the Muslim poet obliged to translate the Hindu epic alongside Miskin was derisive in assessing his material: 'puerile absurdity', he commented.

There was far less prospect, at this stage, of reconciling a religiously split Europe. In its feel for the anguish of an era torn apart by its own fervent wilfulness, Bruegel's work loosely parallels the late masterpieces of the two great Italians whose manners he was at pains to avoid. Both remarkably powerful into old age, Michelangelo and Titian had become opposing fixtures of the art world long before their deaths in, respectively, 1564 and 1576. (Inevitably, the former discreetly patronized the latter: 'It is a shame that in Venice people do not learn from the beginning to draw well' was his comment after inspecting Titian's work.) In the late 1530s, after the traumatic Sack of Rome, Michelangelo returned to the scene of his earlier triumphs – and did his damndest to negate what he had painted on the Sistine Chapel ceiling with what he painted on the altar wall. In the *Last Judgment*, nearly 14 metres (46 feet) high, cloud-banks of pale, naked humanity rise, hover or fall around the damning gesture of a wrathful Christ. Michelangelo's stock-in-trade, the muscular body, seems not so much an expression of the spirit as an agonizing trap for it, with remorse and disgust convulsing the massed figures. Most of his energies thereafter were devoted to planning the rebuilding of St Peter's, but in his few subsequent drawings and carvings he struggled yet more agonizingly with the material limitations of art as he had previously defined it.

Titian, meanwhile, continued to push the possibilities of mythology. Classical legend could give a licence for erotic imagery, as whoever entitled the *Venus of Urbino* recognized. But it also offered more: it invited viewers to think poetically, to consider how things were in the world, without making any specific demands on their belief systems. It could dignify human affairs and even reflect on the nature of dignity itself. In Titian's case mythology became a way to muse over the pinnacles of power and command to which his stellar career had introduced him – and, perhaps, over what connection they bore to his art. Yet against these lofty



concerns his painting always pitted direct bodily realities, such as lust or pain. One of his final canvases [159] pictured Marsyas the goat-legged satyr, who challenged the god Apollo to a musical contest and lost. His penalty was to be hung from a tree and flayed. While Apollo slices and a singer strikes up a melody, a king in Titian's likeness looks on and a lap-dog licks the blood. In this grim but sophisticated counterpart to Grünewald's earnest *Crucifixion*, art itself seems to become an aspect of

160 Giambologna, *Rape of a Sabine*, 1562. Artists of the Mannerist era were much possessed by the ideal of the *figura serpentinata*, the figure that winds like a snake. We see it here in the arresting twist of limbs and planes that turns a scene of violence into an exercise in abstract elegance. This over life-size marble statue was installed in Florence's central piazza, joining statues by Donatello, Michelangelo and others. Giambologna had earlier cast the grouping as a bronze figurine.



cruelty. The whole flesh of the painting is itself raw and quivering, a battleground of finger-smears: the extremism of Titian's old-age technique compares with the unfinished, perhaps unfinishable rough chiselling that marks much of Michelangelo's later output.

Each cast a long shadow over art, even before their deaths. Michelangelo's legacy was in fact carefully nurtured by a clique of Florentines who in 1563 formed the first European artists' academy, so as

to draw a line between their own intellectual credentials and the ‘mechanical’ skills represented by the old painters’ guilds. Their leading spokesman was Giorgio Vasari, who made Michelangelo the hero of his *Lives of the Artists* in 1550. Art was becoming not just ‘a thing of the mind’ in these circles, but a complex conceptual web of texts, connoisseurs and scholarship. Much of the art made in Florence in Michelangelo’s wake has an insistently artificial chill about it. A second generation of Mannerists (sculptors such as Benvenuto Cellini, portraitists such as Agnolo Bronzino) carried on the pursuit of difficulty seen in 1520s work like Pontormo’s, rejoicing in flaunted musculature and buffed, glossy surfaces.

Another way to describe their enterprise might be to call them an avant-garde, even practitioners of a kind of abstraction. ‘The subject was chosen to give scope to the knowledge and study of art’, wrote the sculptor Giambologna to his patron in 1583, concerning the marble group [160] he had just completed for Florence’s Piazza della Signoria; what title his composition bore was a matter of indifference to him, and *Rape of a Sabine* seems to have been someone else’s afterthought. What interested Giambologna (Giovanni da Bologna, or Jean de Boulogne – a Netherlander who had travelled south to become a fixture of Florentine art) was not the dramatic meaning, but the challenge of uniting three figures in a single vertical spiral rhythm. In resolving the problem – firstly through bronze figurines, a medium in which he became the abiding master – Giambologna created, more than any sculptor before, a truly four-dimensional work, involving time as well as space. The spectator needs to walk all the way round the group in order to follow its formal fascinations.

Spirals and serpentine movements such as this seemed a certificate of artistic quality for the intellectual elite far beyond Florence. They featured prominently in the art created at the Prague court of Rudolf II during the last decades of the 16th century. Here, Netherlandish landscapists working in Bruegel’s wake, Germans scientifically recording botany and beetles, and Italian virtuosi like the visual punster Arcimboldo – painting heads composed of books or fruit or fish – were all gathered under the patronage of an emperor who, like Akbar, wanted a cosmos in miniature placed under his view. For a brief period his *Kunstskammer*, an unprecedented collection of everything art and nature had to offer, was the envy of Europe. On a much smaller scale, Northern European courts like Queen Elizabeth’s in England were also attracted to philosophical refinement. ‘Emblems’ were their favoured visual coinage – concise pictorial symbols for complex realms of understanding, readable only by the initiate.

161 Paolo Veronese, fresco of figures and a landscape, Villa Barbaro, Maser, c. 1560. Illusionistic painting, originating in classical times, was an art revived and developed by Italian painters from Giotto onwards: Mantegna in particular had a major hand in expanding the repertory. It had various departments. Technically, *trompe l'oeil* meant 'tricking the eye' with paintings of objects looking so solid that the viewer was tempted to touch them, such as the mouldings seen here. *Quadratura*, on the other hand, was the perspectival geometry that generated fictional recessions of architecture, pierced by imaginary vistas and skies.

162 Ceramic panel from the Mausoleum of Selim II, 1574, Istanbul. The Ottoman empire was ruled by some formidable sultans in the course of the 16th century, but Selim II was not among them. The debauched reign of 'Selim the Sor' saw major reverses to Turkish supremacy, with Christian fleets gaining victory at the Battle of Lepanto, and ended when the sultan slipped on a bathhouse floor. The work of his predecessors in organizing a superb network of imperial artists' workshops ensured that Selim was commemorated, at least, in exalted style.



Italy, though, remained the chief driving force of European art. A wall in a room built around 1550 and frescoed ten years later displays some of the stylistic exemplars that late Renaissance Italy generated and exported [161]. The building's architect, Andrea Palladio, was based in the city of Vicenza, around 60 kilometres (40 miles) from Venice. He was employed by Daniele Barbaro, a Venetian noble with whom he shared scholarly interests, to design a country villa at Maser, where the north Italian plain meets the foothills of the Alps. Palladio's schemes for such country villas referred to the ancient Roman texts of the architect Vitruvius, and wholeheartedly adopted the Romans' practical concerns with good engineering and efficient agriculture – interests he would systematize in an architectural textbook of his own in 1570. At the same time this ethos of construction had idealistic dimensions: classical orders (such as the Ionic columns shown here) integrated the improvement of the land within a scheme of significances that reached up to the 'Great Architect', the creator, through both pagan and Christian schemes of allegory.

Here, in the Villa Barbaro's 'room of Bacchus', devoted to the god of the vineyard, the re-creation of ancient Roman rural harmony was represented by the painter Paolo Veronese in a perspective on a contemporary park avenue that seems to echo ancient frescoes [see 58] in its captivating lightness and calligraphic charm. And through this scheme of Veronese's, all the previous work of solid construction is translated to a level of fantasy – for nothing, barring the spiralled upper frieze and the ceiling vaulting, has any three-dimensional substance. The mock marble, the grotesque herms and the comic cameo'd camel declare that, deep down, shallowness rules. Overhead, out of view, the illusions extend to a half-nude Bacchus, seen *di sotto in sù* ('from below to above') against a silvery, cloud-flecked sky – the kind of august and emotion-free allegory with which Veronese would subsequently delight a clientele inside the city of Venice. It was a potent combination for aristocracies elsewhere to adopt. One made good the land. One conformed to the great scheme of things. One laughed, one distanced oneself: it was all something of a game.

The fantasy life of Venice's sometime trading partners, sometime enemies the Ottoman Turks revolved around flowers and abstracted gardens [162]. This imagery, with its echoes of paradise, had found a footing in Islamic art from the outset, but in the era after the Mongol invasions (the 13th and 14th centuries) it slowly gained predominance over linear geometric pattern, in a movement stemming from the Persian-speaking east. The Ottomans took many Persian artists back to Istanbul after a 1514 raid on Tabriz, and this hastened the westward flow of floral motifs that were in origin Chinese. In this panel of tiles from 1574, the



Chinese (*hatayi*) style has been interpreted by the Turkish empire's most celebrated workshops: the potteries of Iznik in north-west Anatolia. Their startling cobalt blues and Armenian-bole reds bounce and dance on a white ground that keeps the exercise sober, making it another kind of meditation on organic growth and good order.

The design of the panel points us towards the realms of carpet-making in Anatolia and Persia. But in fact, it and a companion piece, each almost the size of Veronese's wall, stand flanking the doorway of a tomb-hall for a sultan. It could almost be described as a funereal ornament like Michelangelo's allegorical figure of *Day* [see 149], except that pathos is so utterly alien to it. The hall was built by Sinan, the 16th-century architect whose stature in Ottoman history matches that of Palladio in the West. His limestone mosques, lucidly proportioned and boldly engineered, bore out the claim of the sultans to be regarded not only as caliphs of Islam in the Prophet's footsteps, but as inheritors to the Roman Empire whose distant Byzantine descendant they had defeated in 1453.

Byzantium's status as the centre of Orthodox Christianity had passed. It was now claimed by the Tsars ('Caesars', Roman emperors) of the 'Third Rome' – Moscow – and capped by the dizzy grandeur of the city's St Basil's Cathedral, built in the 1550s. But for Greeks in the heartlands of the Orthodox Church, it was at least as tempting to head west. Around 1567 a young icon painter, Domenikos Theotokopoulos, boarded a ship from his native Crete to Venice, the metropolis from which the island was then being ruled. In Venice he quickly adopted Catholicism and the pictorial language of the still-active Titian. He then made his way to Rome, where his critical attitude to the works of Michelangelo – he seems to have assumed the innate intellectual seniority of his own culture – alienated the local art world until a friendly cardinal invited him to travel on to Spain. Here, at last, he found a comfortable base of operations in the academic and literary city of Toledo, where, as El Greco, 'the Greek', he painted till his death in 1614.

The art issuing from this unusual career path [163] has some affinities with that of another proud individualist, Jacopo Tintoretto – a painter who from the 1550s tried to take over Titian's leadership in Venice, and from whom El Greco may also have learnt. Both took to the limits the Venetian habit of creating events directly on the canvas out of dragged brushloads of paint; both plunged deep into the suggestive darkness that had first entered the tradition with Leonardo; and neither was constrained by commonplace perspective in his will to think big – as in this epic compression of the story of Jesus communing with the angel and accepting the fate of his imminent arrest while his disciples sleep on. Equally, the affini-



163 El Greco, *Agony in the Garden*, 1590–95. A proudly independent intellectual with an unusual curriculum vitae – painting in Crete, Venice, Rome and Toledo in turn – Domenikos Theotokopoulos, or El Greco ('the Greek'), took singular liberties with the Italian oil techniques he had mastered during his westward progress. Especially attentive to heads, such as that of Jesus here, he otherwise pushed aside the business of 'imitating nature' to create swirling, gestural forms suggestive of spiritual experience.

ties could be read as spanning the Mediterranean. El Greco's roots in Byzantine painting, with its gleaming highlights (compare the *Virgin of Vladimir*: 86) and its mind's-eye truths, strangely matched the tastes of a Toledo where St John of the Cross had recently composed a mystical poem about the 'Dark Night of the Soul'. Spain, with its national sense of Christian mission, was a fertile terrain for arts of spiritual concentration.

Or we might see El Greco as the ultimate Mannerist – an eccentric risk-taker without parallel, his coldly dazzling slashes and coils of paint taking the wilful pursuit of artistic individuality that had surged through the European Renaissance to a point where no one could follow, in a refined provincial backwater. Qualify that: no one would really follow this act until Picasso began to reinterpret it in 1907. But to approach matters from such an angle would be to write history backwards.



THEATRICAL REALITIES

Other times

China, Southern India, the Americas, Italy, 1530–1630

Histories such as this have a bias towards progress. The idea that artists are transforming the cultures around them and imagining the previously unimaginable – Michelangelo painting in the Sistine Chapel, for instance – makes for a more exciting story. But if we insist on looking for innovation, we may go against the historical grain. Art cultures always move, but not always in leaps. Westerners are used to thinking that small-scale societies (Aboriginal Australia, for instance) have changed their terms of reference relatively slowly, but the same might be said of the largest of all regional civilizations. Through the 16th century – as through most of the last two millennia – the world’s wealthiest and most populous state was China, then ruled by the Ming dynasty. Far from Beijing, the empire’s capital, a landed elite had converged for three centuries around the lakeside city of Suzhou. In this agreeably sophisticated environment, Wen Zhengming was one of hundreds devoting himself to painting scrolls with landscape or plant studies accompanied by poetic inscriptions. It was a high-minded pursuit, in so far as literati like Wen would not (in principle, at least) take money for their work; rather, it might circulate in exchanges of demure politesse.

Wen’s *Seven Junipers* [164] of 1532 stands out among the throng of such works on account of its whip-crack dynamism, a wild, irregular rhythm bounding over the length of three and a half metres (twelve feet) of paper. It seems to do things with pictorial space that Western painters would not attempt till the 20th century. But its force – unlike that of contemporary works by Michelangelo – is by no means a matter of radicalism. Wen, painting the scroll in his sixties, was returning to an image painted by his revered predecessor in Suzhou, Shen Zhou, and looking back beyond Shen to the style of Zhao Mengfu, who had painted around 1300. His accompanying poem, written ‘in admiration of antiquity’, identifies the junipers as morally encouraging emblems of resilience and as ‘magic witnesses of days gone by’. ‘Who knows’, he adds wistfully, ‘what is to come hereafter?’ In other words, the momentum here is one of nostalgia: in the hands of a distinguished exponent in a privileged location in a politically unruffled era, backwards-looking might have a creative force of its own.

164 Wen Zhengming, *Seven Junipers*, 1532. Following the style of his teacher Shen Zhou, the austere and dignified Wen Zhengming was the most revered of all artists in the so-called ‘Wu school’, which consisted of painters based in Suzhou during the Ming dynasty.

Time unfurls in another way in southern India, still at this point a major presence in world trade with its spices and textiles, and as yet beyond the reach of Mughal power to the north. Here is the summit of a *gopura* [165], one of four gatehouses towering some 60 metres (about 200 feet) above a temple in the city of Madurai. In this capital, renowned for its wealth since 300 BCE, a complex of buildings dedicated to the goddess Meenakshi had been growing for over two hundred years before the *gopura*'s erection around 1599, and construction would go on well into the 18th century. Nowadays, the complex's 33,000-figure swarm of stucco statuary is repainted every dozen years. This art had been developing without abrupt change since the time of the Mamallapuram rock-carvings and the *Shiva Nataraja* we saw in Chapter 4, and remain vigorous and spiritually potent on the streets of contemporary India among millions of sculptors and painters and hundreds of millions more worshippers. The ever-multiplying, all-encompassing encrustation – alarming, enticing, diverting, delirious – proclaims a security in tradition that religious buildings in the historically disrupted West can for the most part parallel only wanly.

Art in Europe had very different behaviour patterns by the 16th century, and further innovations would emerge in the century after. These innovations are the chief subject of this chapter – though many of them could equally be described as attempts to give Christendom's visual culture a fresh stability. For all the residual strength of the Chinese and Indian traditions, the reach of these European ways of thought was by now far extended. Southern India had dealt with Western shipping from 1498 – the Portuguese making their base at Goa twelve years later – and by the mid-16th century China too was encountering the 'foreign pirates'. Here, a Jesuit mission to the imperial court showed off European pictures, together with clocks and other technological novelties. Possibly this influenced some Chinese painters to add new touches of modelling to their long-established portrait techniques [see 96], but in matters of landscape European efforts were at first treated dismissively – the dominant literati did not regard such window-on-the-world illusionism as 'art'. In Japan, the arriving Westerners were exotic curiosities to be caricatured in screen paintings. Just emerging as a powerful centralized state after centuries of civil war, the country was less concerned with the Europeans' pictures than with their missionary activities. Threatened by Christianity's popular appeal, alarmed by the feuding of Jesuit and Franciscan, the shogun ordered a mass crucifixion of members of both orders in 1597.

In the creeping globalization of the 17th century, the martyrs of Japan could be found represented in paint at another end of European communication lines – Cuzco in Peru – some three decades later [166]. A school of

165 The summit of a *gopura* (gatehouse) at the Meenakshi Temple, Madurai, 1599. The top of a steeply raked pyramid covered with a profusion of ceramic statuary, it was originally erected in 1599 but has been repaired and retouched every dozen years since. Naturally, the paintwork here is a celebration of the vibrancy of modern synthetic pigments. The figures include guardian spirits and dragons (compare with the *makara* at Borobudur: 75). Massed princes hail the wedding of Shiva and Parvati, who appear at Madurai in their local emanations of Sundareswara and Meenakshi.





166 Lázaro Pardo de Lagos, *The Franciscan Martyrs in Japan*, 1630.

painters that would keep Andean regions supplied with devotional art for two centuries had been started there by an Italian immigrant in the 1580s. The concerns of its alumnus Lázaro Pardo de Lagos, delivering his trenchant visual sermon for a Franciscan convent, seem both far-reachingly internationalist and doughtily local – a cultural position typical of many subsequent European colonies. In his staccato massing of crosses something of the compressed force of earlier Peruvian design, such as Inca masonry or tapestry work, comes through – though to what extent ‘indigenous’ habits of mind resurfaced in Latin America’s post-conquest

Christian imagery, as if they were irrepressible instincts, remains an open art-historical question. The sheer accumulation of robes, shafts and saving angels foretells the glutted surfaces of later Latin American artistry, which in places rivals southern India in its encrustation.

The doleful piety of the martyr portraits obeys a trend that had started in Europe many decades earlier. The Catholic Church held extended discussions in the mid-16th century to reconsider its position in the light of Luther's Protestant Reformation. In the so-called Counter-Reformation, the Church turned away from the attitudes of Pope Julius II, who could permit Michelangelo to cover the Sistine Chapel ceiling with exultant paganistic nudes. Instead, it resolved to concentrate the resources of its imagery on saving souls, directly and heart-wringingly. Pain, pathos and mystical witness were to take the place of Renaissance ingenuity, titillation and scenic variety. It was a prescription that would affect art widely up until the late 17th century – not least because it sparked off other programmes of return and reform within the artistic community itself.

As we saw in the last chapter, a sense of 'artistic community' had gradually coalesced in various big cities during the 16th century – meaning that Europe's artists were finding common languages in which to debate their own purposes and philosophies, as distinct from what their patrons wanted. The process was significantly boosted by Vasari's founding of a prototype 'academy' in Florence in 1563. But it soon struck three young artists in northern Italy that the *maniera statuina* of the likes of Vasari – the marble-cold, consciously artificial look pursued by so many post-Michelangelo painters, from Pontormo onwards – was exactly the problem the community needed to address in delivering its own reform. In 1582 they set up an academy of 'the rightly guided' in their home city of Bologna: Agostino Carracci in charge of tuition, with his cousin Ludovico dominant in religious commissions and his brother Annibale in secular. To talk of right guidance implied that the art being made around them was erring – too far, as they saw it, from the balance achieved seventy years before by Raphael.

The way in which the Carracci academy defined this balance proved highly influential. The long-standing north Italian taste for solid, immediate realism (think, for instance, of Niccolò dell'Arca's terracotta sculptures in Bologna: 124, 125) was regarded as a demand for 'nature'. The linear qualities and conceptual ambitions associated with Florence represented 'the ideal'. The ideal complemented the natural, and the rightly guided path steered judiciously between them. It did so by building up grand compositions, freighted with dignified meanings, from units of nature like landscape studies or life drawings – such as this sheet of Annibale's from the 1580s [167], an exemplar for future academy practice. As in other work

167 Annibale Carracci, *Sketch of a Youth Holding a Bar*, c. 1584. The vigour of Annibale's draughtsmanship and the good sense of his technical procedures belie the strange sideways drift of his career. It had started in 1582 with a provocatively realist painting of a *Butcher's Shop* (comparable to Aertsen's: 155), perhaps a manifesto against Mannerism. He then moved on to emulate the classicism of Raphael in his frescoes for the Palazzo Farnese in Rome. When his patron received these poorly, he withdrew into depression, and his last *Self-Portrait* of 1604 is a work of deep, enigmatic melancholy.



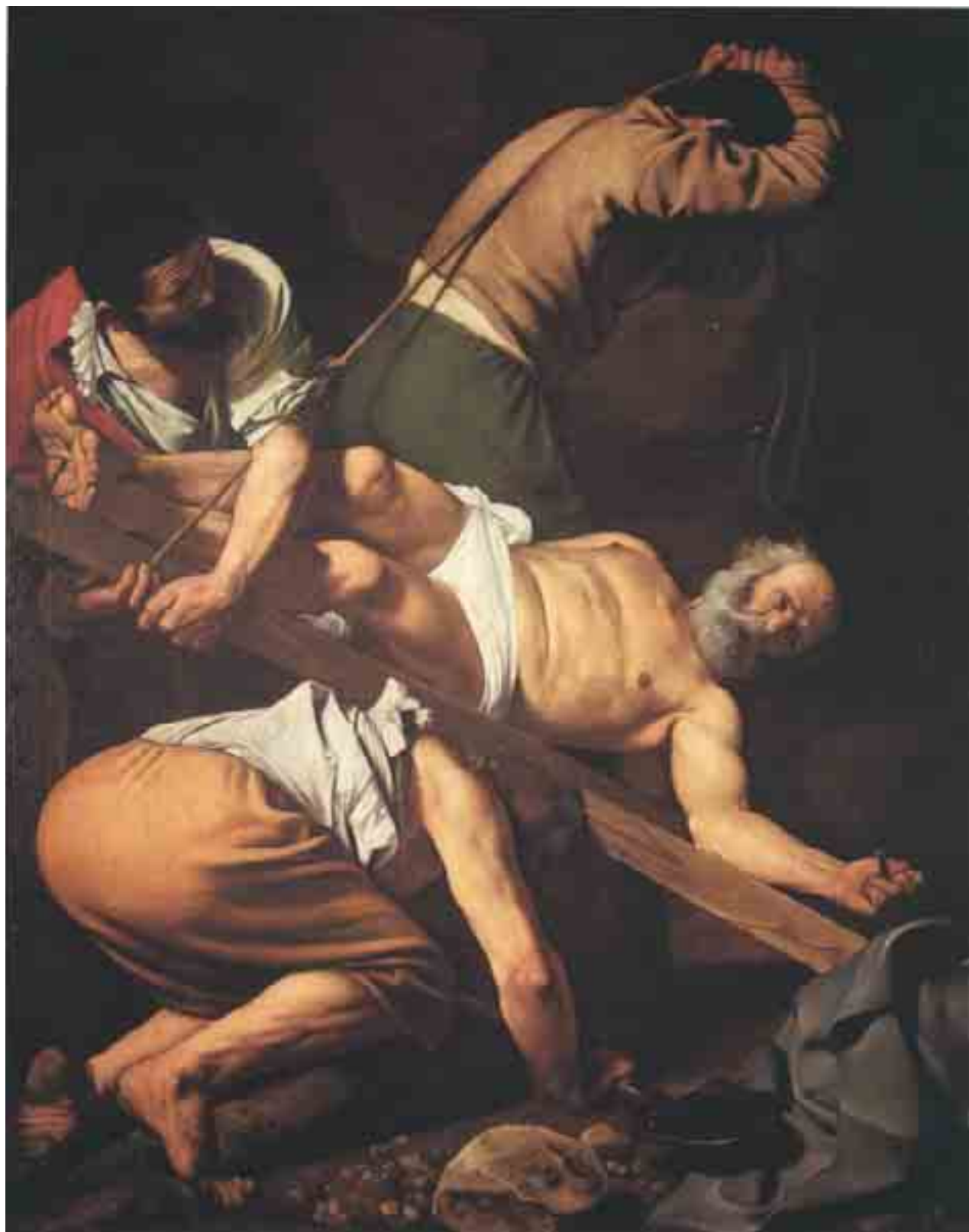
from Bologna, a school that produced many of Italy's leading painters through the next half-century, an intimate, almost tender feel for the model lies somewhere beneath a heavily, dramatically accented massing of lights and volumes. Subtly, both the informality and the rhetorical roll leave Raphael behind.

Annibale Carracci made a considerable impact on Rome's artistic community in the late 1590s when he brought his reformed, less marmoreal style of fresco painting to a commission to paint a ceiling in the palace of Cardinal Farnese. But in a city trying to regain the cultural primacy it had lost with the Sack of 1527, he rubbed shoulders with a far more pugnacious innovator from northern Italy. Michelangelo Merisi from the town of Caravaggio had spent seven years building a reputation for extraordinarily palpable collector's pieces – luscious fruit, drink and pretty boys painted direct from studio set-ups – before a cardinal's patronage launched him into large-scale altarpiece work in 1599. The customary strategy for major pieces of this sort was to combine and enlarge preparatory drawings, such as that by Annibale Carracci. Instead, Caravaggio expanded his previous techniques on an unprecedented scale. He hired people off the street to strike up a dramatic pattern of poses under shafts of torchlight in the studio, and recorded the results straight onto canvas.

Caravaggio's method was radically direct ('not a single brushstroke unless from nature' was his claim), if strenuous work for all concerned – as in this re-enactment of the martyrdom of St Peter [168], on a cross that the saint humbly begged his tormentors not to hoist the same way up as Jesus'. In principle, it fulfilled the Church's Counter-Reformation demands for sober, challenging mementos of martyrdom. But there was a problem. The churchgoers of Rome hated it. Parish committees, not wishing to confront inside their churches the dirty soles of the labourers who stood outside on the street, rejected altarpieces commissioned by Caravaggio's friends in the elite. They, for their part, were sustained by the excitement his work was stirring up among fellow painters. Art world insiders versus outraged urban public – a first foretaste of the patterns of scandal and alienation that would run through 19th- and 20th-century history.

Caravaggio's own disposition fed into those patterns. Homosexual imagery may have added something to his risqué status, though a liking for boys had long been habitual in Italian art culture. More crucially, the edgy temper that led him to stab a man to death in Rome in 1606 meant that his four remaining years were spent in exile, fleeing from Naples to Malta to Sicily to the coast between Naples and Rome, where at the age of thirty-eight he died of a fever 'as badly', as an early biographer expressed it, 'as he had lived'. The commissions he executed while on the run sloughed off the

168 Caravaggio, *Crucifixion of St Peter*, 1601. Caravaggio wanted to know what it would look like when three labourers had to hoist up two planks with an old man in a loincloth attached to them upside down, and he paid locals in Rome to enact the incident in his studio. He moved in close on their efforts and froze the pattern of shapes they made at its most startling configuration, much as a photographer might. Thus the congregation of S. Maria del Popolo, where this painting still hangs, were presented with a workman's posterior staring them in the face, and the filthy sole of his foot.





quasi-photographic studio technique of his Roman altarpieces and distilled to extremes their stark urgency. The figures became isolated slashes of white and red in engulfing dark voids, their existence no more than flesh and spilt blood. This fear-filled, brutal blackness dazzled many oncoming artists, even if it appalled others. Much of the early 17th century's most adventurous painting, whether in Italy, France, Spain or the Netherlands, was by *caravaggisti*, interpreters of the homicidal painter's chiaroscuro ('light-and-dark') manner. Some saw opportunities for pious pathos in his torchlit presentations; many were fascinated by the new street and low-life subject-matter he had brought to large-scale easel painting; others, like the Spanish painter Jusepe de Ribera in Naples, relished the violence.

Artemisia Gentileschi, like her father Orazio – a friend of Caravaggio's – was taken by both the stark, surprising patterns thrown onto the canvas by his new figure-painting techniques, and by the clarity and rationality of the Carracci approach. The walled-off picture space of *Susanna and the Elders* [169] and its cold, bold glare were very much the cutting-edge manner of 1610 and would come to typify a new 17th-century 'classical' style, reconstituting Raphael's. Throwing a harsh light on a biblical tale of sexual harassment, Artemisia focuses attention on her own experience as a woman. How exactly her picture reflected her life in a patriarchal society we cannot know; this canvas was painted two years before the trial in which an assistant of her father's was accused of raping her. But of course the light cast by this powerful female testimony throws strange shadows back on the whole history surrounding it. Starting as a painter's daughter gave Artemisia a chance to operate as a successful independent figure in Rome and Naples until her death in 1640. Other women in painter families had found niches as portraitists or still-life artists during the previous century. Yet the fact remains that Artemisia was very much the exception to a near-global rule that allocated different arts in large-scale societies according to gender, and those arts concerned with figural representation almost exclusively to men. Art in the early 17th century may have allowed for lawless individualists like Caravaggio, but it was still a long way from arriving at its modern status as a medium in which humans at large seek self-expression.

169 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1610. The Bible's Apocrypha tell of two wicked city judges who lay in wait in the garden of a virtuous woman and pounced on her as she bathed, threatening capital punishment if she would not yield to them. Artists commonly took this as a cue to paint a sensuous nude. Artemisia turned it into a vision of the massed, corrupt weight of male authority.

Crescendos

Rome, Northern Europe, India, Iran, 1600–1650s

To get a broader picture of the conditions of early 17th-century art, I want to take an extended roundabout excursion, starting from and then returning to the city in which Caravaggio and Artemisia painted their pictures. Rome was returning to cultural prominence around 1600 as an attractive

nexus on which Europe's growing artistic communities could converge. Its taverns filled with rowdy groups of artists arrived from the north. In this proto-bohemia, there was also a model to be found for that later cliché, the 'starving artist in a garret'. At his death aged thirty-two in 1610, Adam Elsheimer from Frankfurt was destitute – a tale of dubious associates (the printmaker who marketed his designs then threw him into debtor's prison) and neurotic perfectionism, with the artist taking years to perfect his paintings on tiny sheets of copper, among which the *Flight into Egypt* [170–72], at 41 centimetres (16 inches) wide, towers in size. Elsheimer's extraordinarily intense little images took the northern delight in landscape (seen in Hüber's and Bruegel's pictures) and lent it a contemplative dimension. The holiness of his Holy Family, stealing their torchlit way through the countryside, passes over into the holiness of the night-time itself – enfolding the peasants clustered around their separate dream of a bonfire, embracing the vastness of the cosmos. His lyrical poem of distance and wonder was also a naturalistic transcript of light conditions and astronomical detail: he may have been one of the first artists to use Galileo's telescope.

170–72 (below and opposite)

Adam Elsheimer, *Flight into Egypt*, 1609. The subject is Mary and Joseph carrying the infant Jesus away from the dangers surrounding him in his native land. Elsheimer's vision transports the Gospel narrative onto another plane. The travellers in the centre, the shepherds keeping warm on the left and even the great moon itself all become as it were subsidiaries, bright particles cradled within the dark embrace of an infinite but compassionate cosmos.





Elsheimer's designs had great influence. This example was later reworked and enlarged by his friend Peter Paul Rubens, a rather more successful artist – in fact, by 1630 the most renowned painter in Europe. The Rome on which both northerners descended may have had unique artistic charms, but Europe's centres of political and economic gravity lay elsewhere. Beyond Italy, the big monarchies were looking for ways not simply to coerce, but to co-opt and win over their religiously fractious subjects. In this situation, Rubens was perfectly placed to mediate between artists' and politicians' interests. The classically educated son of a Flemish lawyer, he had toured Italy's cities copying their art as the Duke of Mantua's agent before he set up his own studio in Antwerp in 1608. His inside knowledge of the art scene, combined with a commanding social *savoir-faire*, soon made him indispensable to the viceroys of the Spanish Netherlands, and he went on to paint grand canvas sequences for the courts of Paris, London and Madrid. His royal patrons also entrusted this suave internationalist with diplomatic missions, and there was a diplomatic aspect to the art that lent them prestige: it aimed to acknowledge and reconcile everything he had seen in Italy – Mantegna's classicism, Leonardo's flow of energies, the Carracci's methodicalness, and above all Titian's colour.

Like any effective statesman, however, Rubens transmuted others' thoughts into a versatile personal strategy. His oil sketches show him approaching the formats that he was asked to fill as so many spaces to dynamize, with bold, sweeping brush movements. In principle, he was to outline schemes of affirmative political allegory or of Catholic Counter-Reformation pathos. The large workforce in his Antwerp picture factory extended the master's prototypes across acres of canvas in a kind of organic evolution, enlarging and subdividing his gestures and generating the hues from a warm earthy level of underpainting. Often the master's hand returned to the canvas only for the finishing touches.

The outcome could be powerfully stimulating, with its big surges of quivering flesh and its convulsive, curling diagonal rhythms [173]. Like the equally resourceful Titian, Rubens could also modulate to tenderness in his portraiture. His strategy seemed utterly to outflank the Mannerist styles of his immediate forebears, rendering them pallid and disjointed by comparison. For aristocratic Europe, it became the epitome of persuasive grandeur. In the late 18th century, when its political outlook had become remote, the label 'Baroque' – originally meaning contorted, excessive – would be applied to this manner (as, increasingly, it has been applied to everything to do with the 17th century). But excess was exactly what Rubens meant to oppose. This canvas, 3 metres (10 feet) high, was painted late in his career, in 1638, by which time Central Europe was plunged deep



173 Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of the Effects of War*, 1638. Unlike Pieter Bruegel, his great predecessor in Antwerp, Rubens revered the painting and sculpture of Italy. Passionate, however, to deliver a lively sensuous effect, he was concerned that his adaptations of Italian classicism should ‘not in the least smell of the stone’. The fast swirling rush of this composition epitomizes the aesthetic that has come to be known as ‘Baroque’.

in the cataclysmic religious strife of the Thirty Years’ War. Its allegory – the goddess of love trying to restrain the god of war, as he bursts from the doors of Concord’s temple into a mire of emblematic monsters and trampled-down arts – presents an uncommon spectacle, now if not then: the peace-loving convictions of an experienced politician expressed with epic imaginative energy.

Rubens’s court-hopping followed a pattern of patronage we have seen in previous centuries, both in Europe and in Asia. Big rulers imported experts from prestigious art centres over the heads of local artisans and local traditions – Netherlanders and then Italians for Christian kingdoms, Persian painters for Islamic. Often it was hoped that the incoming talent might help implant a new national style by example. Not all kingdoms followed this policy – notably, Orthodox Russia still kept a cultural arm’s length from the rest of Europe – and in others the grafts remained frail: Poland with its island of Italian architecture at Zamosc, built in the 1570s; Ottoman Turkey, where soberly factual local variations on Persian painting thrive or withered at the whim of succeeding sultans; Denmark, Sweden and England, with their deference to highly skilled Netherlanders.

Nevertheless, this top-down cultural politics was 17th-century normality. King Charles I of England, a big-spending art-lover, brought Anthony van Dyck, the most gifted of Rubens's many Antwerp pupils, to his court in 1632. Van Dyck remained there till his early death in 1641, making the English aristocracy his personal province. His portraiture [174], as sumptuous in its scale and shimmer as anything by Rubens or Titian, registers insecurities quite alien to those sanguine personalities. Van Dyck's own, no doubt; but the double portraits in which he specialized also seem like membranes responsive to incoming tremors. The complex pathos he elicits from these poor little rich kids shifts in meaning in the light of their futures. Young George Villiers, sullenly glowering in 1635, would become one of England's most unscrupulous political schemers. His guileless little brother Francis would die in the 1640s civil war that ended with King Charles's execution and with further iconoclastic assaults on the nation's art traditions.

174 Anthony van Dyck, *George and Francis Villiers*, 1635. Arriving on the art scene as a teenage prodigy, van Dyck excelled throughout his career in painting subtle multiple portraits. The subjects turn their best side to the portraitist, keen to have their glamour recorded by a bravura technician; but looking at the faces on the canvas, the viewer is urged to compare, to contrast, to divide attention. An irresolvable unease is opened up. Together with Velázquez and Rembrandt, van Dyck gave 17th-century portraiture a metaphysical dimension.





175 Govardhan, *Young Prince and his Wife on a Terrace*, c. 1620. Jahangir, Mughal emperor of northern India between 1605 and 1627, was a connoisseur who encouraged individuality in his court artists. The miniaturist Govardhan here portrays some imperial prince relaxing with his dynastic bride on a terrace in Agra on a hot June evening, with the monsoon about to break. The additional glances and whispers of the three women from the harem make for an atmosphere as ambiguously poetic as that of Giorgione's *Tempest*.

176 Riza Abbasi, *Lovers*, c. 1630. Riza's calligraphic elegance was much admired and imitated in 17th-century Iran. The palaces of Isfahan were adorned with large-scale frescoes of wine drinkers and lovely maidens, rendered in a manner similar to this sheet.



Portraits such as this seem to offer seeds for stories. What story might unwind from Govardhan's picture [175], made perhaps fifteen years earlier in the Mughal court at Agra? It is a summer night with the monsoon impending, a time for love-making, and a prince and his bride are gazing into one another's eyes. So much is evident, but we can only speculate as to what secret sub-plot might possess the three waiting women. The possibilities for Indian miniature painting had expanded fast after the departures from Persian precedent launched by Akbar in the later 16th century. An imported art was now flourishing in local hands. Govardhan, a Hindu, was painting for Akbar's son Jahangir, and the prince in this image was probably one of the new emperor's sons. While Akbar had been fascinated by painting in general and by the prospect of describing all things faithfully, Jahangir became fascinated by painters and their individual styles, and his connoisseurship promoted diversity.

With Govardhan, psychological delicacy was matched by atmospheric sensitivity to the sultry haze of the north Indian plains. His naturalism fuelled his poetry in an art that on a smaller scale mirrored trends in European painting. The interplay between East and West was growing. Jahangir's artists often lifted putti and figure poses from European prints, while a pair of van Dyck portraits shows Sir Robert Sherly in Persian satins with his Persian wife: an English adventurer trying to break the Portuguese monopoly on Asian trade. In Persia – the Iran ruled by the Safavid dynasty – the pictorial ideal of multilayered complexity set by Bihzad in the late 15th century was now being displaced by a very different manner of painting [176]. Riza Abbasi became the most admired and imitated artist of the early 17th century through his mastery of line. The sinuous rhythms of his pen brought Persian art closer to Arabic calligraphy and, indeed, to the sparseness of Chinese literati painting. Riza's lovely boys and girls and shrewd old dervishes stemmed from the same Sufi imagery that had inspired Bihzad, but his outlook was far more obsessional, both narrower and bolder – more *louche*, in fact. Sheets of erotica like this were destined not solely for a royal library but might also serve as signed commodities for sale. The flask of Shiraz wine that Riza depicts may echo some poet's metaphor, but his own career was derailed by a ten-year alcoholic bender.

Riza's surname derived from his patron, Shah Abbas, one of the 17th century's greatest city builders. Abbas's lucidly rational redesign of the ancient city of Isfahan, in central Iran, was organized around an enormous arcaded square. At one end, big battle frescoes surrounding the bazaar portal demonstrated Iran's disregard for the doubts about figure imagery that troubled other Islamic regions; at the other, a cunningly angled



177 Ceiling of the central dome at the Masjid-e-Shah ('Masjid-e-Imam-Khomeini'), Isfahan, c. 1611–30. A glimpse of the ambience of colour and sunlight produced by one of the 17th century's most spectacular architectural ensembles. The blue exterior of the hall supporting this great dome is mirrored a deeper blue in the mosque courtyard's central pond. The visual effect of an ideal, heavenly reality is insistently re-echoed, and in this sense Shah Abbas's project cleaves to a Persian aesthetic that dates as far back as Persepolis.

sequence of entrances bursts onto the most coloristically dazzling space for worship in the entire Islamic tradition. The tiled ceiling of the mosque's dome [177] comes by quite other means to the same vision of heavenly unity glimpsed four centuries before in a Baghdad mausoleum [see 90]. Complex abstract forms have yielded to engulfing floral fantasy, geometric lines to a gathering rush of turquoise on yellow on azure (again, we are at the limits of what a photograph can effectively convey). In its imposing forms and its unearthly subliminal effects, this 'blue mosque' of Isfahan, completed in 1630, broadly parallels the Taj Mahal, built at Agra by Jahangir's successor, Shah Jahan, between 1631 and 1654. The extraordinarily exquisite marble-carving and inlay work that the Mughal emperor commanded for

the mausoleum to his wife seem consciously intended as an endpoint of art. Like the broader-brush dramatics of Shah Abbas, his Taj Mahal set out to proclaim: ‘No one shall ever surpass this.’

Alongside these great works the rebuilding of Rome was proceeding in the West. The project started a century earlier under Julius II was now resumed, after the misfortunes of the Reformation, by a newly confident papacy. From 1623 to 1644 Urban VIII’s rule promoted the exuberant construction projects that, more than anything, have come to epitomize ‘the Baroque’. Three figures dominated the period. The most visionary, the architect Francesco Borromini, was also the most difficult: notoriously, this deeply pious man ended his life on his own sword. As a result, Church law forbade him burial in the tomb he had planned for himself in his first masterpiece, S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane [178]. Here, Borromini’s designs, engaging with a small and cramped street-corner site, plunge



178 Francesco Borromini, interior of the dome at S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome, 1638. Borromini’s art probed the nature of space, extracting unprecedented experiences. Everything curves in concert: none of the main lines of his structure run straight. To make the tessellation of crosses, lozenges and octagons recede across the oval dome, Borromini may have cast a light-projection of a drawing from below, tracing the shadows on the ceiling.

whoever passes through the doors into a cool, white space that mysteriously distends and balloons. A look up into its dome, completed in 1638, reveals his driving geometric mysticism, as giddy and dematerializing in its way as equivalent creations in Islam. The swelling masonry in which Borromini specialized twisted, fused and ignited the viewer's whole experience of space. Variations on his curves and scrolls became common accessories in Baroque building, taking architecture in an opposite direction from the orderly classicism of Palladio.

The other two leading figures of Baroque Rome were likewise architects but also worked in the figurative arts. In a 1630s fresco [179] for a palace owned by a nephew of Pope Urban, the church-builder Pietro da Cortona entered what had become a contest played out on scaffolds between the pictorial successors to Annibale Carracci. His own contribution to Rome's ceiling-painting vogue took the tradition started long before by Mantegna to a new pitch of swagger. Illusionary architectural framing (*quadratura*) still underpins his glorification of the Barberini, Urban's family (whose giant heraldic bees fly within its central wreath), but thunderous, convulsive heapings of angels, clouds and foliage encircle it, systematically overriding its logic and inducing a uproarious delirium. There is nowhere the eye can settle, all is flux.

Yet Rome's greatest impresario, for almost sixty years after Urban's accession, was the sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini. His long artistic dominance, launched by astonishingly precocious marble-carvings in his youth, echoed that of Michelangelo a century before, but with a very different inflection. Unlike his predecessor, Bernini was by no means at odds with the world around him: he was devotedly attentive to it. His rise was partly due to his smooth courtier graces and mobile wit, partly to the rapt response to individuality that he conveyed in his portrait busts of notables, and partly to his unique flair for simulating diverse textures in marble. The vast workload he took on after Urban appointed him architect to St Peter's in 1628 was executed with an unflagging zeal for his patrons' appointed spiritual-cum-political themes.

Bernini engaged wholeheartedly with whatever conditions he was given (like Rubens, like Titian: in this, if anything, we see what separates their artistic attitudes from those of modernity). He turned this subservience into a powerfully imaginative act by interpreting each task in terms of a decisive gesture realized in stone. Thus the great twin colonnades he set before St Peter's (whose main structure, begun in 1506, had only been consecrated in 1626) he described as the Church's mother arms reaching out to embrace the faithful. The statues he placed inside the basilica urge the attention onwards and upwards with grand, passionate arm-sweeps, while

179 Pietro da Cortona, *Triumph of the Barberini*, ceiling fresco at the Palazzo Barberini, Rome, 1632–39. Cortona brought together many illusionistic fresco techniques of long standing – including those used by Veronese (161). Veronese was playing at quiet, classical good order when he painted his north Italian villa, but seventy years later in a Roman palace the accent is on escaping, exceeding and running rings around the framework. This will to involve the viewer in a vivid confusion is now seen as a defining quality of ‘the Baroque’, making it a contrast to the values of classicism.



his early sculptural groups typically quicken around actions of splitting or straining. The *Ecstasy of St Teresa* [180] was an altar commission of the late 1640s that Bernini consciously intended as his personal masterpiece, an attempt to crystallize the distinctiveness of his artistic vision. It is a close visualization of a passage in the mystical memoirs of a Spanish Counter-Reformation saint, written some eighty years before. A beautiful angel thrust a golden arrow repeatedly into Teresa’s heart, causing ‘a pain so



great that it caused me to utter several moans; yet exceeding sweet ... leaving me all on fire with a wondrous love for God'. Everything thus turns on the sensation of climax – but a climax that meant much more than it does in today's narrowly sexualized culture. The arrow's sharp onrush transports both body and soul, via marble that dissolves into clouds and flickers into draperies of flame, onto a visionary celestial plane.

Gestures and suddenness are nothing without an audience. This was not sculpture as Michelangelo had understood it, a revealing of spirit in the stone's mass, nor does it resemble Giambologna's abstract spiralling rhythms. The work of an unrivalled master-carver in a town full of painters, it seems almost a substanceless two-dimensional image, set at a fixed remove from the viewer, except that a solid architectural framework and the actual sunlight beaming from a concealed window are crucial to its impact. In fact, the format in which all the arts can converge is spelt out by the flanks of the altarpiece, where members of the commissioning family are portrayed sitting in boxes, encouraging the viewer to join them in the stalls. Rushes, surges, round-the-corner surprises, 'realistic effects': we are at the heart of an age of aristocratic theatre, a time when fantasy and faith were one. The experience of life in big-spending court cities, with their elaborately engineered festivals and their convoluted dress codes and ceremonies, were transformed in the earlier 17th century into Christendom's and Islam's most transcendent spectacles. For 'the greatest art', wrote the Spanish epigrammatist Baltasar Gracián in 1647, 'is the art of seeming'.

Marketplaces and marks

Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, 1600–1660s

The sudden emptying of a chamber pot over a soldier in a scene from the *commedia dell' arte* – one of Italy's travelling street entertainments – shows another side to 17th-century tastes [181]. Alongside the era's shining, seductive idealities, artists also kindled a liking for the gross, the ludicrous and the low. The Carracci, founders of dignified 'academic' procedure, toyed off-duty with shorthand character defamations of a kind that led the way to modern caricature. This sketch of the clowns' antics is by their pupil Guercino, otherwise best known among the second generation of Bolognese painters for his grand, storm-lit poetic dramas on elevated themes; it forms part of an alternative private oeuvre, exuberant little ventures with pen and wash or crayon into zones where he declined to follow with his oil paints. Behind the surfaces of canvas and frescoed plaster that artists put up for public exhibition lay deep pools of studio activity, and with the growth of a self-conscious, self-involved artistic

180 Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of St Teresa*, 1647–52, S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Having changed the face of Rome during two decades of virtual artistic dictatorship, Bernini used a commission for a family memorial in one of the city's churches to create a concise résumé of his own distinctive innovations. This interpretation of a memoir written by a Spanish mystic eighty years earlier demonstrates his uniquely varied texturing of marble and his distinctive transmutations: natural light from a hidden window taking on supernatural meaning, the sensual becoming an analogue for the spiritual.



181 Guercino, sketch of *commedia dell'arte* clowns, 1630s. Guercino's sketches, many of which seem to have been done simply for private amusement, are masterpieces of *light* art: brilliantly, irresistibly unassuming. In the lightning mobility of his pen and brush, and in his wit and tenderness, Guercino's only contemporary equal was Rembrandt. His subjects are most often figures, but they range from the people about him living their daily lives to angels and nightmare monsters.

community it was here, in among the ink-work, that imaginative currents might flow most strongly. Guercino's scrawls and dappled blots take techniques used since Raphael's time to an unprecedented pitch of fluid speed.

Grossness as a relief from the strain of maintaining appearances was not a syndrome peculiar to Italian artists. The lure of the ugly was widespread during the early 17th century, from Jusepe de Ribera in Naples portraying a bearded mother suckling her child, to Riza in Isfahan abandoning his Persian belles to draw tavern regulars instead. There was in fact room in an ever-expanding, diversifying market for specialists in this range of imagery. Adriaen Brouwer was one, a Fleming painted by early biographers much in the likeness of his own disgusted drinker [182] – disreputable, short-lived, once escaping jail only through the good offices of his eminent patron Rubens. A canvas of 1631 epitomizes not only the vigorous low-life taste that had grown across Europe in Caravaggio's wake, but also the new handling of oils perfected by his Dutch teacher Frans Hals – an undisguised stab-and-slit that invites you to inhabit both the liveliness of the painter's actions and that of the instant he depicts.

To distinguish Flemish from Dutch artists is to say that southern and northern Netherlanders had parted company by the 1580s, although the Spanish rulers of the Catholic south would continue fighting the new Dutch republic for another sixty years. Politically and economically, the

182 Adriaen Brouwer, *The Bitter Draught*, 1631.



fortunes of the Dutch soared during this period while those of the Spanish kingdom plummeted, but in terms of painting this was an extraordinary era for both. The interplay of ideal and natural, and of noble and base, informed each country's pictorial 'Golden Age'.

Spain resembled other art-importing nations in the excited reception it gave to arrivals from Italy, including, from the 1610s, copies of Caravaggio. Yet here the host culture had dominant artistic instincts of its own. Spain, with its warrior Christianity, had a tradition of fiercely emotional religious wood-carving, which established a benchmark for imagery designed to focus the mind and challenge the heart. If figural art had become almost an enveloping ambience in Italy, here it remained a spiritual spur. At the same time, the 'most Catholic' monarchy of the Habsburgs aimed to centralize religion and administration, a policy that filtered through its hierarchies of nobles and clerics down to the studios who worked for them. Several factors thus lent the art of painting a more concentrated remit in Spain than it had elsewhere in Europe.



183 Francisco de Zurbarán, *Agnus Dei* (*Bound Lamb*), 1635.

El Greco's fervent, individualistic visions in scholarly Toledo had formed one response to these conditions. In Seville, the country's great port to its transatlantic colonies, a larger and less self-important workforce supplied altarpieces to religious foundations in Spain and the Americas, and *bodegones*, tabletop still lifes, to adorn the homes of merchants. The bound lamb painted by Francisco de Zurbarán in 1635 [183] was an image that straddled those genres, at once a symbol of Christ's sufferings and an impassioned act of observation. Who commissioned it is uncertain, but in his empathy with the solitary victim laid out on his studio table Zurbarán discovered a language that might speak both to unlettered parishioners and to their ecclesiastical overlords. Pain—as St Teresa had demonstrated in her memoirs—was a kind of truth in itself; and other strands in Counter-Reformation spirituality suggested that, to a devout understanding, objects on all levels might be vessels for God's will. The quality of attention that Zurbarán devoted to the humblest tuft of the poor creature's wool was a proof of his piety. Painting in Seville thus revised Caravaggio's straight-from-nature approach: the blackness became mystically charged, the dazzle sacred.

Meanwhile, in Protestant-led, business-minded Holland, livestock studies – not to mention bird- and flower-pieces, renderings of silverware and crockery, 'merry companies' and dignified portraits, architectural views, river and windmill scenes and vistas of Norway, Rome and Brazil – were becoming available in paint or in print from hundreds of studios and picture shops. The 'first mass consumers' art market in European history', as the historian Simon Schama has put it, started to take off in the 1610s,

with artists moving from Antwerp in Catholic Flanders to the freer trading conditions of northern boom towns like Haarlem and Amsterdam. Their special lines in still life and landscape multiplied and subdivided to meet the tastes of a new urban public with money to spare for commodities to hang on parlour walls. The Republic's policy of religious tolerance was matched by its citizens' omnivorous stylistic curiosity. Amsterdam's docks imported artwork ranging from Italian marbles to Persian and Mughal drawings and Chinese ceramics. Among the keenest purchasers during the 1630s was the city's most successful artist, Rembrandt van Rijn.

Rembrandt, a miller's son from the town of Leiden, came to Amsterdam in 1631 as a young printmaker and painter with a reputation for dramatic storytelling. The finely detailed chiaroscuro rendering he had learnt from Elsheimer and from Dutch painters who had worked in Caravaggio's Rome was soon applied to the lucrative portrait market. As he rapidly rose to fame in this field, he brought his dramatic gifts to bear on big biblical scenes and on experiments in group portraiture that culminated in a vast canvas of an Amsterdam militia, the so-called *Night Watch* of 1642. Numerous pupils gathered under him. A singularly sure-handed,

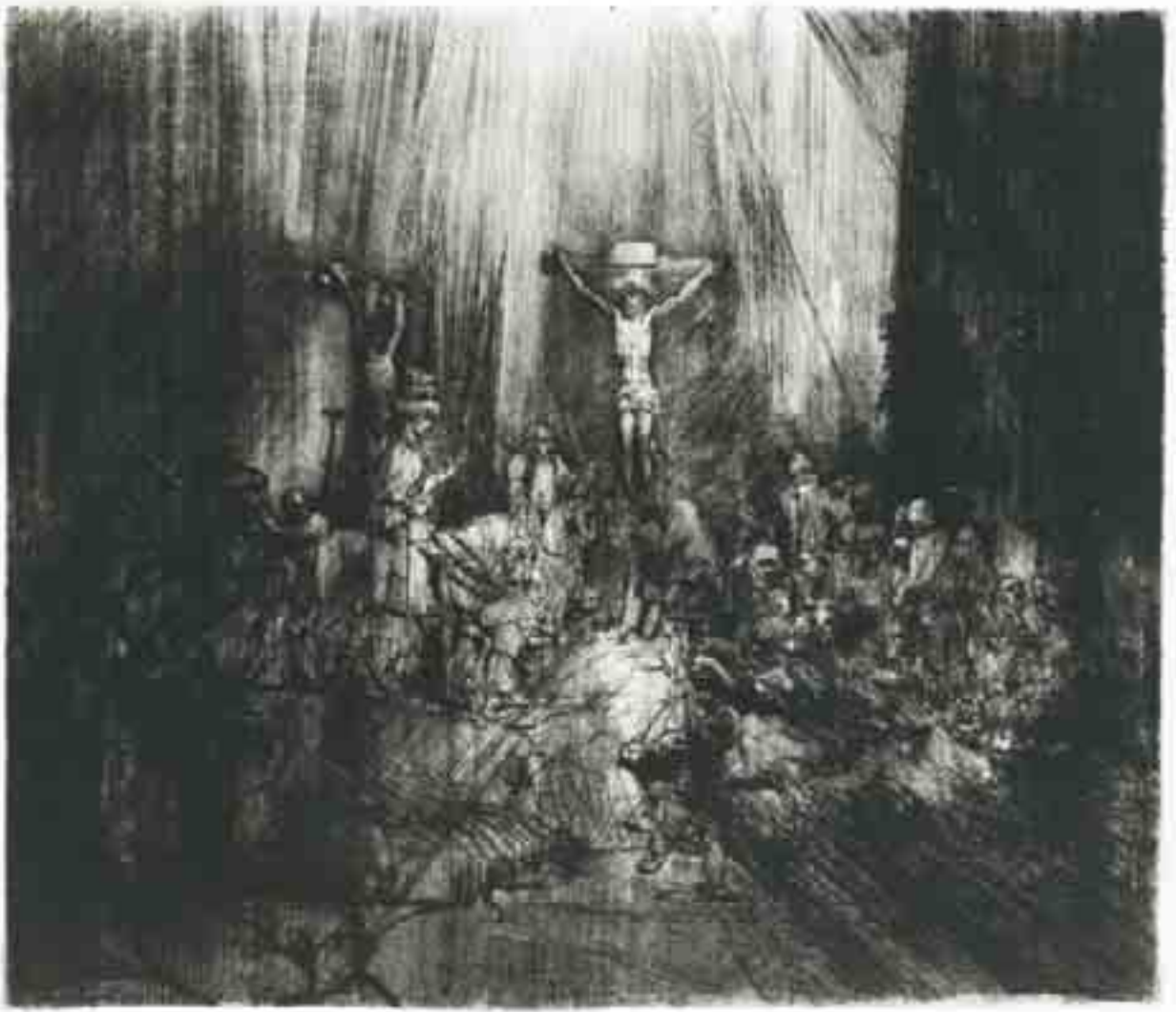
184 Rembrandt, *The Jewish Bride*, c. 1665. This painting was probably a commissioned wedding portrait, for a Jewish couple posing as the biblical Isaac and Rebecca. In the single written statement he left concerning his intentions as an artist, Rembrandt told a patron that he was concerned to represent 'the greatest and the most natural emotion'.



singularly restless independent artist in a brash new society, Rembrandt pitted himself in his etchings against artistic father-figures like Raphael and Rubens, trying on their costumes in self-portraits or debunking their elegant nudes with images of gawky commoners caught stark naked.

The basic premise that Raphael and Rubens could take for granted – that art made thoughts and feelings visible – became in Rembrandt's hands an unending conundrum. His work, done amid a babel of visual languages, explored innumerable ways in which marks might mean things – not academically but obsessively, creating not so much a method as an inhabitable disorder. To imagine his studio is to imagine a rich, busy maze: perched on the easel, some likeness that all but spoke (just as Brouwer's boozier all but shouts: such realist effects were much in demand); scattered on the table, skittery intimate sketches of women or children, reckless and breathy like Guercino's; on the drying rack by the printing press, etchings that encompassed an eye-boggling breadth of textures and linear effects, often within a single sheet. *The Three Crosses* [185] was one of his drypoints – a technique that allowed him to print from and then to rework a plate repeatedly over a decade. Through such processes, an image of straightforward devotional interest ended up as an apocalypse of mark-making itself, legible figures blasted away in the remorseless chiaroscuro.

The Jewish Bride [184] was equally technically restless, moving from tender ambiguous blurs about the mouths and punctilious highlights dotting the jewellery to the hefty upstanding paint-blobs that model the bridegroom's sleeve. But, overwhelmingly, the whole paintwork reaches out a hand to touch something invisible – in the viewer, as in its subjects. It is one of several paintings in which Rembrandt portrays the Jews who had made Amsterdam their home, and his reverence for a people whose religion forbade images says something about his new artistic approach. What was primary – for Jews, but also for Protestants like himself – was thought, word, spirit, which stood in relation to the fleshly body rather as the warm dark ground of his canvases related to the tremulous textures he clotted them with. Like no other image before, this painting meditates on how love is between two adults: how it is, and yet is not, bodily. Similarly, I think, an unassuageable desire to paint consciousness itself drove Rembrandt repeatedly back to the mirror, where he produced an endlessly involving sequence of self-portraits. Viewers have long read into these pictures a humanity that may not altogether tally with Rembrandt's personal behaviour (he contrived to have a former lover confined to a madhouse when she claimed breach of promise). Yet pictures such as *The Jewish Bride* did as much as any literature to give shape to modern ideas of what it is to be human and to be an individual.



185 Rembrandt, *The Three Crosses*, drypoint and etching, fourth state, 1653. Rembrandt depicts the moment of Christ's death on the cross, when the Gospels say 'the sun was darkened'. There are three earlier 'states' of this image – in other words print runs from a particular working of the etching plate. In them, Rembrandt progressively built towards a sumptuously dramatic chiaroscuro. When the third working of the plate wore out after too many printings, Rembrandt broke loose – scored out crowd figures left and right, scratched in abrupt new arrivals, streaked the scene to a point where visible order itself is about to dissolve. No marks in European art are richer than Rembrandt's; none riskier, either.

The etching was started in the 1650s and the canvas a few years before Rembrandt's death in 1669. This was a time when, despite his prints' international reputation, Rembrandt's heyday in Amsterdam fashion had passed and his obsessive art-collecting had left him bankrupt. With hindsight, the period seems something of a hinge in the history of European oil painting. In 1650s Madrid, Diego Velázquez was working on a canvas that encompassed the entire project of describing the visible world in a commanding summation, at once sceptical and mesmerizing. *Las Meninas* [186, 187] extends the possibilities of 'painterliness' as explored by Venetians like Titian or by northerners like Brouwer, to their limits. Every touch of paint in his palace chamber at once asserts a fact – something recorded as seen – and thrills as an expression of fluid, dancing legerdemain. At the same time the painting puzzles over painting itself.

Velázquez, born in Seville in 1599, had made a reputation painting *bodegones* and suchlike humble subjects with astounding physical immediacy when still in his teens – images of the city's poor at table with their



186 Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656.

earthenware, for instance. Their forcefulness led to his recruitment, at the age of twenty-four, as the king's painter in Madrid, a post he kept for life. This privileged position brought him into contact with Rubens and allowed him to tour Italy. His feel for the mute and unpretending thus encountered the pomp and mythologizing of international high art, and much of his painting found a way to negotiate between the two. Thus in a canvas of 1629 Velázquez depicted the god Bacchus boozing among Spanish tavern types, while *Las Meninas* plays off a Habsburg princess against the maids for which



187 Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656 (detail). A *menina*, or maid of honour, hands the Infanta Margarita, Philip IV's little daughter, a jug of water on a tray. Fingers, fabrics, flowers, crimped hair are touched onto the canvas with a consummate lightness and economy that no other oil painter has ever equalled.

it is named, and also a dwarf, portrayed no less reverently. The canvas presents the weird disjunctures of ceremonial life in the headquarters of a kingdom that was by now all but bankrupt (the palace ceiling has been stripped of its chandeliers), and in this sense at least is a 'realist' work. But the painter's interest in pitting one reality against another lures his viewers into circular riddles. The mirror looks straight out, reflecting Velázquez's patrons, the king and queen, who are looking in. All this is theirs: this palace, this artist, this painting. Ours, too, by extension: as onlookers, we grant this picture life. Yet we do not see what the painter has set on that canvas from which he steps back so coolly – unless, in fact, it is this great canvas itself that he is withholding from us, as if it were entirely at his whim that we should see anything at all; as if this great charade were his alone.

The conundrum resounds in the chamber's gloom while the palace denizens shine forth, summoned into life by Velázquez's reserved yet fascinated attention – a 17th-century version of cool expressing itself in the silvery, darting shoals of his shorthand brushwork. A very different but equally fastidious command over visual fact could be found during the 1650s and 1660s in Holland, in the house in Delft where Johannes Vermeer



188 Johannes Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*, c. 1660. This canvas was admired by a succession of Dutch owners after Vermeer's death, but otherwise the artist's name was all but forgotten – until 1842, that is, when the French critic Théophile Thoré rediscovered him. Vermeer's modern renown derives principally from Thoré's subsequent monograph on the artist. Is it a coincidence that in 1842 the invention of photography had just been announced?

pursued his quiet provincial-city career. Like Velázquez with his ‘realist’ palace snapshot, Vermeer would gain an entirely new audience after the 19th-century development of photography, especially since he evidently used a camera obscura in creating his own small and exquisitely controlled oeuvre. But to regard his work as a trailer for later technology is to forget that, in its own time, there was no familiar visual experience with which to compare ‘photographic’ effects such as the pixel-like dotting on the foreground still life in *The Milkmaid* [188]. The scrupulous replication of what happened when a lens projected the breadbasket’s highlights on a screen might well have looked faintly bizarre. With Vermeer, such tactics serve to distance what he paints from how he paints it. The women he observes maintain a self-sufficient existence that his own activity, at the far end of the room, takes care never to crash in on. He seemingly restricts himself to weaving his flawless fabric of light – most often, as here, set off with blue and gold. And yet the painting is dedicated to the maid’s grave monumental presence. Without any pointed allegorizing on the painter’s part, it generates a virtually religious aura: the white stream pouring from the painting’s central void is as abrupt as any miracle.

Richer and clearer

The Netherlands, Italy, 1620–1670

Vermeer’s was a specialist operation, pursued in a refined corner of a highly diversified art world. Nevertheless, it drew on habits common to Dutch painting in general. Other works of his suggest more of a story, touching on a widespread fondness for social comedy – relatively restrained in his case, more raucous elsewhere. *The Milkmaid* also caters to a taste for austerity in which the Dutch, shaping a self-image out of their struggles with the Spanish and the sea, took a certain national pride. The bare, nail-pitted wall is modestly skirted by the blue-and-white tiles that Vermeer’s home town of Delft had lately taken to making, their little Chinaman figures alluding to the culture the manufacturers were aping. Among the Dutch at this time, as among the Chinese during many previous centuries, an urban elite with wealth to spare found room to nostalgically savour rural simplicity.

This play at poverty, however, tended to make way for the international advance of the swagger we now label ‘Baroque’. Jan Davidszoon de Heem, a painter working both sides of the Netherlands divide, articulated what would become the dominant tone for the later 17th century. His *Grand Still-Life* [189] of the 1650s marries a host of Dutch illusionistic specialisms to the sumptuous tastes Rubens had established in Flanders.



189 Jan Davidsz. de Heem, *Grand Still Life*, 1650s. De Heem told the German art writer Joachim Sandrart that he moved from Utrecht to Antwerp because only in that port could he obtain 'rare fruit of all kinds, large plums, peaches, cherries, oranges, lemons, grapes' fresh from the stall. Note also the Wanli bowl, underlining the Chinese trade connection suggested by the tiles in Vermeer's pantry.

A few decades earlier, still-life artists had liked to claim that their tabletops with hourglasses, skulls and evanescent flowers encouraged thoughts about *vanitas*, the transience of worldly things; but here, the gorgeous, all-seasons spread of titillations for the gourmand and the connoisseur effectively smother the issue. De Heem's close rendering and colour harmonies make up a manifesto for the joys of materialism.

The incoming ethos mirrored changes in the intellectual climate of Europe. The concerted investigation of nature that Leonardo had argued for a hundred years earlier started to gather momentum at the turn of the 17th century, the age of the optics of Kepler and Galileo. In the Netherlands and Italy art kept the new science close company. In Delft, for instance, Vermeer with his camera obscura was a close associate of Antony van Leeuwenhoek with his pioneering microscope. In Italy, the academic approach brought in by the Carracci, with their investigations into all matters visual ranging from sign language to landscape, was conducive to new pictorial experiments. We have already seen the astronomical interests of Adam Elsheimer, painting around 1609: I believe the experience of looking through Galileo's new invention of the

190 Gottfried Wals, *Country Road by a House*, c. 1620. Like that earlier German in Rome Adam Elsheimer, Wals opened up territory that others would explore only during the Romantic era. Elsheimer's *Flight into Egypt* (170–72) shifts religious feelings onto the plane of landscape, prefiguring Caspar David Friedrich. This roundel, like some early 19th-century watercolour, asserts that daylight and a country road are alone sufficient materials for art.



telescope may have been what another German in Rome, Gottfried Wals, was mimicking with the circular format of his own little painting on copper [190], done perhaps a dozen years later. At any rate, this view of some country road outside Rome was a radically new venture – an oil painting made out of the mere fact of looking, free of coded symbolism and almost of objects, trusting entirely to harmonies of geometry and light. So new, in fact, that these possibilities would hardly be exploited with such singlemindedness for another two hundred years.

Gottfried (or in Rome, Goffredo) Wals has been best known not for his own work, however, but as the mentor of another artist come south to seek out Italy. Claude Gellée from Lorraine worked with him in Naples, the port where the sunset and rigging patterns in a canvas of 1639 [191] were most likely observed. Even more than in the work of Elsheimer and Wals, natural light is the hero of Claude's picture: figures and buildings fall away before the sun like angels outshone by a divinity. Claude's seamlessly unified atmospheres, rendered through repeated subtle glazes, ensured him an elite clientele from his arrival in Rome in 1627 onwards. But the fresh glamour he lent to the art of landscape painting over a steady fifty-year career was a matter of stage-setting as much as

of science. The *Seaport* wraps up its solar fireworks in a costly architectural tableau, spliced together from the kinds of classical frontage that Italian nobles desired for their palazzi. Claude's touristic vision also extended to ancient legends played out by toy-town figures against big backdrops of ancient ruins, and to lovely idylls of country life, assembled from his sketches of the lands south of Rome ('the Campagna'), fit to serve generations of aristocracy as definitive pastorals. His calmly consistent oeuvre had an incalculable impact on the subsequent dream-life of France and England.

191 Claude Lorrain, *Seaport at Sunset*, 1639. Claude was the inventor of a world of beauty that aristocratic devotees later aimed to reproduce in their country parks. He was also the inventor of the personal database, being the first known artist to sketch a record of every canvas he had finished within a private volume, his *Liber Veritatis*, thus keeping guard against fakers.

Accompanying Claude on his youthful sketching trips in the Campagna was the French painter Nicolas Poussin, another settler in Rome and another student of visual science. A sketch that Poussin made for a painting around 1649 [192] uses a pen-and-wash technique mastered by both artists, but Poussin approaches afresh the question of how to make a picture. Look back at Wals's little landscape roundel, with its



perfect balance between the inward geometry of the design and the outward limit of the frame; look back beyond that to Raphael's roundel of a century before [see 148], with its concern to concentrate the view on an affecting spiral of mother and child. Poussin was approaching the rectangle of his proposed canvas intending to paint figures as Raphael had done, but with the thoroughly abstract attitude towards picture space displayed by Wals. His imagination blocked in the sheet with an alternation of pluses and minuses, blacks and whites: it became not so much an image to peer into as a flat array of visual information, dynamically composed.

Poussin's composition was for a 'bacchanal', the kind of mythological reverie in which he had specialized during his earlier years in Rome, where he arrived as a young man in 1624. He went sketching with Claude, he picked up hints from Raphael, Titian and the Bolognese painters: the flat-on temple in his sketch responds to their disciplined design instincts just as Artemisia Gentileschi's constricting wall does. The lighthearted spirit that buoyed up his earlier work made way for a graver demeanour as Poussin became involved with a circle of intellectuals interested in synthesizing the realms of classical learning, Christian spirituality and

192 Nicolas Poussin, *Bacchanal in front of a Temple*, pen and wash, c. 1649. Poussin's interplay of black and white, of ink and bare paper, is also an interplay of order and disorder, the temple and the debauch. Note the collapsed drunkard in the foreground, slumbering in a lady's lap.





193 Nicolas Poussin, *Baptism*, 1658. The moment of spiritual initiation is one of grave and solemn wonder. In the bestilled dawn air, a patchwork modulation of blues and russet-earths maps out the view. The landscapes in Poussin's canvases are based on the Campagna, the countryside south of Rome.

contemporary science. Poussin hearkened to the same philosophical rhetoric about stoic moderation and curbing excess that Rubens had imbibed in Antwerp, but with contrasting results – it made him the exponent of an artistic sobriety at odds with swagger and tumultuous grandeur. (At odds also with the dangerous influence of Caravaggio: ‘That man was born to destroy painting’ was Poussin’s comment.)

The *Baptism* of 1658 [193] shows the older Poussin at work, handling Christian material with gloves of philosophy. The moment at which Christ’s mission began is interpreted as a moment of dawn light, and of dawn-time in the land, too, which lies as yet pristine and wild. All components of the picture, on whatever level, must be tuned to the same key, or ‘mode’: such was the quasi-musical principle on which Poussin constructed two series of paintings that represented seven aspects of Christianity in terms of its sequence of sacraments, and then a further series that allegorized world history through the cycle of the seasons. It was not a naturalistic principle. Look at the elderly candidate right of centre and the way in which he relates to the neighbour clasp his shoulder, and you witness a three-dimensional impossibility. But then, as the composition slowly reveals, the more you attune to its strange, chill



194 Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Jewish Cemetery*, c. 1660. A 17th-century vision of the preterite, of things that are past. Ruisdael's use of medieval ruins is rather forward-looking; this material for sentiment would really come into focus only during the following century. The theme of Judaism was much in the air in cultures such as Ruisdael's Holland; Protestants believed that the Bible not only assigned the Jews a foundational role in history, but a necessary part in events to come.

harmonies, a larger kind of rightness may be possible, just as song may say more than speech.

Poussin's bracing classical aesthetic was keenly appreciated by well-informed patrons, both in Rome and in a Paris to which he declined to return. As the *Baptism* shows, intellectual integrity can generate a poetry of its own. Rigour can even turn modish. A new European aesthetic was emerging during the mid-17th century, one that marginalized the confrontational edginess that had charged up painting from the time of Caravaggio to that of Rembrandt and Velázquez. In the 1660s Jacob van Ruisdael, a painter from Haarlem, brought the emerging 'fine manner' to Dutch landscape, just as de Heem had brought it to still life. Ruisdael's *Jewish Cemetery* [194] yoked together – from across a distance of 40 kilometres (25 miles) – a graveyard reserved for members of an ancient race and a ruined Dutch abbey redolent of the distant medieval past, enshrouding them both in the most baleful of weathers. The ostensible theme – underlined by Ruisdael's signature on the gravestone lower left – is old indeed: all must pass. But the darks are sumptuous, and the rolling and sparkling drama of the elements and the fervent historical nostalgia all seem to usher in the Sublime – a concept shortly to be introduced to cultivated conversation by the French writer Nicolas Boileau. How delicious, how magnificent, to push the imagination (but only the imagination) to the edge of the thinkable! We have entered a different world of feeling.



A CHANGED TRUTH

Modernities

France, Brazil, Japan, 1780–1805

‘This form has never been utilized and it is the only one appropriate to this monument, for its curve ensures that the onlooker cannot approach what he is looking at. He is forced, as if by a hundred different circumstances outside his control, to remain in the place assigned to him.’ The French architect Etienne-Louis Boullée was imagining what it would be like to stand inside his *Cenotaph to Newton* [223] – a project with which I want to introduce a question that will dominate much of the remainder of this book: what does it mean to be ‘modern’? Isaac Newton, the scientist who had defined the universe, was by Boullée’s own declaration his god, and how was he to worship him? ‘How can I find outside you anything worthy of you?’ What he proposed was, ‘as it were, to envelop you in your own self’: to place Newton’s tomb at the base of a great globe whose roof would be pierced with the patterns of the night sky, so that the sunshine outside would light up its stars. The onlooker, led up to a central viewing platform, would be dwarfed, disempowered.

It was 1784, and within a decade the Paris around Boullée was to lurch across one of history’s great watersheds. The French Revolution, like the Cenotaph, was fired by a zeal for new forms to honour human reason – that being a central theme of the great cultural movement for which the philosopher Immanuel Kant coined the name ‘Enlightenment’ in 1791. But Boullée himself was no politician, and his scheme was not destined to get off the drawing table. In so far as we talk about a ‘modern’ era, however, it is one in which projects are in the ascendant. Our eyes are set to the future, and whatever lies behind – henceforth defined as ‘tradition’ – must submit. The past is a matter for reference rather than reverence. It may of course happen often that our project is foreshadowed by the truly archaic, the primeval. Boullée, like many in his time, was a Freemason inspired in his quest for sublimely simple forms by speculations about the pyramids. But for his generation the hierarchies and customs of the recent past would have to make way before the buoyant, all-encompassing rethinking of forms that they dignified with the label of ‘the imagination’.

Three centuries earlier, Leonardo da Vinci had been such a rethinker, but

223 Etienne-Louis Boullée, *Cenotaph to Newton*, 1784. The great scientist Isaac Newton had died in 1727, but the writer Voltaire went on to exalt his reputation among progressive circles in France. Boullée planned his spherical monument to the man who had ‘defined the shape of the Earth’ to stand 150 metres (492 feet) high and to be surrounded with cypress trees ‘in imitation of the ancients’. From inside, the dome would simulate a starry night sky through patterns of tiny apertures. ‘I would have felt I was committing sacrilege’, Boullée wrote, with a characteristically modern accent on purity, ‘if I had used any other decoration.’

he had worked in politically unfavourable times. Now, however, nation states investing in public education and science might provide forward-looking schemes with a different level of feasibility: conceivably, the technology and the human resources would follow the dreaming. What they might end up with was another matter – the Cenotaph project, abandoning the human proportion of Leonardo's ideas, seems a foretaste of the monster architecture of 20th-century totalitarianism. Boullée's cunning plan to keep 'the onlooker' suspended in space foreshadows an even more recent bad dream, the simulated cosmos of virtual reality, forever somewhere just beyond the human grasp. But then modernity is a self-perpetuating principle: it can only criticize and move on, co-opting new pasts, again making new. It is an edge of energy, a wave.

To treat 'the modern' historically usually means considering it alongside other strands that by contrast are cast as 'traditional' or maybe as 'reactionary'. But in the remaining chapters of the book I shall try to keep implicit quotation marks around all those epithets: what I aim for is neither a manifesto nor a protest, but rather a small-scale map of large changes. This will involve correlating many often contrasting senses of 'what's really happening'. In the first three sections of this chapter, I look at what emerges in different regions between the 1780s and the 1810s; the final shifts its focus to a slightly later generation of artists, who started work from 1800 onwards.

If we turn to the weather chart art historians customarily use for the late 18th century, the chief cyclone of innovation is seen to centre on Paris, with associated cloud patterns prevailing over large parts of Europe. Through Germany, Italy and Spain the artistic traits that people were now starting to call Baroque (or by extension Rococo) were being washed away; in Britain, a late developer in painting and sculpture, they had never had much purchase anyway. Whatever in public art rolled, swooped, swelled, entangled or flaunted itself – from Rubens and Bernini to Boucher and Tiepolo – was, in principle, making way for the severe Neoclassical simplicity of which Mignot's fountain relief was the harbinger and Boullée's scheme the distillation. But, needless to say, nothing is quite that simple. At the Swedish court, for instance, Gustav Pilo was spending twelve years from 1780 painting an enormous coronation scene that more than any canvas of its century imparted the mystique of a divinely sanctioned monarchy – exactly the politics that thinkers of the Enlightenment had been setting out to refute. Can we simply dismiss this work as belonging to a backwater of European culture?

Can we do the same with the church of Bom Jesus de Matozinhos at Congonhas do Campo in Brazil, where, between 1796 and 1805, the three-centuries-old Christian tradition of the *sacro monte* was being given an

224 Antonio Lisboa ('O Aleijadinho'), *The Crowning with Thorns*, 1796–99. The Brazil in which Lisboa worked remained a colonial possession, yielding the Portuguese monarchy great profits from its gold mines. Brazil declared its independence only in 1822, eight years after the sculptor's death. Lisboa's African ancestry would have restricted his social status. Christianity, however, communicated with people independent of race and class, and in Lisboa it found one of its most eloquent sculptural advocates.



interpretation of unsurpassed intensity [224], eight thousand kilometres from its native northern Italy? A 'holy hill' was a sculpture to walk through – a succession of housed ensembles of life-size figures enacting the stages of Christ's Passion, placed along a path ascending towards a church that stood for the cross. In the gold-rush towns of upland Brazil, the sculptor and architect Antonio Lisboa, adapting this format from the colony's rulers back in Portugal, had no immediate precedent to consult, only books of Baroque prints imported from Bavaria and France. But he synthesized these sources to deliver figural types that could transform the quality of Christian emotion. Mournfully, wonderingly distraught, his Christ drifts through a mob of squat, grotesque tormentors, his heroic beauty soaking up the world's insults. It was a long time since European artists had reimagined the face of the divine with such commitment, and perhaps very few have since; accordingly, some historians have treated Lisboa as a colonial throwback to medieval ways of feeling. On the other hand, for many Brazilians the innovations of this master carver and builder, half-African and half-Portuguese, indicate a gathering national self-consciousness: those Roman soldiers, they claim, are caricatures of the colony's rulers. The artist's legend is given added resonance by the wasting disease that lent him his nickname 'O Aleijadinho', 'the little cripple'. The story goes that, having lost both fingers and toes, he went on carving with chisels strapped to his stumps.

Maybe tales of extreme personal pathos are not the best pitch on which to make claims for an artist's historical importance. But thinking about the Congonhas ensembles raises at least two issues that affect all histories of 'modern' art. One is the relation of centre and periphery. By 1800, Portugal and Spain, the old ocean-faring colonialists, were in political and cultural relegation, with their American empires soon to break loose, whereas both France and Britain were locked into a global power contest

involving rival seizures of Asian and then African territory. Their new imperialisms were backed by exclusive claims to ‘reason’ and ‘science’. How much do we buy into these agendas if we concentrate on a ‘modern’ art world revolving principally around Paris or London, at the expense of the provincial and smaller-scale societies?

Secondly, there is a conflict of ideas about what ‘art’ itself means. Lisboa was interpreting a very old story with empowering spiritual conviction, as a stonemason and wood-carver redeploying skills learnt from his builder father. Boullée, a ‘free’ mason speculating with at most one foot in practical experience, was trying, head on, to invent a new myth for a forward-looking age. Its rhetoric – ‘Sublime Newton! Prodigious and profound genius! Divine being!’ – was strained and almost desperate. Enlightenment thinkers were unstitching the fabrics of meaning customarily provided by religion and monarchy while the oral lore and transmitted skills of craft workshops were being increasingly bypassed. A restless urge towards new systems, both of symbolism and of production, would trouble European art from this time on.

By comparison, other cultures appeared static in European eyes, mere resources on which artists could draw in their quests for archaic or ‘primitive’ alternatives. There are many angles from which to question this Western colonial mindset, but the history that most obviously refutes it is Japan’s. Edo, one of the world’s largest and wealthiest cities, maintained a dynamic art scene always looking for new sophistications of technique or imagery. The market for *ukiyo-e* had expanded through the 18th century as more and more samurai aristocrats pitched into the life of ‘the floating world’, even if the government continued to hover in disapproval. By the century’s last two decades, the genre’s most buoyant phase, colour printing had turned into a complex collaborative process, often involving the use of more than a dozen blocks on deluxe papers to meet the standards of a connoisseur clientele. Lush textural contrasts and sparse line made for a product as refined as the screens established by earlier elite tastes, but thoroughly urban in its arch, insider wit. Like the kabuki theatre on which they thrived, *ukiyo-e* had a quick-moving succession of stars. Utamaro led the field during the 1790s with a repertory of beautiful women ranging from housemaids to ‘castle-breakers’ – the high-class prostitutes who would rid a samurai of his fortune. His boldest designs [225] zoom in on the other sex’s personal space with a voyeur’s obsessiveness; as generally in Japanese pictures, the erotic heat comes from the interfaces of patterned and plain, of covered and revealed, of hair and the nape of the neck. At the time this print was made, pictures of kabuki female impersonators by another artist, Sharaku, were staking out a new territory of camp comedy and pathos, equally prescient in terms of more recent art,

225 Kitagawa Utamaro, *Beauty at her Toilette*, c. 1795. Utamaro thrived on producing intimate and charming images such as this during the 1790s. He also had a major place in Edo's pornography market, which from time to time had severe measures passed against it by the authorities. It was political nervousness, however, that shaped government attitudes towards the art of Japan's entertainment sector. In 1804 Utamaro drew what was felt to be an impertinent picture of Hideyoshi, the ruler who had reorganized Japan two centuries earlier. He was thrown into jail and humiliated, and exited a broken man.



although the cultural moment for both would be brief. The sense of privileged access to a charmed world would, as we will see, evaporate in the blurrier social fusions of the century to come.

During the late 18th century an equivalent province of feeling, intuned and intimate, could be found in French and British art. The caressing, ruffling scumbles of Thomas Gainsborough's portraits and Jean-Honoré Fragonard's pastorals, or the equally sensual handiwork of the terracotta figurines of the French sculptor Clodion all addressed private sensibilities ignored by the streamlining, moralizing prescriptions of writers like Winckelmann. For all the turn of taste away from the frivolity of earlier aristocratic art, its sensuality was tempered, rather than repressed, by the spread of the sentimentality we have already seen in Wright of Derby's

226 Antonio Canova, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1797. The grouping interprets the climax of a story by the 2nd-century writer Apuleius. Immortal Cupid breaks the spell of sleep that his angry mother, Venus, had cast upon his mortal lover Psyche: at last, he becomes wholly, visibly hers. Canova brought out the glow of the marble to a point where it hardly seems to have surface or substance. His mastery of sliding, slipping transitions and sinuous rhythms made him Europe's most in-demand sculptor from the 1780s to the 1810s.

picture [see 216, 217]. The expansion of educated urban society encouraged the entry of a number of women into the international art world around this period. The Swiss-born Angelica Kauffmann painted studiously graceful allegories in Rome and London; Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, confidante to France's Queen Marie-Antoinette, was one of the age's most accomplished and ingratiating portraitists. At the same time, the artistic personas of each fed into a developing rhetoric of gender. Remember Edmund Burke's 1757 enquiry into the nature of taste, and his pairing of 'the beautiful' – so 'delicate', so girl-like – with its opposite, the fear-inspiring 'sublime'. That categorization flavoured what the public looked at and patronized. On the one hand, this era of Neoclassicism embraced a feminized art of elegance, of the circling and self-enclosed and tender; on the other, an art that aimed at the rugged, the angular and unrestrainable – the actively violent, in fact.

Ideals and bodies

Italy, Spain, France, 1780s–1820s

At least three issues, then, are involved if we want to consider developments during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Taste acquires new gendered





227 Francisco de Goya, *The Straw Manikin*, 1792.

connotations, involving implicitly 'male' strands of imagery and implicitly 'female'. There is a tension between so-called centres and so-called peripheries. And then there is a fundamental insecurity about art's grip on symbolic meaning. Three concerns to consider as we turn not only to Antonio Canova and Jacques-Louis David, the two celebrities who dominated European art in the eyes of the contemporary public, but also to the artist who from this distance seems to tower over the era, Francisco de Goya.

Canova was a Venetian sculptor whose training took him to Rome in 1781, already for two decades a centre for the revival of the clean Greek

simplicity demanded by the writings of Winckelmann. Canova fulfilled this prescription more boldly than any previous artist when he carved a mythological marble of Theseus sitting on the slain Minotaur. With its terse outline and compact surfaces, his monument was hailed as a reinvigorating break from everything done in Italian statuary since the days of Bernini. Canova swiftly rose to a position of equal celebrity, his services in demand from the Pope and the Tsar, and later from both Napoleon and his adversary, Wellington. But this Theseus was Canova in his virile, muscular mode: he owed his continuing international fame as a ‘second Michelangelo’ far more to his alternative, ‘elegant’ line of imagery.

Cupid and Psyche [226] – a piece sought after variously by a Scottish noble, a Russian prince and the Empress Josephine – shows how Canova streamlined the outlines of his figures, only to wind them into a novel form of intricacy. If we contrast him with the preceding supremo of Italian sculpture and place this work beside Bernini’s *Ecstasy of St Teresa* [see 180], we see that Canova’s conception is far more multi-dimensional than Bernini’s theatre show – he is asking the viewer to circle around the life-size grouping, tracing the strands of its knot of bodies. Yet the extraordinary translucency achieved by Canova’s buffing of the marble dematerializes the flesh of these flawless adolescents, setting them apart from immediate physical experience on a plane of luminous perfection. Bernini went fiercely for both the spiritual and the sensual. Canova held each at a certain remove: the dreamily innocent awakening is not in any precise sense an allegory, nor yet is it fullheartedly a sexual encounter. It was this suspension of feeling in an indefinite ideality, perhaps, that gave Canova such an enormous hold over the fantasy life of his contemporaries.

Was it elegance that Goya was aiming for in his *The Straw Manikin*? In a sense: he was designing for the king of Spain’s palace, where the image [227] was intended to hang as a tapestry in an office. Here were the quaint rural ways of His Majesty’s subjects, served up in 1792 on a gold-rimmed saucer – the type of aristocratic pastoral undertaken earlier in the 18th century by the likes of Tiepolo and Boucher. In the broad perspective of its own time it might be seen as a provincial work, in that it leans to the by now old-fashioned Rococo manner; doubly provincial, in that it was painted for a monarchy that had for eighty years been a foot-dragging satellite of French cultural and political power. Goya was the recently appointed king’s painter and he could draw on twenty years’ experience of executing such commissions. His modestly respectable parents had kept a base in the Aragonese countryside, and he was familiar from childhood with country costumes and folklore. He was well positioned to turn out a lighthearted sunny charmer, with a hint, particularly in the rich blacks of

the nearest girl's lace, of the gorgeously fluid, impassioned portraits he could deliver with equal panache.

All the same, this frisky account of carnival customs comes with bite. Traditions of unknown antiquity made the manikin a ceremonial victim, to be dashed to pieces, taking with him the sins of the village. These robust daughters of the land were not only toying with a spineless scapegoat, but with the sexual hierarchies of polite urban society: for Goya, the female, so ethereal in Canova's Neoclassical sculpture, was a source of strength. Who knows what other sorts of teasing might lie behind the royal employee's professional reserve? One line of interpreters conjectures that the limp dummy stands for Charles IV himself, a dim and ill-advised monarch. Goya was strongly drawn to the Enlightenment thought coming out of France, with its appeal to reason and its critiques of the Church and nobility who kept a stranglehold over the peasantry of his own native land. An alternative line of thinking reads the butt of ridicule as a *petimetre*, someone too trendily fond of all things French. Goya was equally drawn to the folk mentality of his fellow countrymen, even if half in revulsion: an unreason to set against reason, a dark, heavy weight resistant to enlightenment.

Goya was forty-six when he painted this canvas in slow-moving Madrid: shortly afterwards, he would undergo a life-changing illness. Meanwhile, in the quick-moving Paris of 1792, the king was in prison, and among those shortly to vote for his death sentence was the choreographer of Revolutionary festivals and decor, Jacques-Louis David. David, two years Goya's junior, had become the centre of metropolitan attention back in 1784, when his painting of a Roman historical legend, *The Oath of the Horatii* [228], galvanized the critics and the crowds at the annual Salon exhibition. Seemingly both archaeologically correct and publically inspiring, it fitted Neoclassical prescriptions precisely. A father holding out three swords to three armed sons who swear to die for their country, three womenfolk behind him curled in dismay – this punchily repetitive image, pitted against a stark three-arch backdrop, crystallized the public's gender-polarizing fantasies and their latent yearning for a convulsive common cause.

It sparked off the kind of call-and-response interplay of repetition and a mass audience seen in many later contexts. David, having begun as a trainee of the king's painter Boucher, found himself at the centre of a political chain reaction that accelerated with unprecedented dynamism from the Revolution of 1789 onwards. He was in his element. Throughout his career a passionately alert portraitist, he had an equal instinct for the energy-level of events around him. The edifying precision of his Salon successes of the 1780s changed gear to a raw, brisk pace of brush as the Revolutionary terror gathered force. When its leader, Robespierre, fell,

David went briefly to jail, to re-emerge on the public scene with a softer touch and more fulsome imagery, perfectly aligned with the rightwards drift of politics that ushered in Napoleon – whose chief propaganda machine his studio would in due course become.

The *Death of Marat* [229] catches this cheerleader-cum-weathervane in 1793. A leading journalist, a friend of David's on the political left, was stabbed in the chest by a female centrist Revolutionary who stole in on him with a false note of introduction as he worked in a sheet-lined bath, seeking relief from a skin complaint. David reconstructed Marat's dying moments from intimate knowledge of his circumstances in time for a public funeral at the Louvre two months later. Neoclassical painting took its stylistic instincts as much from the early 17th century as from actual classical antiquity, and this terse, glare-lit, blocked-off pictorial space is an indirect descendant of those in the history paintings of Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi [see 168, 169]. Back then – before the Enlightenment, the Revolution and the sweeping aside of Christianity in the name of 'Reason' – there had also been martyr mementos, such as the Peruvian picture of crucified monks with angels descending to crown them [see 166]. But David's urgent improvisation, neither exactly 'history' nor 'martyrdom', belongs to a time jumped off its customary tracks – not least through its fragmentariness: the funeral was for two assassinated radicals, but the death image that once matched Marat on the right was later destroyed by the subject's daughter, who had switched sides to become an angrily zealous royalist.

228 Jacques-Louis David, *The Oath of the Horatii*, 1784. The ancient historian Livy described Rome's early days as a small tough city-state. Three Roman brothers swore to risk their lives fighting three brother warriors from a rival Italian tribe. In David's painting, their sister despairs because she is married to one of these adversaries, joined in sorrow by her mother and her sister-in-law, who comes from the opposing tribe. It is hard now to look at this enormous canvas without thinking of subsequent events. The scene originates in the same era of archaic Roman history as the *fascies*, the symbol of a clenched bundle of sticks that was an inspiration for Fascism.



229 Jacques-Louis David, *Death of Marat*, 1793. Jean-Paul Marat was a scientist who turned full-time activist come the Revolution, starting his own journal in 1789. *L'Ami du peuple*, 'The Friend of the People', identified the people's 'enemies' and called for their heads to be cut off in large numbers. Charlotte Corday was a young provincial supporter of the Revolution, outraged by the massacres instigated by Marat. She plunged a knife in his chest. Her head was cut off, and those of hundreds more from her political wing. At Marat's funeral, the oration claimed that 'Like Jesus, Marat ardently loved the people, and the people alone.'



As it stands, however, the pictorial balance of Marat is all a matter of above and below. David's hero is caught between the great, visibly invisible scumble that refuses to reveal some redemptive angel of pity and its equally grim and invisible counterweight, the blood-bath in which he wallows. The packing-case plinth on which the painter has scrawled a dedication is a minimal measure to hold the desperation at bay and turn it into eloquence. Thrusting bare facts, bare words, bare brushwork forward, David tried to wring hearts with them. Death had a changed face, and with it truth.

The national crisis in which David worked was contagious and became all Europe's during the next two decades. From the late 1790s Napoleon redirected the energies of the Revolution into a mission of imperialist modernization ranging from Egypt to Russia, in the course of which his armies occupied France's backward southern satellite of Spain. This precipitated counter-energies, outbreaks of 'guerrilla' popular resistance across city and country. Of this cataclysmically violent period, Goya would strangely become the leading recording instrument. The illness of

230 Francisco de Goya, *This Is What You Were Born For*, etching from the *Disasters of War*, c. 1810–14. The *Disasters* was a private series of aquatint etchings that Goya began probably around 1810. He continued adding to the series through the next decade, but they would not be published until 1863, thirty-five years after his death. Goya did, however, present the same terrible subject-matter on a public scale in a canvas painted for the king of Spain in 1814. This showed the events of 3 May 1808, when French troops massacred citizens of Madrid who had tried to rise up against them.



1793 that left him unable to hear seems to have knocked through floors in his imagination. Its lumber of fantasies, fears, cracks and sneers shifted and gathered in weight. While he maintained his post as leading court portraitist, he now pitched into the kind of eccentric printmaking formerly practised by Italians like Tiepolo and Piranesi. His set of *Caprichos*, ‘caprices’, from 1799 gave the genre a new pungency and grotesque force, prodding not simply at stock butts of derision like the priesthood, but at human propensities in general.

Goya resumed printmaking in 1810 in response to the chaos gripping Spain, etching an ongoing sequence privately entitled *Disasters of War*. (He never got to publish them himself.) One, of a mother dragging her children away from the armies trampling the countryside, is entitled *I Saw This*, and Goya may have done so literally: he had toured around his home city of Zaragoza in 1808 soon after it was besieged by the French. On what level did he see this [230]? Most likely in an imagination fed by news reports. Also, no doubt, fed by Tiepolo (a onetime visitor to Madrid with whose son Giandomenico Goya communicated), the previous century’s master of brisk tonal contrasts and terse sardonic sangfroid. But now, after ‘Reason’ had done its work, the subject-matters of religion and pastoral had fallen away, leaving much less to look at – just corpses on a bare plain. Much less and too much: one could only collapse, puking. Had these men died to some purpose? The clothing indicates an indifferent shambles of Spanish guerrilla irregulars and the French military. This disaster went beyond nationalistic feeling: this was (as people have since learnt to say) ‘the human condition’. Stupidity, cruelty, disgust and death: *This Is What You Were Born For*, the title here reads.

Unlike David, Goya was not an instinctual side-taker – rather the reverse. He wove warily through the alternations of pro-French and anti-French regimes and would finally leave a reaction-ruled Spain to end his days in Bordeaux. Nonetheless, he maintained throughout an imaginative distance from the Neoclassicism that was currently the ‘modern’ style of a France-dominated Europe – and this, I think, helps explain why his art has seemed so important in more recent times. David’s *Marat* takes us to a very hard place spiritually, with nothing to go by but words and the void. Goya’s late drawings [231], along with the visionary ‘Black Paintings’ with which he decorated his home in the late 1810s, arguably take us to somewhere yet more desolate. But the design of *Marat* is as absolute and inexorable as the curvature of Boullée’s visionary dome, and both now seem tainted with modernity’s more nightmarish associations, its alien mechanical chill. Preferable to that is to concentrate the imagination on

231 Francisco de Goya, *The Idiot*, 1824–28. In his later work Goya often dwells on bodies that feel dislocated and monstrous – even, one senses, to themselves. A cryptic, sardonic, sometimes hilarious commentary on human affairs hovers about them, but images such as this drawing are hard to place in terms of any specific reference. The original sheet was destroyed during the Second World War. Maybe one should detach the image from history, and submit it to some anthology on the theme of the scream, to join Munch, Bacon, the *Laocoön*, Niccolò dell’Arca to create a gallery of despair.



thick and solid flesh: on a body, even a body howling, misshapen, bound and dumped in a corner, backed on to nothing, witless with fear. For Goya's markings, as they dwell on it, jitter and jerk with life, and in that there is a kind of redemption – even if not the salvation once believed in by Zurbarán when he dwelt on the Christ-like sufferings of a bound lamb [see 183]. The familiar weight and tug of the flesh is where Goya's art habitually returns, and is what returns it to the Spanish and Italian traditions that stretch behind it. His *Idiot* casts a long shadow on art to come, and a dark one back on his *Manikin*.

Vision and landscape

Britain, Germany, 1790–1840s

Goya, working on his *caprichos* or fantastical images in deaf solitude, would sometimes borrow ideas from imported prints. Caricaturists in London, notably James Gillray, forestalled him by turning an old-fashioned figure language into a medium of explosive derangement – Baroque revisited as burlesque. In the cities of late 18th-century Northern Europe the art scene was rowdier and more febrile than in Madrid. Here, the experience of studio traditions counted for less than the stimulus of critical conversation. The competing throngs of academy trainees developed a new subculture, one in which shared whispers about esoteric interpretations of history (such as Freemasonry) coexisted with assertive personal claims to the quality of 'genius'. In fact, a cult of the archaic went with a cult of the inspired imagination, giving it a language to speak. Both offered an angle of advantage on the uncertain and fast-moving public world that the artist was pitching himself against. Winckelmann's passion for the ancient Greeks, Piranesi's for the Romans or Boullée's for the Egyptians attracted artists like secret revelations, seeming to open doors that led beyond contemporary culture in all its compromise. The long-marginalized medieval past was also starting to attract curiosity. In the late 1740s the English dilettante Horace Walpole had tried reanimating the 'Gothick' style of building, which had lingered on in Europe's most old-fashioned provincial corners even up to that time. His pinnacled and quatrefoiled mansion at Strawberry Hill, outside London, was a venture made in much the same whimsical spirit as chinoiserie, but those who followed him into this terrain took the symbolisms of the cathedral builders more seriously.

William Blake was an artist rooted in this cultural ferment. Born in London, he had spent his early years sketching the medieval monuments of Westminster Abbey before an uncomfortable spell training as an

232 William Blake, *The Ancient of Days*, 1794/1824. According to Blake, this image was originally inspired by a vision that appeared at the top of his stairs in his suburban London house. Angels and ghosts would also frequently make themselves known to him. The subculture in which Blake moved during the late 18th century evolved into the cult of spiritualism in the mid-19th. It was a tradition that would eventually inform the pioneer abstraction of Vasily Kandinsky in the 20th century.



engraver at the Royal Academy, where he developed a personal opposition to the state-sponsored dominance of oil painting. From the 1780s, through forty years passed mostly in ill-paid, heroically obstinate obscurity, he persisted in exploring alternative techniques of luminous wash painting and of 'illuminated printing'. The latter was used for his own

poetry, which revolved around a self-created mythology. 'I must create a system, or be enslaved by another man's', he declared. A figure designed to illustrate one of his books shows the maxim in application [232]. The design owes something to prints of figures from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and something to the symmetries and strong outlines of 13th-century stained glass, but it is driven by a pulsing, hurtling dynamism. 'Energy', above all, was the quality Blake wished to celebrate, the quality that made his archaisms modernistic. In its total disregard for fleshly naturalism, his coloured etching shakes free from the artistic sophistications dominating London's exhibition halls, such as those of Joseph Wright of Derby. Yet it shares that painter's ambivalence towards the gathering power of science. In one context Blake named the mythological figure with the dividers as Urizen – 'your reason', a personification of all that measured, restricted and enslaved the energies of the human spirit, binding it down in material confines. It was symbol of a tyranny that ran from the universal rule-making of Isaac Newton to the repression and poverty surrounding him on the streets of London. Later in William Blake's career, the image was restyled *The Ancient of Days*, as if this were indeed the creator we must all acknowledge. Was this a false demigod, or the true God himself?

What kind of meaning could artists be sure of? If the traditional scaffolding of Christianity had been cut loose by Enlightenment thought, what kind of grip did art have on the truth? These uncertainties, addressed implicitly by Goya and David, were much under discussion in north German intellectual circles while Blake was working in London. Winckelmann's writings about art had been followed by essays from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in an explosion of creative conceptualizing that also spawned Immanuel Kant's new philosophic system. It was in this hubbub that around 1798 Friedrich Schlegel adopted what became a new catchword. He wanted to launch a 'Romantic' poetry that could meet spiritual desires, not so much by supplying them with fixed images to admire as by offering a process, 'forever becoming and never perfected', through which the participant's feelings might continually be educated. The attitude that he was outlining bore a certain resemblance to Chinese artistic doctrines, and, as in the equally literary ambience of the silk-scroll painters centuries before, the visual medium most readily adapted to it was landscape. The techniques, needless to say, were profoundly different.

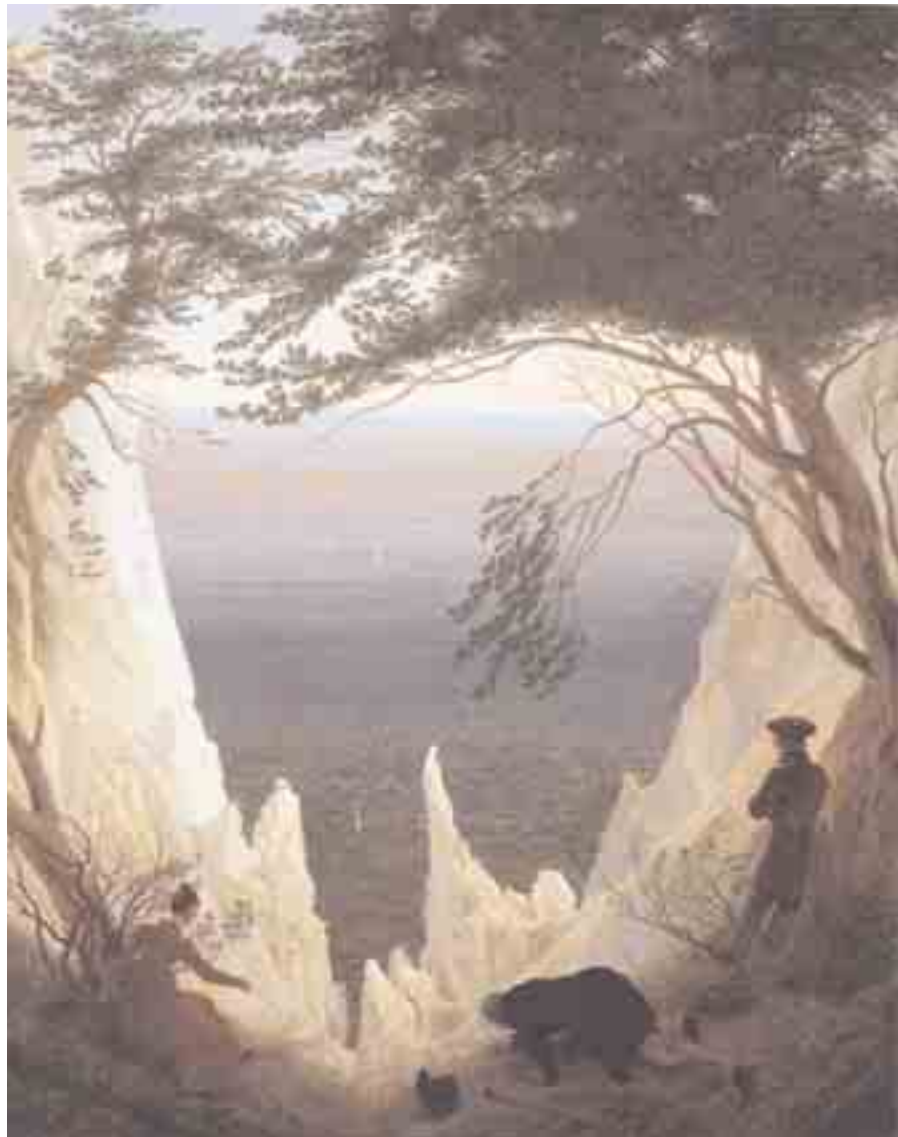
Caspar David Friedrich, a north German artist trained in the kind of outdoors sketching Europeans had practised since the time of Dürer and Hüder, was one of a generation drawn to the new agenda. He

launched his career in 1808 by presenting a view of a pine-fringed mountain peak, topped with a cross, framed up as an altarpiece – as if to proclaim that the experience of nature was in itself the substance of religion. After this didactic and heavily controversial effort, the pictures he exhibited became carefully considered little dramas about the process of learning from nature. Friedrich reflected over concepts like Schlegel's from one remove, exploring their potential for paradox. *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen* [233] offers a glimpse of the 'forever becoming' – the shimmering, unending expanses of the sea. Set against a jagged geology, there lies the awe-inducing Sublime. That concept had been a conceptual standby for artists since the 1760s but now, in the Romantics' interpretation, it constituted the sole experience that could satisfy the spirit's restlessness.

At the same time, those jagged cliffs form a dazzling interior framing that interacts with a darker frame of trees. Both remind us that we are looking at a finished work of art, not at the processes of nature itself: after all, the sea-surface is an exquisite specimen of illusionary paintwork, quite at odds with the wild, instinct-driven brush-flights of a Chinese painter like Shitao [see 202]. In a sly doubletake, the outer ring of branches reveals itself as a heart-shape – insinuating a 'romantic' meaning in the commonplace sense. Friedrich would have us believe that the watchers on the cliff edge stand for some poignant personal memory. Their imbalance – two men and one woman was a recurring literary motif of the period – adds an undertone of tension to what is otherwise one of his higher-spirited images.

Rügen, an island in the Baltic, was the kind of destination sightseers were turning towards in 1818. Like the Alps or the Hebrides, it offered a wildness that earlier painters of the Sublime had encouraged them to seek out; and for Germans this wildness was gaining in nationalistic meaning. Maybe they could discover in the forms of those chalk pinnacles, as in the pines that Friedrich elsewhere loved painting, a basis in nature for the forms of the Gothic architecture that had prevailed when their nation was last powerful, many centuries before: something to contrast with the Neoclassicist modernity associated with Napoleon's imperialism. Other German artists such as the Nazarenes, one of the self-styled ideological groupings that were starting to punctuate European art, took this agenda to the point of painting with a linear, unmodelled, mock-medieval naivety. The more self-conscious framing devices of the *Chalk Cliffs* canvas come at the problem of making pictures in a changed world from a different angle, but with comparable results. That hidden heart, once recognized, suddenly flattens the image. It all becomes a pattern of light picked out in a viewfinder. Many other paintings of its time produce the same effect by lit-

233 Caspar David Friedrich, *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen*, 1818. Rügen, an island on Germany's Baltic coast, was just coming into fashion as the tourist destination that it still remains when Friedrich painted this picture. Friedrich originated from Greifswald, on the nearby mainland. His allegiances were chiefly oriented to the north: he had trained in Copenhagen, and he was the mentor of Johan Christian Dahl, a landscapist who did much to shape a national identity for Norwegian art.



234 John Constable, *Study of the Trunk of an Elm Tree*, 1821. This is a particularly charged encounter between Constable and his subject-matter, in a career filled with industrious open-air sketching in oils and pencils. The little painting focuses on a towering presence that inevitably projects an almost human individuality. Constable is just as devoted as any photographer to concrete fact, and to dramatizing the moment when it confronts you.



erally setting a vista inside a window frame, so as to emphasize the distance between the room – as it were, the interior world of the artist's imagination – and the world out there that it tries to apprehend.

The mind-room within; the world-view without. That pairing may help us to understand how Blake could dwell on his imaginative visions at the same time as many other artists were turning their attention to the recording of outward fact. From the 1780s a number of British and French painters took up the possibilities first explored by Gottfried Wals in the 1620s [see 190], creating landscapes purely from what the eye happened upon. If Wals was inspired by the technological novelty of the telescope, they often leant on portable varieties of the camera obscura – devices that emphasized the fact that an image was, inevitably, a pattern of light.

Watercolour, a common medium for English painters on their field trips, left the white of the sheet shining through that pattern, further emphasizing the image's abstract, formal qualities. (John Sell Cotman was the medium's outstanding practitioner in the early 19th century.)

And yet abstract qualities in art tend to back on to factual ones as if they were two sides of a door. The same focus on given appearances could lead to oil paintings as intensely material as John Constable's *Study of the Trunk of an Elm Tree* [234]. Constable, a countryman developing his art between the 1810s and the 1830s, approached its subjects with a scientific, recording curiosity that was at the same time an assertion of love for the local, the familiar and the particular – a discovery of those qualities, in effect. His elm is aged, weathered and modulated by moss; it is also an immense pillar of strength, spreading its hospitable shade over a meadow that recedes to a discreet view of a property in a London suburb. In all this, it happens to embody the painter's nationalistic vision of England, as if a short walk from home had abruptly confronted him with a kind of a natural allegory. It was in political terms a conservative vision, but artistically it impelled Constable into radically new manoeuvres. Not only the extreme closeness of the elm study, but its deep absorbing greens depart

235 Joseph William Mallord Turner, *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, 1812.



from all the classical constraints that had previously dominated English painting. A determination to grapple with the textures of nature would subsequently lead Constable into a freer handling than the crusty impastos used in this 1821 canvas: the oil paint's gouts and dabs would break into skittering dances, re-enacting transitions of light.

The technical developments of Joseph Mallord William Turner, his contemporary, headed yet further in the same direction. Turner's later work – he lived longer, not dying till 1851 – was often painted as if he himself were part of the processes of nature, a tornado seizing up any new pigment that 19th-century chemistry could provide. He had earned himself the freedom for such manoeuvres by staking out, from his youth onwards, a commanding professional expertise through his mastery of topographical sketching and of watercolour. Unlike the passionately parochial Constable, this Londoner took on as wide a view as he could master, drawing on anything in European art from Dutch seascape specialists to the example of Claude Lorrain and – as far as England's wars with France permitted – expanding his horizons with sketching voyages abroad.

The extent of the ambition driving this fiercely independent practice was first fully revealed in 1812 when he brought *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps* [235] to the Royal Academy's annual exhibition. Typically, Turner haggled furiously to secure this large canvas maximum advantage in the hanging scheme: he was through and through a showman, but on his own terms. He had spliced distant memories of Switzerland with more immediate memories of a blizzard witnessed on a Yorkshire moor and capped them with an allusion familiar to the public from their education in ancient history. The whole 'Sublime' spectacle was pitched so as to resonate with them, on all possible levels. Resonate, that is, loudly and open-endedly. As of 1812, Hannibal's epic venture might equally have stood for Napoleon's or for that of Great Britain. Without question, however, it spoke to the intuition that these were convulsive, world-shaking times, and that ordinary mortals, the fragments of figure strewn over the foreground, were wretchedly at the mercy of vast, overwhelming forces.

The painters who followed Turner into this realm of showroom apocalyptic spectacular, such as the American Thomas Cole or Russia's Karl Bryullov, might have identified those forces as 'History' or 'Nature' – favoured new demigods of the 19th century. But in Turner's own case the issue was one of inner energy, as it had been for Blake. It was imaginative energies that drove the paint in the *Snow Storm* forward, allowing events, mountains and down-drafts to emerge from it. Turner's was a psychological struggle almost as singular and elemental as Goya's; in that storm-clawed sun, it is as if he grapples with what might almost be his God.

The new regimes

Iran, France, Denmark, 1800s–1840s

The world was being shaken while Turner painted his picture, and on one level the quake's epicentre was Napoleon. To the west, Brazil had just taken in the Portuguese royalty on their flight from his armies; to the east, the Ottoman empire was trying to digest the impact of his attack on Egypt, while Russia, swallowing up his 1812 invasion, was about to prove his ruination. On another level Napoleon was simply the frontman for a broader transition – from monarchies tethered to religion and aristocracy to hard-headed regimes for whom power, modernization and 'reason' were virtually synonymous. These new set-ups might find religion useful and socially desirable, and they might enthuse about 'tradition', but religion and tradition had become self-conscious, detachable affairs. They were at the service of new masters. This trend extended beyond Europe: it could, for instance, be seen in the modernizing government set up by Muhammad Ali in Egypt after Napoleon's departure.

How was art caught up in this? Another of the new regimes was the Qajar dynasty, which took over Iran after many decades of political turbulence. The Safavids who had embellished Isfahan (see p. 235) had succumbed to a confusion of military adventurers, and it was only at the end of the 18th century that Fath Ali Shah, whose long reign was based at the new capital of Tehran, re-established a national cohesion. Culturally, he did so by making claims on Iran's deep past. After a gap of twelve hundred years, he reinstated the carving of cliff-face imperial rock reliefs. The Safavids might have based their authority on their allegiance to Shi'a Islam, but he was going to base his on national identity, harking back to the glories of the ancient Persian empire. At the same time, every kind of public venue, from foreign embassies to mosques, was commanded to display outsize ruler portraits of Fath Ali. The imperial studios turned them out with an eye on the equivalent portraits of Napoleon currently being produced by David's team in Paris. If anything, this propaganda, with a mesmerically bejewelled, waist-length-bearded object of devotion to project, surpassed its French prototypes in glitzy hieratic pomp.

Oils had been introduced to Iran in the mid-17th century, not long after Riza Abbasi [see 176] turned the Persian tradition in a distinctly secular direction. In the modernizing climate of early 19th-century Tehran, the medium gained a fresh impetus. This canvas of an acrobat [236] was painted to fill a niche in a salon in Fath Ali's palace, the Gulistan. Addressing himself to this brash, showy, exclusively male milieu, the painter (who seems to have been named Ahmad) launched into what must have been,



236 Ahmad, *Female Acrobat*, c. 1815.

Artists in early 19th-century Iran approached oil painting rather as certain Europeans would roughly a century later – as a flat patchwork of colours that was as decorative as it was figurative. Compare the effects here with those of Klimt, painting in 1909 (274). The torrid reds and turquoises are characteristic of the era. Later in the century, painters such as Kamal al-Mulk brought quasi-photographic values to Iranian subject-matter.

237 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Madame Rivière*, 1806. Under the tassels of the Indian cashmere shawl is the blond varnish on the brand-new sofa. Fixing on its mock-medieval painted ornament, Ingres is chewing over his own visual habits. He loves what coils in on itself, what is full of itself (as the cloverleaf is), what stops the mind from straying. These qualities will make him, in the sixty-year career that follows this work for the Rivière family, the most obsessive of portraitists and the most conservative of operators in the French art world.

even for its own time, a swaggeringly bold performance. Nothing in the long line of figure painting behind him had pitted the tension between pattern and figure with quite such an outrageous, topsy-turvy design logic. With their vibrant colours and bristling encrustation, Qajar paintings such as this presented an edgy, rowdy kind of novelty, poised between the more relaxed hedonism of Iran's past and the movement towards European naturalism that would gather pace during the 19th century.

Fath Ali's recourse to the archaic past mirrored initiatives we have already seen in Europe – except that there, the initiatives had come firstly from artists and critics. A second generation of Neoclassicists continued to think that somewhere out there lay 'tradition', which individuals could use to redeem the otherwise soulless present. The results were often more radical than we are now likely to notice. 'One spends a long time in guesswork before recognizing anything' was a contemporary critic's comment on *Madame Rivière* [237], an exhibit in the 1806 Salon by a youth newly issued from David's studio, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. His eyes were thrown by a painting that jettisoned the relief modelling on which David and painters before him had relied, to dwell instead on lines that coiled across the canvas almost at odds to the figure being portrayed. A 'flattening' effect: compare those produced by Friedrich or Blake. In fact, Ingres had designed the portrait as a variation on Raphael's *Madonna della Sedia* [see 148], just as elsewhere he looked towards the styles of Jan van Eyck, Greek vase painting or indeed Persian miniatures. All these far-off reference points gave him a handle on the mundane immediacies of clients like Monsieur Rivière, a nouveau-riche government placeman. Their 'ideality' permitted the subtle liberties he took with Rivière's wife's body – pulling away her hips from her torso, disjoining her left shoulder, covering the distortions with curling draperies, all the better to complete a rhythm that expressed his response to her sexual allure. However, most viewers at first found this type of tight-wound, full-on, ferociously self-contained painting very hard to take. It was only in the 1820s, under the restored royalist regime that followed Napoleon's downfall, that a section of public opinion swung behind the doggedly consistent Ingres. His choice of clientele, his classical references and the linear control of his drawing all assigned him a certain place in French art politics. Until his death in 1867, this master of a revised Neoclassicism came across as the epitome of conservative values, despite the strange instinctive intensity of his actual paintings.

Ingres's iconic portraits of well-accounted sitters, alongside his fantasies of marmoreal goddesses and oriental concubines, found their niche in a post-revolutionary age. After the end of the wars in Europe, in 1815, the bourgeois, the main inheritors of power, were trying to establish new



cultural orders. But the bourgeois – propertied townspeople, that is – were not a monolithic grouping with united standards of taste. Outside the cultural metropolis of Paris, other sectors of the new European public were approaching painting with only a glancing interest in tradition. In the post-Napoleonic period many painters in Germany, Austria and Scandinavia, rather like their forebears in 17th-century Holland, painted closely naturalistic renditions of the day-to-day and anecdotal, often in



238 Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, *Standing Female Nude*, 1837. The nude in classical times and then in the Italian and French art worlds was a norm – a basic language for art, to be taught in an infinity of life classes, to be deployed to fill an infinity of compositions. For exactly this reason, memorable European nudes often come from outside those traditions – from Goya in Spain, from Rembrandt in Holland, or, as here, from Eckersberg in Denmark. Rather cautiously, Eckersberg departs from a convention that had dominated ‘high art’ from the time of the Greeks, in which the female pubis was reduced to a smooth and featureless mound.

upbeat, bright-hued palettes. This strand of taste would retrospectively be called Biedermeier, after a satirical character who epitomized a cosy, smug set of bourgeois values; these were seen as typefying an era when reactionary regimes held sway across the region.

Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg's nude [238] complicates that stereotype. Eckersberg was a Dane who, in common with Ingres and numerous other early 19th-century painters, had studied with David in Paris. His friend and compatriot Bertel Thorvaldsen became Europe's most sought-after Neoclassical sculptor in the wake of Canova; but after his own return to Copenhagen in 1816 Eckersberg's work turned away from the historical. Academies had long upheld a doctrine that the beautiful amounted to the true. With a scrupulous Protestant earnestness, he tied this to a literal reading of what he called 'Nature's Great Book'. In this canvas of 1837, the controls of an academic exercise were fixed severely only so as to highlight the independence of the individual, gawky and proud, who confronted him. How grave she looks, how strangely sensual: the 'virtuous' demeanour favoured by the age's religious monuments transposed to the vulnerable, contingent privacy on which realist novelists would soon be setting their sights. By the 1830s Eckersberg had passed his feel for the immediate and his sharply focused technique on to a host of pupils, giving rise to a 'Golden Age' of Danish painting: his outstanding protégé, Christian Købke, had a Vermeer-like precision of tone.

Towards the suburbs

France, Japan, 1810s–1850s

We might see latterday Neoclassicism and Biedermeier as brake pedals on the imagination, attempting to steady the transitions of an onward-moving modernity. By the same broadbrush characterization, other sectors of the art world were pumping on the gas, trying to infuse the liberating energies invoked by Blake. David had employed both controls in his left-swerving, right-swerving career. Yet another practice originating from his studio, the battle art of Antoine-Jean Gros, employed the baroque chiaroscuro and turbulence that Ingres was busy rejecting. This mode took on a new appeal for up-and-coming artists. At the age of twenty-one, Théodore Géricault launched himself into the Paris Salon with the enormous *Charging Chasseur* [239]. It was 1812, the year of Turner's *Snow Storm*, and this work too was a splicing of private recollection with public epic. A cab-horse rearing on a suburban road out of Paris had prompted Géricault to dream of the greater thrills of contemporary life, to be found far away at Austerlitz or Jena fighting for Napoleon

239 Théodore Géricault, *Charging Chasseur*, 1812. Géricault reached for a virile visual language even as Ingres dwelt on femininity. Each drew on the work of David, who had characterized both gender values in his *Oath of the Horatii* (228). The 3-metre (10-foot) height of the canvas presages the colossal cinema-screen dimensions of Géricault's subsequent *Raft of the Medusa*, a masterpiece too large and dark to reproduce effectively in miniature. Géricault was far from alone in bidding for an epic effect in the early 19th century, but most outsize canvases were quickly recycled as wagon covers and the like.



among his chosen elite, the Imperial Guard. He pitched his own knowledge of horsemanship and of Rubens into a spectacularly dynamic grapple with the outsize canvas, creating a glamorous vision of violence, if hardly a reflection on it. The slabs of scarlet and green, and the stipple of the gray's rump and leopard-skin saddle, lend the imaginary action a perverse decorative bravura, almost like that of Ahmad's acrobat.

The Guards officer who posed for Géricault was one of the thousands who died as Napoleon retreated from Moscow and his fortunes went into decline. After the emperor's enemies reinstated the pre-Revolutionary dynasty of French kings in 1815, Géricault's zest for the virile and the dynamic took on a new politicized edge: it became a rhetoric with which to defy the phoniness of this new 'normality'. He employed it in *The Raft of the Medusa*, a yet vaster depiction of a recent news story about a shipwreck aimed at the Salon of 1819. Implicit in its black extravaganza of dying and desperate bodies was an accusation of the corrupt government appointments that had occasioned the disaster. The 'true story' for this driven

young bourgeois was one of terror, energy, violence: the truth was intrinsically extreme. Smaller canvases portraying inmates of a hospital for the insane and heads severed by the guillotine touched on a darkness that, unknown to Géricault, Goya was simultaneously plumbing. By the time of Géricault's death from riding injuries in 1824, the notion of a French 'Romantic' art, loosely corresponding to the ideas floated by German writers, had coalesced around this uncanny body of work. In France, therefore, Romanticism meant not landscape (as in Germany or England), but recourse to old figural techniques, pursued for new purposes.

How could these purposes be described? 'I feel within me an infinite longing for what can never be achieved', wrote Eugène Delacroix, the painter who came to epitomize French Romanticism after Géricault's death, in the journals that remain its definitive document. There might be no certain point of arrival for the energies Delacroix tried to unleash in his paintings, but they pushed in all directions. Working on *The Death of Sardanapalus* [240] – the most reckless of his assaults on the Salon during the 1820s – he wrote himself memos: study Michelangelo, Greek vases, Persian art, heads of Africans, 'make them very Oriental'. Napoleon's conquests had brought art treasures from all over the world to the Louvre, marking a great upsurge in the evolution of public museums and, with them, of Western curiosity concerning other cultures. Delacroix, a child of minor aristocracy whose appetite for novelty was flavoured by a sense of being at odds with the times he lived in, lapped up these stimulations just as he lapped up narrative poetry, his customary source of imagery (*Sardanapalus* stemmed from a recent poem by Lord Byron). The mainstay of Delacroix's

240 Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Sardanapalus*, 1828. Enemies have surrounded the king of Assyria at Nineveh, but they shall not have his wealth. Rather, let the women and horses be slain, bring torches, let 'this blazing palace / And its enormous walls of reeking ruin' stand as 'a nobler monument than Egypt / Hath piled in her brick mountains.' Delacroix's 1828 extravaganza was an expanded variation on Byron's melodrama *Sardanapalus*, published seven years earlier.



references, the supreme example of lordly energy, remained the painting of Rubens. The hot colours and melding forms of paintings like *Allegory of the Effects of War* two hundred years before [see 173] were reimagined in his studio with a technique that moved away from Rubens's earth-colour underpainting towards an unrelenting to-and-fro of vibrant hues.

It could be a chancy strategy. The uproarious, sumptuously zany chaos of *Sardanapalus* – an indifferent tyrant dopily lolling on his bed while his concubines are murdered and a frightened horse, lifted from Géricault, is dragged to slaughter by a slave – brought rebukes from both critics and official patrons. Yet Delacroix's will to opposition tugged at state power on a fairly short leash. Three years later, their energies momentarily converged when he allegorized a popular uprising that brought about a change of monarchs in 1830: his *Liberty Leading the People* would subsequently become an icon of French nationalism. Soon after, Delacroix took off from mundane Paris to Morocco, to capture the archaic glamour of its 'Oriental' Arabs and Berbers. (Simultaneously, French armies were fighting to subdue the same peoples, just across the frontier in Algeria.) On his return Delacroix concentrated on commissions for murals from the state, while the press cast him as the 'radical' foil to the conservative Ingres, recycling the old slanging match of the 'Venetian' colourist versus the 'Florentine' linear designer.

An alternative opposition is suggested by *Rue Transnonain, 15 April 1834* [241]. This print, published three months after the incident it records, seems to breathe out the immediate reality that Romantic deathbeds like *Sardanapalus* kept at bay. It is, needless to say, no less artful. Honoré Daumier's studiously casual snatches of a rolled back nightshirt, an upturned chair and a crushed baby re-create what happened when a further reactionary monarchy – the one ushered in by the uprising allegorized by Delacroix in 1830 – sent in troops to break up insurrections in a working-class quarter of Paris. They went a little too far – ran up apartment stairs, shooting and bayoneting at random. There is nothing vague about the accusation here. It is not some grandiose reach for pistols, swords or rhetoric, as had been the case with French political art all the way back to David's *Horatii*. Like an up-and-coming generation of writers, the 26-year-old Daumier was using the feel of contingent fact as a precisely aimed weapon in a developing class struggle.

His *Rue Transnonain* is couched in a plain-speaking realism, but the bulk of the work of this politically effective artist would be in the mode of caricature. Distortion allowed Daumier to think more freely and funnily about bodies – their grossness, their weight, their fluidity. Like Goya before him (still hardly known in Paris), he was injecting a rough new life

into the figure at a time when so much in art was flatly linear and punctiliously smooth. In fact, both Delacroix and David had tried out caricature in the course of their careers, venturing out into the open seas of image-trade from the tight little harbour of ‘high art’ on which this book’s argument has concentrated. Outside the Salons and academy halls lay the larger, looser sprawl of printing presses and specialist draughtsmen and draughtswomen. Its facilities had been expanding: lithography (printing with inks suspended on a stone slab), the technology behind *Rue Transnonain*, had been invented in Munich in 1798 and would accelerate and refine the flow of image information throughout the 19th century.

The Salons seemed to revolve around lurid elsewheres and whimsical yesteryears. (‘Troubadour style’, high-definition medieval anecdote, was a typical early 19th-century vogue.) What if it was painting that put the brakes on modernity, while other, less self-important media were able to ride the energies of change? Grandville – another contributor to the 1830s satirical press – was as fascinated by alien mechanical perspectives as Daumier was by the plight of his fellow human beings. His illustrations extrapolated from the gadgets, fashion fads and futuristic speculations swirling round Paris and jumbled every category of information into phantasmagorias of almost Bosch-like outrageousness. He provided prototypes for later fantasy art that passed into global visual culture, like John Tenniel’s illustrations to *Alice in Wonderland*; he also seems to have been the first artist to try the now familiar trick of zooming in on street life from overhead. Grandville’s busy little woodcuts represent an industrial revolution of the imagination, reflecting an era in which everything was becoming subject to metamorphosis and disorientation. The vignette



241 Honoré Daumier, *Rue Transnonain*,
15 April 1834, 1834.



242 (top) J. J. Grandville, *Grandville's Last Dream*, published 1847.



243 (above) Hokusai, *Mount Fuji Seen through a Spider's Web*, 1840.

shown here [242] was a report on his own dream-life made not long before his early death in 1847. The vignette's fade-out format seemed made for Romanticism, dissolving images into a bigger blank that could stand for the mind, or even for the life of the 'ever becoming, never perfected' artist.* It was not, of course, an effect available to canvas painters.

'Low' and 'high' media had featured in the Japanese art world ever since cheap seductive prints rose up alongside screen and scroll painting in the later 17th century. In the 19th century borders were becoming less clear-cut. *Ukiyo-e*, in 1790s Edo a downtown scene of intense, distinctive vigour, started to move out a few decades later into the broader, more respectable world. If the landowning aristocracy was by now thoroughly urbanized, the bourgeois equally took pleasure in touring the countryside. The two artists who made the most of this changing social situation were Hokusai and Hiroshige. The prodigious and long-lived Hokusai in fact poured his curiosity into every available province of picture-making. He kept drawing from the 1780s through to the 1840s, by his own account steadily improving: 'At the age of one hundred I will have reached a magnificent level and at the age of one hundred and ten each dot and each line will be alive.'

Among all his perspective studies, flower studies, drama scenes, poetry illustrations, pornography and ground-breaking compilations of moving figure poses – *manga* – Hokusai cemented his reputation with deluxe albums of views of Mount Fuji [243]; the picture here comes from one published in 1840. Fuji is a towering volcano a hundred kilometres from Edo, just visible on clear days – a distant objective for townsmen's nature-loving reveries. Hokusai found a hundred and two witty ways to shock novelty into its silhouette, interposing his mind's eye into juxtapositions on every conceivable level – not unlike Utamaro, sneaking between the girl and her mirror. In this woodcut, the great and eternal is framed by the small and frail, a novelty rich in ancient meanings. The transient and humble is habitually cherished by an aesthetic (*wabi sabi*) descended from Japan's prehistoric spirit worship. The same tradition deems Fuji a mythical stronghold of immortality – a symbol freighted with personal significance, no doubt, for anyone with a life plan like Hokusai's.

Hiroshige, thirty-seven years Hokusai's junior, would turn out to be the last major exponent of a genre that yielded to new printing methods as Japan embarked on a crash programme of industrialization. He too depicted nature, but a nature that was nearly always qualified – seen from somewhere, used by someone. Weathers, materials and moods all fluctuate together. Different impressions of *Cuckoo Flying over the River* [244],

* The point is taken from a fine set of essays by Henri Zerner and Charles Rosen: *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art* (1985).

published at the end of his career in 1857, wavered from clear early evening to rainy deep dusk, its spare design allowing the latent resonances of ink, paper and wood to come to the fore. In its quiet river poetry, it overlaps with oil paintings produced over the preceding decade in countries as diverse as Christian Købke's Denmark, Grigory Soroka's Russia or even the America of George Caleb Bingham. The gunboats of America's Commander Perry had already entered Nagasaki harbour; within two years, American pressure would force Japan to open up fully to Western imports and to a very different kind of modernity. But stopping by the river-bank temple where the rouge sellers hang their flag, everything is calm, serene. Nature is under control. Across the water, suburbia beckons.



244 Hiroshige, *Cuckoo Flying over the River*, 1857.



INDUSTRY'S MOMENTUM

Matter and fact

France, Germany, Britain, 1840–1860

Sometime in the mid-1820s, a French country gentleman named Nicéphore Niépce made a mechanism do what previously only human hands and eyes could do. He got the pattern of sunlight passing through a lens to mark a sheet of chemically coated tin, producing a picture by what he called ‘heliography’. We do not know if this view of the barn roofs on Niépce’s estate [245], taken in 1826 with an eight-hour exposure, was his original breakthrough, but it is the earliest known record of a technology that has since transformed the world. In 1829 Niépce was joined in his experiments by Louis Daguerre, a painter-entrepreneur who had recently pointed the way to another modern medium, the cinema, with his ‘diorama’ – a theatre in which Parisians could view alluring painted images on a vast backlit screen. Niépce died soon after, and it was not until 1839 that Daguerre could present a workable, repeatable photographic process to the Académie des Sciences, which then made it publically available.

The new invention was eerily both like and unlike the art of painting. It seemed to mimic what Constable and many other observational artists of the time had recently been doing, and indeed what had been done before by Vermeer and Wals, or still earlier by Holbein and van Eyck. And this was natural, since it was an extension of the use of the camera obscura that had formed a minor but distinctive strand of the European tradition. But, through taking away the artist’s body, it shone a different light on the uncertainties I have already suggested this tradition was facing. What kind of truth was there to be found in pictures? Photography met the question like an ambiguous oracle. In the pitted grain of Niépce’s tin plate, you seem to overhear matter mumbling mindlessly to matter, without symbolic purpose. The surface confronting you has a dour, resistant density. Textures like this would in fact be cherished by people aiming to produce photographic art, as if the new medium could be as mysteriously material as the thick oil impastos of Turner’s canvases, as though it might yield poetic resonances like Hiroshige’s prints. Alternatively, the smooth high-resolution images subsequently achieved by Daguerre (and by the run of photography since) seemed to reveal a bewildering cornucopia of detail,

245 Nicéphore Niépce, *View from a Window at Le Gras*, 1826. As the earliest known photograph, this has an incomparable status: the light-etched tin plate from which this print was taken was a genuinely new kind of object in the world. Independently of Niépce and Daguerre, however, the Englishman William Henry Fox Talbot was developing a process similar to theirs, and it is his ‘calotypes’ that are the first real masterpieces of photographic art. The values of plates such as Fox Talbot’s *Haystack* of 1844 compare interestingly with those of Constable’s study of an elm tree.

246 Adolph Menzel, *The Balcony Room*, 1845.



yielding transparent access to an endlessness of facts. What felt more real, opaque texture or crystalline transparency? The question would affect not only photography but painting, as artists carried the problems of Romanticism forward into an age of unrelenting change.

Although photography was initially dependent on long exposures, its techniques quickly spread around the globe along the networks of European commerce. It joined the proliferation of printing and picturing techniques we have already glimpsed in the last chapter. But photography was only one facet of a great pushing-together of the world by the combined forces of technologized production, capitalist finance and colonialist aggression. The nations of Northern Europe, peaceful since 1815, were now transforming living conditions on a global scale with a rapidity unprecedented in history. As the engineers and the surveyors moved in, traditions became converted into commodities, rooted ways of life into disposable spectacles. In the celebrated words of Karl Marx, writing the *Communist Manifesto* in Brussels in 1848, 'All that is solid melts into air.'

Marx was writing as a dangerous radical scurrying from capital to capital; London before him, Paris and Berlin behind. The last became one

of the 19th century's fastest-swelling cities. The modest frontier town from which Prussia was governed when Marx studied there back in the late 1830s had ballooned into the two-million-plus metropolis of an industrially and intellectually formidable German empire by the turn of the 20th century. Across that time-span the artist Adolph Menzel kept pace with Berlin's expansion, itemizing all its aspects with his pencils and brushes. The long life-work of this inquisitive master-recorder is no more reducible to a single image than that of the equally unflagging Hokusai in Edo. Scaffolding, streetlaying and railways were already in Menzel's sights in the 1840s, alongside musical soirées, church services and museums. Bricklayers and strollers in the park, bicycles and battlefield corpses, a coronation and a rat slipping down a gutter all later swept into his view, in a panoramic survey of the textures of 19th-century modernity



247 William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853. Like his Pre-Raphaelite brothers, Holman Hunt combined a nigh-obsessive attention to detail, rendered with an almost photographic precision of technique, with a moral message warning against the snares of contemporary life.

that culminated in the great, dark, heavy industrial interior of *The Iron-Rolling Mill*, painted in 1872–75. More than any artist of his time, Menzel addressed himself to the mechanical and the factual, even when he was painting scenes from Prussia's past history. This documentation, however, was in no way dispassionate. Menzel seized on his bits and pieces angularly, anxiously, keenly, excitedly.

The Balcony Room [246] was a brisk mental stocktaking by the young radical-leaning artist of 1845, briefly stepping back from sketching the city outside. It jumps us a conceptual generation forward from the Romanticism of German painters like Caspar David Friedrich. Rooms in early 19th-century paintings had often suggested the inward spaces of the mind: if windows were like eyes, mirrors might serve as emblems of contemplation. Here, that symbolism still hovers, like an interrupted sentence, but is blown sideways by a sudden radiant onrush of breeze. As Menzel has captured them, things – or thoughts – are every which way: the chairs are stacked casually back to back with a mirror image that fails to match up with the almost vacant left half of the picture, itself flecked by an unaccountable light-patch. In contrast to most early photography, which tried to present material facts in an orderly fashion, here was an urgent, impetuous brushwork that positively embraced improvisation and happenstance: an art for an age of progress. Whatever light consisted of, whatever the world out there might be, this art rushed forward to engage with it.

As it proved, the progress of Menzel's art was towards a kind of darkness. His later reflective paintings became mortally sombre, probing the limits of a solitary individual's engagement with the world. Among the many expert pictorial technicians turned out by academies across Germany, he came to stand alone, as a one-man inspection team on modernity, a stoic and sceptical analyst of an ever-stranger world. The aftermath of Romanticism took on quite another cast in Britain, the nation that had been pushing forward the Industrial Revolution since the 1760s. In the 1830s an architect and writer named Augustus Pugin gave a new voice to the culture-shock caused by the drastic pace of change. Britain needed to meet the social and environmental turmoil with a revived spiritual and moral life, he claimed; and the idiom for such a renewal was to be sought in the Gothic of the medieval past. Pugin helped Charles Barry rebuild London's Houses of Parliament after they were destroyed by a fire in 1834. The grandiose panoply of pinnacles that went up during the 1840s proclaimed that the industrial, colonialist nation-state could reconcile progress with lofty Christian ideals.

Yet for many thinkers 'the Gothic' remained a potent rebuke to the present. Surely painting, too, had lapsed spiritually since the days of

Jan van Eyck? The elderly Turner might address the novelty of the railway in 1844 with dense expressive paint-storms in his canvas *Rain, Steam and Speed*; but for the young Londoners who formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, gestures and impastos were merely the mannerisms of an outmoded rhetoric. The way to reinstate the truthfulness that had fled from art since Raphael's time lay in zealous attention to factual detail, applying sable-brush glazes to a radiant white ground. They meant to unite the moral integrity of the 15th century and the chemical ingenuity of the 19th: paintings like William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* [247] leant heavily on the intensely vibrant new coal-tar pigments just coming onto the market.

Such unfamiliar stridency of colour may have been one reason why this Royal Academy submission of 1853 was derided as 'ugly' by a bemused public, a repeat of the hostile reception already suffered by Holman Hunt's fellow Pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais. To their defence sprang John Ruskin, a 34-year-old critic whose moralizing interpretations of the arts may have lain behind the Pre-Raphaelites' initial thinking. Weren't the mockers aware, wrote Ruskin, that every single detail of *The Awakening Conscience* was trying to alert them to the spiritual perils of contemporary life? Even the pattern of vines on the wallpaper in that modish drawing room carried an allusion to a biblical verse of warning, while as to the flashy, trashy veneer of its piano – how could any observer fail to take alarm at 'its fatal newness'? It was plain to see: here is a 'kept woman' who has been awoken to awareness of her sinful plight by the haunting strains of a melody that her seducer chances to pick out on the keys. She is rising to free herself from the clutches of this caddish predator; she gazes out from the gilded cage in which he has trapped her, seeking the clear daylight that catches fire on the piano leg and that, in a matching canvas, is represented by Jesus in person.

This would-be novel in fact owed as much to the precedent of Hogarth's social commentary as to the example of van Eyck. Holman Hunt wished his viewers to pick their way through the facts in a commodity-cluttered suburbia where allegorical symbols might equally be status accessories. Either way, everything was charged to bursting with meaning – albeit with one slight drawback: it was failing to communicate. 'They're a brother and a sister – it's a family squabble': so went the guesswork of a bemused viewing public.* They became more reverential, however, when Holman Hunt returned from a painting trip to Palestine.

* The Pre-Raphaelites are art history's gift to comedy. Holman Hunt was hoping to turn the barmaid who posed for him here, Annie Miller, into his pious, respectable bride. He plied her with improving lectures before departing for the Holy Land. As soon as his back was turned, she ran off with his racier Pre-Raphaelite 'brother', Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Vibrant hues seemed well suited to the far-off land where the Saviour had lived, giving piety a novel allure. Holman Hunt's less didactic colleague Millais likewise became a fixture of public attention after tricky beginnings, thanks partly to his greater intuitive gifts as a visual dramatist. The sheer industriousness of Pre-Raphaelite methods earned them approval in a culture that worshipped the ideal of hard work.

Holman Hunt's Palestinian venture followed tactics already familiar in Paris. Images of an exotic Islamic 'Orient' issued from both the rival grandees of the Salons, Ingres and Delacroix, during the 1830s and 1840s, and were echoed by the many exponents of the *juste milieu*, the stylistic middle ground lying between the two. But Parisian art politics were starting to reshape. Outside the circle of Salon acceptance and prestige lay a peripheral subculture of artistic hopefuls, habitually hand-to-mouth and address-hopping. From the 1830s it began to acquire a Romantic prestige of its own, under the label 'bohemia' (that being the supposed homeland of gypsies). 'Art for art's sake', a catchphrase coined by the poet and novelist Théophile Gautier in 1835, became part of the subculture's image, for this generation was supposed to be turning its back on piety and public virtue to devote itself to aesthetic intensity without limit. Apart from their half-legendary excursions into absinthe and hashish, many of these Paris nomads were travelling into the countryside to paint. Constable's landscapes had been shown in the Salon in 1824 and had cast lingering imaginative ripples; somewhere outside Paris, trees might fuse sky and earth with an equivalent force and poignancy. The painter Théodore Rousseau found such a charmed locality in the forest of Fontainebleau, 50 kilometres (30 miles) to the south. Others followed his trail. These 'Barbizon' painters of the 1840s, known after a village where they stayed, effectively introduced *plein-air* ('outdoor') oil painting to France, where the practice acquired a new aura of artistic radicalism.

In 1848 revolution suddenly and transiently re-erupted in Paris – capitals all over Europe soon following – and outsider positions gained a new leverage. This was the point at which Gustave Courbet, a young bohemia-dweller with little but self-portraits in Romantic desperado mode behind him, leapt onto a new scale and subject-matter in massive canvases of rural life that transformed the power balance of the Salon. Subjects taken from his native province of Franche-Comté pushed the texture and weight of peasant experience into the forefront of metropolitan attention. The new presence that had butted into the conversation was ponderous and awkward – 'ugly', again, in public eyes – but compellingly in earnest. In *The Grain Sifters* [248], a canvas of 1855, there is a touch of gawky comedy about the boy who pokes his nose in the grain-



248 Gustave Courbet, *The Grain Sifters*, 1855.

box, and a certain perspectival confusion about how the room is supposed to be receding; nonetheless, there is an unmistakable monumental power in the girl with the sieve, on whom everything turns. Actually, nothing really recedes. The back wall, abrasive and grungy in its palette-knife plastering, presents itself as immediately to the viewer as the powerful workwoman and the powdery, almost smellable corn. Courbet, one might say, is thinking about what matter is like. There in the sacks and the box is the good of the land, the farmer's produce, and here are three ways one might engage with it: one figure is tweaking it, grain by grain; another processes a sample; a third gazes down into the deep amassed store. Courbet, one might equally say, is dreaming about what women are like, that strange other kind of body whose curves, cavities and downward flows are echoed by the forms that strew the canvas. Since Rococo times at least, French artists had liked to charge their work with a more or less conscious sexual emotion (the ethos appears in painters as different as Boucher and Ingres), but as of the 1850s the customary object of male desire was carrying a new, quasi-political weight of meaning.

Courbet's statuesque sifter resembles the peasant figures painted by an artist who hit the Salon at just the same time, Jean-François Millet. The combination of two painters simultaneously asserting the dignity of physical work on the land in warm earthen impastos called for a trend-spotting tag. Journalists reached for 'Realism'. Realism – small 'r' – might mean many things in art, of course: the old message (see p. 135) that 'it happened just like this' had been revived not long before by Honoré Daumier in his *Rue Transnonain* lithograph. In other capitals at just this time Menzel was grappling with the immediate and the Pre-Raphaelites' were faithfully observing the minutiae of appearance. But the Parisian critics were writing with an ear, at least, for the way socialists like Marx claimed to speak for the materially 'real' as opposed to the 'ideal' of the imagination that had been cherished by the preceding generation of Romantic thinkers. Their 'reality' was opaque, resistant, palpable.

Courbet, keen to identify with the Left, liked their label and made it his own. He was not going to rely on historical and biblical costumes like the average Salon exhibitor. He was going to deal with the 'visible and tangible' alone, he claimed: 'Show me an angel and I'll paint one.' The rhetoric suited the bumptious, outsize public persona he had created for himself, a stance forged to defy the bland conformism that took hold of French public life following the collapse of the hopes of 1848. In 1855 the new autocratic regime of Napoleon III aped Britain's public relations triumph of 1851, the 'Great Exhibition' held in a revolutionary Crystal Palace of glass and steel, by staging an 'Exposition Universelle' of their own. Courbet set up his own independent 'Pavilion of Realism' opposite its doors. Here, *The Grain Sifters* joined a gigantic canvas showing the whole of society gathered about the artist at work in *The Painter's Studio*, as if self were the only game in town.

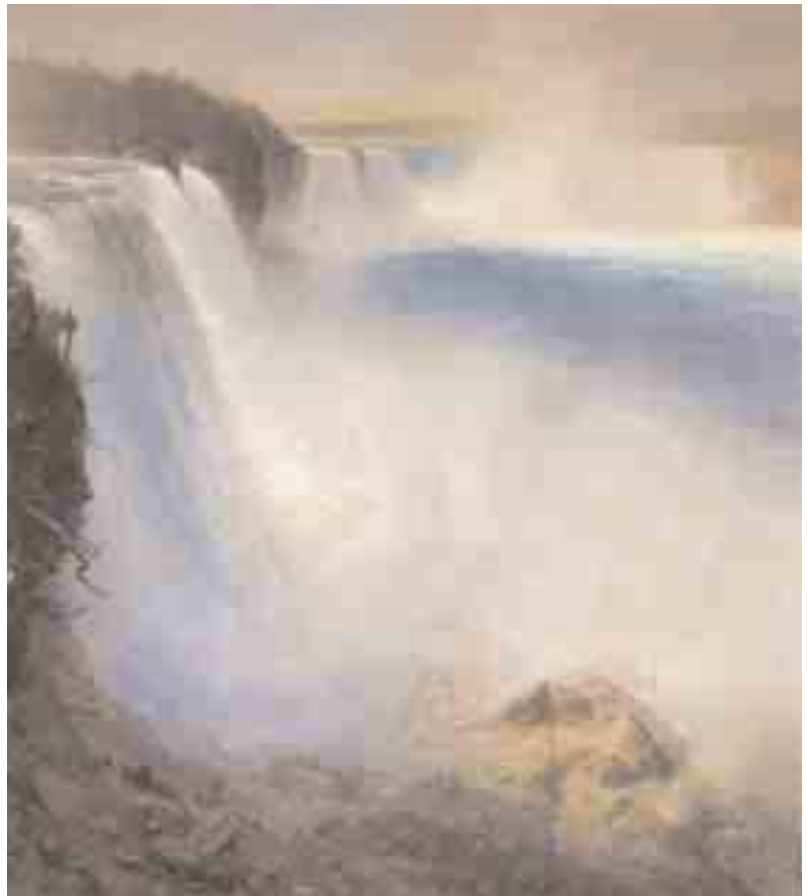
Spectators

*USA, India, New Zealand, West Africa, China,
1840s–1860s*

Little tent versus big tent was a game played out through several generations of 19th-century art in France. Declarations of artistic independence seemed challenging in a nation that governments had been centralizing ever since the reign of Louis XIV, and where the Académie was supposed to keep a strong prescriptive role. Across the Atlantic, by contrast, national art was a do-it-yourself affair. Painting had no particular designated role in the young United States. As in 17th-century England, a largely Protestant constituency of patrons had a penchant for portraiture.

American artists wanting to do something else commonly took off to train in Europe, to return to a hazardous market. The painter who most effectively launched an art addressed to the growing nation was Thomas Cole. Having painting scenes around the Hudson River in the 1820s, he came back in 1832 from an encounter with London and with Turner's sweeping epics to deliver an apocalyptic historical prophecy of imperial rise and fall, couched in a cycle of five visionary landscapes. From the late 1840s, Cole's pupil Frederic Edwin Church attuned this grandiose scale of ambition to a more punctilious concern with visible fact.

The results, displayed in his New York studio to thousands who paid 25 cents for the privilege, were in every sense spectacular. Two and a half metres (eight feet) high, *The Niagara Falls from the American Side* [249] was the kind of display of controlled skill that secured respect from an otherwise art-wary public (*trompe-l'oeil* painting was another demonstration of pictorial ingenuity much cultivated in 19th-century America). The English critic Ruskin, whose sermons on truth to nature Church had read, wrote passionately about the nobility of attempting to paint water



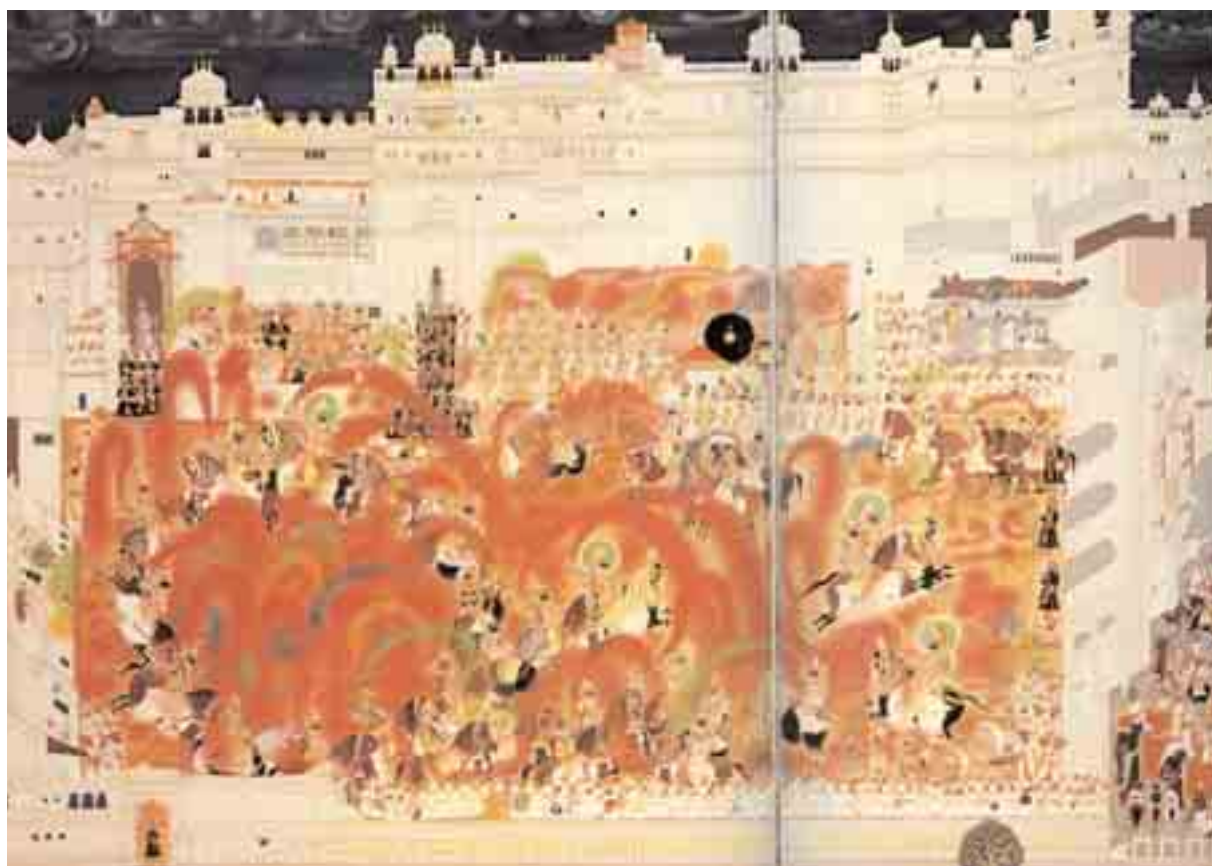
249 Frederic Edwin Church, *The Niagara Falls from the American Side*, 1867. Church's big canvases of exotic sights – of icebergs, for instance, or volcanoes in Ecuador – were meant to elevate the mind, much as earlier versions of 'the Sublime' had done (by Friedrich or Turner, for example). At the same time they were technically stunning displays of showmanship, toured from city to city in specially erected booths. Along with the 19th-century crazes for the diorama and the panorama, paintings like this paved the way for the 20th-century mass culture of the cinema.

(‘It is like trying to paint a soul’*) and, indeed, about the distinctive ‘character’ water assumed when cascading from a great height. Church’s *plein-air* sketching journeys enabled him to convey the ‘hopeless abandonment of its ponderous power to the air’ on a scale surpassing anything to be seen in Europe. (A monochrome photograph also helped prepare the groundwork for his shimmering hues; painters usually disliked admitting to this type of assistance, but by 1867 it was becoming widespread.) With his fine mesh of oils – identifying each fleck of spray, yet uniting all within a seamless convulsion – Church was aiming to paint the ‘soul’ of the vast continent to the west. New Yorkers should set their sights on the sublime wilderness that God had made available to the American nation – a vision that would surely transcend any narrowly commercial perspective.

For scale, Church added spectators on a tiny observation platform perched on the cliffside to the left. From exhibitions of awesome natural spectacle it was a short step to organized ‘tourist experiences’ and then, coming up behind them, transport infrastructures spreading like iron brambles across the land. Some of Church’s fellow painters of the ‘American Sublime’ – Alfred Bierstadt, for instance, painting the Rockies – acted as virtual advertisement agents for the westbound railroad companies. Landscape art was playing into the quickening processes of capitalist enterprise, however high-minded its practitioners. In the mid-19th century, the picture-making of industrial societies was itself becoming a Niagara onrush: ‘chromolithographs’ of popular canvases; panoramas presenting bird’s-eye views of cities; Daguerre’s ‘dioramas’; calling-card photographic portraits; shots of famous ruins; stills of the aftermath of battle in the Crimea and the American Civil War – all this besides the proliferation of caricature, scientific draughtsmanship and suchlike fields of graphic expertise. From the 1850s the deluge was joined by the craze for the stereoscope – a device that offered three-dimensional illusions by presenting both eyes with separate photos of the same scene adjusted to their varying angles of vision. Altogether, with the strings of communication and colonialism pulling ever tighter, the global ecology of art was altering. It was becoming harder for separate traditions to assert an equivalence with the culture that drove all this concerted spectating onwards – with the zone that we now call the West.

Or is that an effect of hindsight? Were there any distinctive patterns to the activity of ‘non-Western’ artists in the mid-19th century? The scattered samples I can offer come from South Asian feudalism, Oceanic tribalism, an African kingdom and the Chinese empire. In some regions, undoubtedly, it was perfectly possible to proceed at your own pace. The work of Tara,

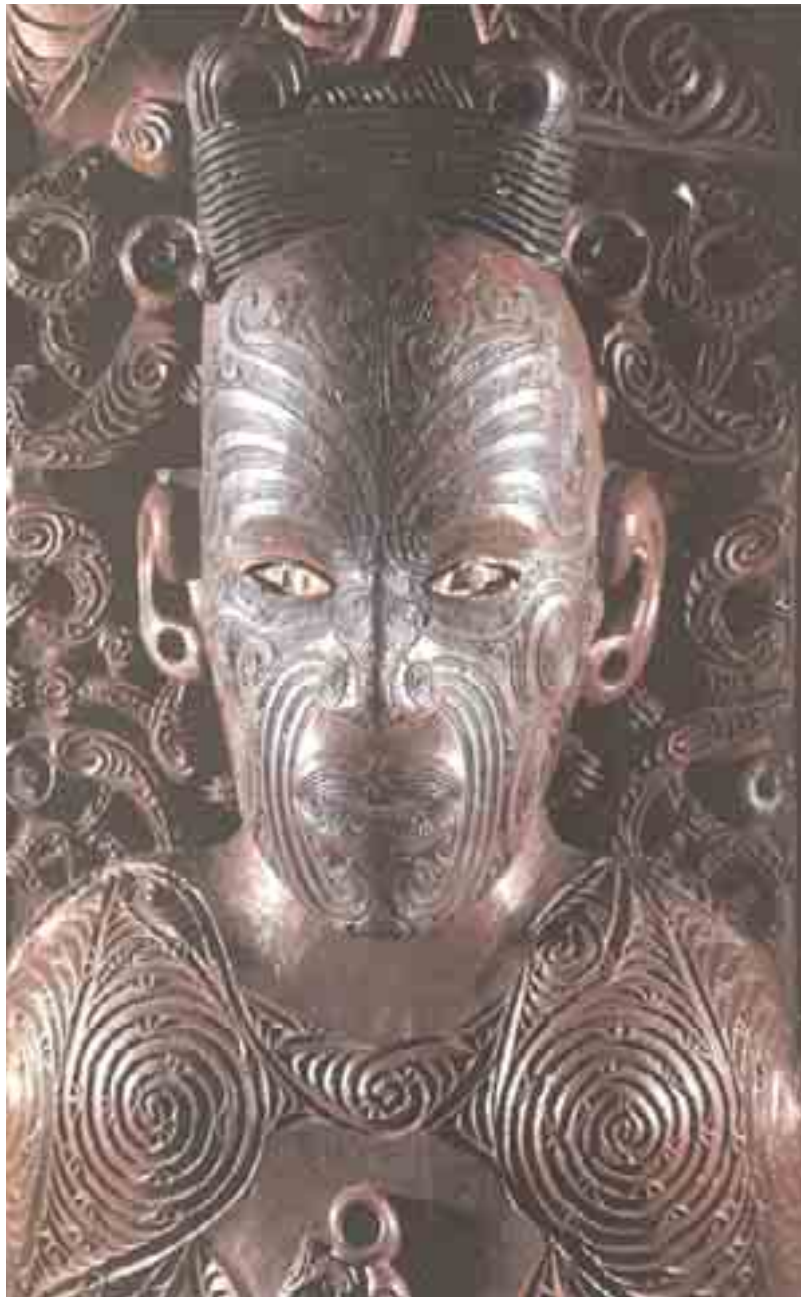
* Quotations from *Modern Painters*, vol. i (1848), part ii, section v, chapters 1 and 2.



250 Tara, *Maharana Sarup Singh Playing Holi on Horseback at the City Palace*, 1851. Indian painters on paper continued to develop their wide repertoire of body-colour techniques during the 19th century. Artists here had been concerned with faithfully itemizing factual detail ever since the days of Akbar (see p. 210). To some extent this coincided with the interests of the British colonizers, who employed them as portraitists and in painting natural history. As in other parts of Asia, the most significant challenge to local ways of picturing perspective came from the rapid spread of photography.

court artist to the Maharana of Mewar, was not in any discernible way affected by the recently established hegemony of the British over the sub-continent. While British scholars were promoting a self-justifying myth of India's decline into 'decadence' and British industrial looms were undermining the region's long hold on the international textile market (witnessed by the cashmeres that both Ingres and Holman Hunt depict), ceremonial life in the city palace of Udaipur held to the rhythms evolved over more than two centuries. Tara's presentation of the annual *holi* festival [250] as performed in 1851 used a perspectival mobility that Indian painters had developed over that period, combining a free-flying cartographer's scan with a feel for separate privacies – those of the riders outside the gate, of the balcony spectators, of the Maharana himself as he circulates around the *mêlée* within, immunized by his gold-rimmed green nimbus. Carefully planned riots, like the delirium of powder-throwing at the heart of this picture, were a speciality of 19th-century Indian painters, and others splattered battle scenes with explosions of blood-spots. While academies inculcating European techniques were being set up in Calcutta and Bombay, and the oil painter Ravi Varma did for Hindu myths what

251 Raharuhi Rukupo, self-portrait carving, 1842. Raharuhi, like the ancient kings of Ife (95), was himself a living work of art, flaunting a transformed skin. The word 'tattoo' came into European languages from Western encounters with Polynesia. However, skin decoration by one technique or another has had a place in cultures all over the world. Since skin is perishable, its history is fairly hard to track, but extremely ancient examples come from corpses preserved in ice in the Central Asian region of the Altai Mountains.



Holman Hunt was doing for the Gospels, artists in a semi-independent protectorate like Mewar (which is now part of Rajasthan) were in a position to use volumetric modelling and cast shadows at their discretion. Their distinctive spatial vision maintained a vitality well into the 20th century.

The Western nations had a different kind of mapping. It involved scientific surveys of unfamiliar cultural phenomena and the shipping of prize specimens of alien art to Europe. While museums in the capitals filled with trophies from Egypt and India, Western scholars and entrepreneurs converged on sites from the palaces of Assyria to Java's Borobudur to the Maya cities of Mexico, restoring them to the light of day. (Later on, some

252 Akati Akpele Kendo, *Agoje! (Gu, the War-God)*, c. 1859. After it left Dahomey for Paris, Akati's scrap-assembled striding figure may possibly have influenced the work of Picasso, who painted what seem variants on it in 1908–9. Another possibility is that Akati himself was influenced by sculpture from Paris: French Catholic missions were operating on the African coast before the French invasion of 1894, and the war-god's stance and the base for his feet seem to echo the look of the plaster saints that adorned their chapels.



of these sites would serve as rallying points for the anti-European nationalisms of the 20th century.) The yearning for the truly 'primitive' and 'archaic', set in motion a century before by Rousseau and Winckelmann, surged on unabated. In 1856 Owen Jones, co-designer of London's Great Exhibition, could reprove the eclectic clutter of contemporary British design by pointing to the tattooing of the far-off Maoris: this, by contrast, demonstrated 'the principles of the very highest ornamental art'.

Jones's observation was based on a shrunken head removed from New Zealand to an English museum. Such transglobal exchanges had only begun in 1769, when Captain Cook broke in on the land previously known as 'Aotearoa' after some eight hundred years of purely Polynesian occupation. British ships introduced potatoes and rifles. A tribal society shaped along Neolithic lines (see p. 30) grew in disposable wealth, and also in political rivalry. As a result, by the time British sovereignty was proclaimed in 1840, Maori carving or 'ornamental art' (one word in the language means both) was probably operating on a more ambitious scale than ever before. An outstanding exponent was the newly baptized chief Raharuhi ('Lazarus') Rukupo. His own likeness stared out with now-lost mother-of-pearl eyes from a carved post [251] of the sumptuous meeting house he constructed in 1842. The *mana* or spiritual power inherent in any such ritual ornament was redoubled here by the pattern of personal facial whorls that the carving presents.

This might not exactly be self-portraiture in the European sense, but it nonetheless employed the imported steel tools that were fast replacing obsidian. Six years later, Raharuhi's project of carving traditional panels for a vast church interior hit opposition from the missionaries who were elsewhere busy doing their best to destroy all evidence of Polynesian visual culture. Raharuhi went on to side with the uprisings against British rule whose eventual defeat would throw Maori culture into eclipse until the later 20th century. A comparable tale, of small-scale societies first thriving and then withering upon their exchanges with a culture of quite other dimensions, might be told in many places: the 19th-century totem-pole building of the Canadian Pacific could serve as another instance.

Other regions had dealt with the white men for far longer. The kingdom of Dahomey (now the Benin Republic, but over three hundred kilometres west of the Nigerian city of that name) had grown powerful through supplying them with slaves, captured in upland wars and transported to the coast. When France invaded the country in the late 19th-century 'scramble for Africa', part of the rhetoric supporting its action would be the 'uncivilized' nature of a monarchy that could sponsor pieces like this sword-wielding war god [252]. A history of the kingdom by

Edna C. Bay suggests a complicating irony. By 1859, the approximate date of the sculpture, the Europeans had mainly abandoned the slave trade, and this had shifted the basis of the Dahomean economy. Prospects for wealth now clearly lay in agriculture, in trading palm oil. With their traditional role as warrior-providers threatened, the kings reacted by shoring up their authority with an ever more elaborate and ostentatious court ceremonial.

The god Gu, protecting all who used metal and here merging with the person of King Glele, was an accomplice to this regime of precarious bravado. His embodiment could be carried aloft, to be saluted as *Agoje!* – ‘Watch out above!’ – and to inspire Dahomey’s celebrated regiments of women warriors with battlefield courage. The artist responsible was in fact one of their captives – Akati Akpele Kendo, a Yoruba from the east who was put to work in the royal smithy. Akati drew on an old and widely practised principle in African art that linked together objects in order to compound their symbolic effectiveness (compare the Ife bronzes, p. 132). He reached for the associative charges carried by used sword- and hoe-blades, casings, bolts and bells. But these he recycled into a swaggering, offbeat new icon whose actual stance, plinth and scale may well echo the statues of saints and heroes used by the French. Their invading army would find the iron man abandoned on the coast in 1894, as the Dahomean amazons retreated inland to make their final stand.

Akati’s assemblage seems borne forward by exuberance while Ren Xiong’s stylistic composite [253], made in China about three years earlier, speaks of desperation. Literally: his smooth features, popping out of jerky, dynamic robes, are accompanied by a dialogue with the mirror:

In the vast world – what lies before my eyes? In the great confusion, what is there to hold and rely on? I am still completely like a racing steed without any plans. What is worse, the historians have not even recorded a single, light word about me. ... All I can see is a boundless void.

We can only guess loosely at the circumstances that led Ren to this archetypally modern howl. He was in his thirties, possibly already dying from tuberculosis; he was a man of poor family struggling, as he wrote, to ‘smile and bow and flatter’ wealthy clients; a citizen of the Shanghai region where the humiliating Opium Wars had forced China to surrender trade concessions to the Western powers; a trainee in martial arts, involved in the region’s defence against the Taiping rebellion that was ripping the empire apart. The securities of China’s 18th century had collapsed, and with them, for an artist like Ren, the gentilities of the old-fashioned literati who refused payment for their nuanced, allusive exercises in landscape.



253 Ren Xiong, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1856.

Responding to new conditions did not in his case involve switching to Western techniques, even though by the 1850s oil painters and photographers were operating in Shanghai. Rather, in the poetic and fantasy works that made his reputation, he sampled every stylistic resource available, from classical handscrolls to commercial woodcuts, and brought them upfront in a terse, arresting, rhythmically energized street language – the basis for a new ‘Shanghai school’ of urban painting that would flourish after his death in 1857. Ren’s fractured image of himself – discarding the landscape setting that the conventions expected, backing onto nothing in a stance of sheer defiance – predicts the rhetoric of late 20th-century street culture as much as any image of its time from the West.

Freedoms and duties

France, Russia, Britain, 1860s–1880s

Europe, as Owen Jones’s criticisms suggested, had its own cultural anxieties in the mid-19th century. Witness the incessant quest for new, far-flung reference points, to which he was contributing: to correct the over-quotation of classical and Gothic art, he urged readers of his *Grammar of Ornament* to study not only the Maoris, but the art of Islam. Meanwhile in Paris, sculptors such as Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux were now resuscitating, after a century’s dismissal, the sensuous frivolity of Rococo.

What was the logic of all these alternative allusions – the ‘classical’ nymphs and ‘Gothic’ turrets and ‘Moorish’ tiles surmounting the streets, the finicky antiquarian reveries destined for Salon walls? The styles quoted in Jones’s pattern book had all, whatever their individual colorations, been created by integrated teams of craftsmen serving clearly graded social hierarchies. In the great cities of the industrial age, by contrast, the shifting masses of the bourgeois public inhabited a machine-made world of steel frames, photographs, factory textiles and ceramics. The small artisans’ workshops on which masters like Boucher or Tiepolo could rely a century before were now subsumed in the growth of a vast and potentially revolutionary urbanized working class. ‘Art’ in this context had become a floating, detached idea – an exotic flavouring to be applied to mechanical products, perhaps. Alternately, the self-contained Romantic obsession that Gautier had advocated with his catchphrase of ‘art for art’s sake’.

In the new museums, the black-suited bourgeois could admire Europe’s former elites portrayed at their ease among saints, allegories and all the appurtenances of the Christian-cum-classical tradition. But where was the art that would confer an equivalent grace on their own images? This was one of the lines of thought explored by Gautier’s younger friend



254 Edouard Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863. Four years earlier, Baudelaire had urged artists to seek out every form of 'modern beauty' in his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life'. 'In that vast picture-gallery which is life in London or Paris, we shall meet with various types of fallen womanhood. ... Some of these, examples of an innocent and monstrous self-conceit, express in their faces and their bold, uplifted glances an obvious joy at being alive (and indeed, one wonders why). Sometimes, quite by chance, they achieve poses of a daring and nobility to enchant the most sensitive of sculptors.'

Charles Baudelaire in his impassioned yet sardonic art criticism of the 1840s and 1850s. Edouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* [254] was a kind of response to it. The 31-year-old painter constructed this 'lunch on the grass', his first major bid for Salon celebrity, around Italian Renaissance reference points; he also liked to lean on Spanish painting, another recent exotic vogue. In his studio, the river gods in a design by Raphael became two members of his own respectable social stratum, out on a leisure excursion with their lower-class pick-ups. Disdaining the hard-worked detail insisted on by many an artist – such as Holman Hunt – who wanted to prove his social worth, Manet reached instead for the seemingly effortless, instantaneous tonal patterns that the lordly Velázquez (or the camera, for that matter) might lay upon a surface.

Manet nonetheless found very different levels of interest in his task, so that it possesses a composite cut-out jumpiness slightly like Ren Xiong's. The woodland and the women's bodies were stated curtly, almost dismissively, while the deep tones of the men's clothing were appreciated with a



255 Claude Monet, *Impression: Sunrise*, 1873. Monet does away with the *repoussoir*, the foreground ledge of solid earth at the canvas's base that had been a convention of European landscape painting since the 16th century. The spectator, deprived of an imaginary viewing station, is enveloped in the watery flow of Monet's oils. While Monet was painting the Seine, the American painter Whistler was hitting on rather similar compositions in his paintings of the Thames in London. Monet expanded on the vision presented here in the huge paintings of water-lily ponds that occupied his old age.

dandy's eye and the picnic with a gourmet's. But then there was the face of his model, Victorine Meurent. As Manet's own hesitations latched onto her stare, it became a lever to unhinge the whole business of looking and being looked at – not simply a naked woman blocking access to the fantasies of voyeurs, but the exhibit asking why it was an exhibit. Perhaps it was this, as much as the painting's risqué subject-matter and nonchalant manner, that fell foul of the Salon jury of 1863 and that provoked crowds into uneasy derision when it joined other supposed second-rankers at a new, officially convened alternative, the Salon des Refusés.

Notoriety in public brought the compensation of kudos among artistic radicals, even if Manet himself seemed innocently shocked by the reactions to the *Déjeuner* and to the still more provocative *Olympia*, which featured Victorine as another insolent and naked prostitute. The group of radicals in question was headed by his near-namesake Claude Monet. They admired Courbet's big statements of immediate, visible fact and they followed the

earlier Barbizon landscapists into the open country, so that their own large-scale canvases, unlike the *Déjeuner*, were painted as much as possible *en plein air*, outdoors. The results were even less well received by the Salon jury than the pictures of Manet, and from 1874 the group exhibited independently. The fragmenting of France's academic system that had begun ten years earlier with the Salon des Refusés was from this point irreversible.

Impression: Sunrise [255], painted by Monet in 1873, was the canvas that prompted one of the independent show's reviewers to give the group a label. 'Impressionism', in so far as it was a shared outlook, involved pursuing some artistic habits found not only in Manet's work but elsewhere among painters of the photography-conscious 1860s – for instance among the group known as the Macchiaioli in Florence. The oil sketch, used by earlier painters to work out tonal relations before painting an exhibition canvas, now became the exhibit itself. The painter was no longer aiming to represent objects as such, but rather to respond to a temporary pattern of stimuli to the retina. If there were no objects, there were no lines, and in effect no drawing: everything existed in colour, embodied in fluid paint. The new approach acknowledged the eye's similarity to a camera, and at the same time its difference from that picture-machine. Vision, and therefore painting, belonged to a mind – a sensibility responsive to nature's poetic suggestions – and moreover to a body possessed of a lively, tremulous hand.

Monet talked of painting 'atmosphere'. Nature in his hands was sunlight refracted through mists, smogs and ripples. Town and country subjects alike had their customary meanings suspended in a gel of flickery, rainbow-bright paint that was at once unrelenting and calmly imperious. In effect, his work suggested that in these times sheer flux could be a source of power as well as of pleasure. That was a disturbing proposition for many viewers of the 1860s and the 1870s, who hankered after a familiar sense of finish. But Monet's resources of determination and stamina led the Impressionist group forward through this lean period to a prominent place in the dealers' market that took the lead from an increasingly outflanked Salon during the 1880s. In his later career he swelled into a formidably resourced, self-willed artistic titan. The frailer Manet, who died in 1883, spasmodically followed his lead.

The Impressionists' early camaraderie on the margins is evoked by Auguste Renoir's view of his friend Monet at work in his garden in a Paris suburb [256]. The technology that launched their *plein-air* revolution is just visible on his lawn – a box of paint-tubes, shortcuts to the mixing and transporting of pigment that had come onto the market only in the late 1840s. In their later careers, Renoir's tender, shimmery touch would habitually linger around the figures of comfortable blondes, while the



256 Auguste Renoir, *Claude Monet Painting in his Garden at Argenteuil*, 1874. Argenteuil, a short train ride from central Paris, became a favoured haunt for the Impressionists and their slightly older associate Manet during the 1870s. The phenomenon of the out-of-town ‘artists’ colony’ had begun in France with the group of *plein-air* painters of forests based in Barbizon, but the Impressionists’ taste for ‘modernity’ turned them in the direction of suburbia. By 1900, most Western nations sported one such colony at least, from Skagen in Denmark to Nagybánya in Hungary.

free-floating atmospherics of Monet’s dawn river would eventually expand into an artistic universe in enormous images of his self-designed garden ponds. But at this moment both could share in a keen instinct for present, palpable pleasure. The demands of ‘history’ – both of pictorial narrative, and of debts to tradition – were at last seemingly being shaken off.

Actually, behind the fresh-eyed innocence of these pictures yet another exotic reference point can be discerned. After Commander Perry forced Japan to open up trade with the West in 1854, trophies from that remote alternative civilization became a European obsession, soon dubbed *japonisme*. Monet’s high viewpoint, his earth-free palette and even his solar disc may all owe something to prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige offloaded at the Le Havre dockside that he depicts across the Seine’s waters.* *Ukiyo-e* prompted new pictorial tactics among Western oil painters because they were just unfamiliar enough. Here was another self-

* The trade would be reciprocated: with the post-Perry national switch of direction, Japanese artists like Kuroda Seiki were producing Impressionist oils by the 1890s.

absorbed, deeply sophisticated urban society, but one in which the unofficial viewpoint had been nurtured more keenly for its own sake. Utamaro and Hokusai were freer to cultivate their sidelong, cunning glances, and Hiroshige his nonchalant stroller's poetry, because nothing in Japanese aesthetics required of them the emphasis on modelling and illusionistic light and shade that Western artists were expected to work with.

The succinct, witty, near-and-far cropping techniques coming from Edo helped to catalyse images as novel as Edgar Degas's *Place de la Concorde* [257]. Before this canvas of 1875, no one in Europe had gone quite so far in shuffling figures in and out of a rectangle until they cohered only negatively, in a clutch of irregular intervals. From where we stand, the result feels like a camera snapshot, but it seems more likely that Degas was predicting the look of a type of photograph that would not come into circulation for another ten years. In doing so, he was giving shape to the detached saunter and the transient impression that – at least for Parisians who had read Baudelaire's essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1859) – encapsulated the very essence of contemporary urban experience.

Degas had a private income, like his near-contemporary Manet and like his friend Vicomte Lepic, here seen walking the town with his snooty little daughters and the pride of his kennels. His engagement with art was

257 Edgar Degas, *Place de la Concorde*, 1875. 'Cut things a lot' – Degas, in his private notebooks. 'For a dancer do either the arms or the legs. ... Do all kinds of common objects, so arranged and contextualized that they have the *life* of men and women. ... No one has ever done monuments or houses seen from low down, from beneath, close to, as one sees them passing on the streets.' And so on – memos on how to unlock new ways of picturing the world, how to make art closer to immediate psychological experience. Not all of them were pursued, but, Degas told himself, 'we will amuse ourselves as eruditely as possible'.



that of a passionate intellectual speculator rather than that of a career builder, and his exhibiting with Monet's group did not involve adopting their ethos. No sunlight is seen to shine on his Paris square, and the touch of his brush was spare and self-questioning rather than sensual. In fact, the casual, off-key, uningratiating angles from which Degas elsewhere drew ballet dancers or women bathing were always, he claimed, the result of intensely deliberated art. His version of modernity was wisened up and history-laden. If – so went his attitude – no 'serious' artist in the late 19th century could hope to maintain the idealism and the linear perfectionism of his idol Ingres, then the option that remained was to brood instead on the irresolvable in-between of figures and expressions and marks themselves – to explore fatigue, distaste and even boredom. As with Menzel in Berlin, obsessional draughtsmanship and an instinct for the problematic generated an oeuvre in which the breaks outnumber the joins. The most pungently witty, indeed the most passionately intelligent of 19th-century French artists thrived on pessimism as the main creative motivator, in a metropolis where religion and Romanticism had become all but irrelevant.

In 1870 Menzel's homeland had inflicted a shock defeat on that of Degas: the Franco-Prussian War of that year sparked off a further Paris revolution, which was eventually crushed with great brutality by the French state. But of that public trauma almost no glimmer appears in the work of the Impressionist exhibitors. (Monet temporarily fled to London: the *Impression* also reflects his study of Turner's work in the National Gallery.) Artistic freedom for Monet, Renoir or Degas did not entail political answerability in the way that it had for Courbet. Rather, it meant that artists could shake off outmoded allusions and idealisms to paint whatever in the contemporary world might captivate their individual poetic temperaments – whether that were a snowy hillside, a railway cutting, a pretty girl on the boulevard or (in Degas's case) a drunken whore scratching herself. The *nostalgie de la boue* – 'hankering after the mud' – of which conservatives sometimes accused such artists was fuelled by a passion for sincerity rather than by materialism – that is, 'Realist' – concerns with raw earth and hard work.

Nonetheless, the issue of art's relation to politics repeatedly surfaced throughout later 19th-century Europe. 'Social Realism' had its notable French and British exponents,* but nowhere did it play a more influential role than in Russia. Painting in oils there had paralleled or aped many developments in the West since the inauguration of the St Petersburg Academy in 1757. A lofty Neoclassicism had long been the approved mode

* In France, confusingly, 'Naturalism' was the term used for Realist painting a generation on from Courbet, in the hands of artists such as Jules Bastien-Lepage.



258 Ilya Repin, *Barge Haulers on the Volga*, 1870–73. Gangs of *burlaki*, the supposed singers of the famous *Volga Boat Song*, had hauled boats north up the great river for centuries – in fact, by 1870 this was a workforce in decline, as steam power was taking over. Repin dramatized his first encounter with them much later, in his memoirs: ‘What rags! Their chests are red from rubbing against the towropes, bare and sunburnt. ... Their sweaty faces shine and their shirts are all black! Now they are coming closer, these human beasts of burden. You cannot imagine a more painterly subject!’

of the Academy itself, which kept up a strong restraining role in accordance with state policies – even if genre scenes of charming domestic comedy went down rather better with the St Petersburg public. The government-instilled atmosphere of repression started to ease after the tsar’s liberation of the serfs in 1861. Nonetheless, a declaration of independence from the Academy could still earn an artist a place in the files of the secret police. The young artists who took that step – known from 1870 as the *peredvizhniki*, or ‘wanderers’ – were spurred on by a moralizing critic, Vladimir Stasov. Stasov believed that the ‘intelligentsia’ – the literate St Petersburgers so precariously perched at Russia’s western window – needed to draw sustenance from the inarticulate life of the masses in the great hinterland to the east.

Following Stasov’s advice, Ilya Repin, a young *peredvizhnik*, travelled to the distant Volga River in 1870 to sketch the ongoing exploitation of the supposedly emancipated peasantry. His muscular draughtsmanship and human curiosity gave the critic’s hypotheses their most resounding vindication. The clothes and grimaces of Repin’s eleven *Barge Haulers* [258] open out onto eleven separate, individuated hard-luck stories. (Or ten, if we exclude the indignant fair-haired youth who raises his head and, along with it, the whole tone of the indictment – as if to say, this sullen suffering shall not last for ever.) Yet these individuals unite under the sweat and scorch of a continental July to drive a single massive wedge forward, out into the viewing space of Repin’s St Petersburg audience. The sheer purposeful momentum of the image was such as to pull the *peredvizhnik* group around Repin in a Realist direction for two decades.



259 Edward Burne-Jones, *The Golden Stairs*, 1876–80. Burne-Jones's ethereal damsels are extrapolated from Florentine art of Botticelli's era (127), although it is said that each face was modelled from an individual acquaintance of the artist's. When the painting was exhibited in London, it created a fashionable look for 'the Aesthetic Maiden': pale and soulful became the way for girls to project themselves in society. 'Whenever one goes to a private view or a salon one sees ... the sweet maidenhood of *The Golden Stair*', wrote Oscar Wilde in 1891. 'It has always been so. A great artist invents a type and Life tries to copy it, to reproduce it in a popular form, like an enterprising publisher.'

Ironically, when he took off to Paris after the picture's success in 1873, Repin discovered how agreeable it was to shake off the critic Stasov as well as the state police, and laid claim to his own freedom from political answerability. Yet he returned to use his dramatic gifts as a kind of national conscience. In Russia, the claims of the community at large had possessed an almost sacred importance ever since the days of that other great gold-and-blue emblem, Andrei Rublev's *Trinity* [see 114]. Others of the *peredvizhniki* fixed their sights on the vast horizons visible behind Repin's Volga barges. Their landscapes of the 'fatherland' matched Church's visions of the American wilderness in epic panoramic ambition. Here, in fact, we see the direction in which the political imagination tended to steer from the 1870s onwards, and not only in Russia. Nationalism became the great heart-stirrer, whether in the hands of Jan Matejko painting scenes of Polish history in Russian-occupied Warsaw, in the Mexican sublime of José Maria Velasco's landscapes, or in the new Australian self-consciousness generated by Tom Roberts' scenes of sheep-ranching.

An alternative account of the artist's responsibilities had meanwhile arisen in Britain. The home of the Industrial Revolution also housed its most indignant critics. One of these was Ruskin, moving on from his advocacy of founder-member Pre-Raphaelites like Holman Hunt. With the Romantic idea in his mind that people derived their spiritual strength from the experience of nature, Ruskin asked what was left to supply it, since factories, mines and railways had supplanted meadows, woods and streams. A design partnership set up in 1861 by two Oxford graduates took note of his demand. William Morris, making Gothic tapestry the model for his wallpapers, and Edward Burne-Jones, designing stained glass with an eye to Sienese and Florentine prototypes, jointly supplied a conceivable answer. If nature could not be summoned back to restore sanity to the townscape, 'art' could. Art could rush to the rescue of the battered urban soul, bearing balm from distant pastures. Pastures so distant, in fact, that they had last been sighted long before Raphael's day – but from that remoteness art could bring back flowers and fair maidens, making beauty present in the brutal here and now.

This second-generation Pre-Raphaelitism was thus in stark contrast to that of Holman Hunt, with his cluttered insistent allegories. In Burne-Jones's *The Golden Stairs* [259] nothing means anything. Its progression of Botticelli-like damsels could just about stand, if we so wish, for the transition from girl to woman, but Burne-Jones scrupulously avoided giving clues that would clinch any particular interpretation. More likely, the keynote to this descending sequence comes from a sentiment expressed by the English academic Walter Pater in 1873: 'All art constantly aspires towards

260 Frédéric Bartholdi, *Statue of Liberty*, 1884–86, Liberty Island, New York. Bartholdi, creator of the 46-metre (150-foot) landmark, began conceiving of sculpture on a titanic scale after visiting the ruins of ancient Egypt. He set a precedent for 20th-century monster monuments such as Yevgeny Vuchetich's Stalingrad Memorial, or the still-ongoing carving of a South Dakota mountain into a statue of the Sioux leader Crazy Horse, which was intended by its initiator Korczak Ziolkowski to stand as the world's largest sculpture.



the condition of music.' Pater's remark came in a study of Renaissance artists that helped inspire a new fashion in idealism. The 1870s – Impressionist in Paris, Social Realist in St Petersburg – were in London the heyday of an 'Aesthetic' cult that sought out 'the beautiful' in all arts, beauty for its own sake. It would flourish into the 1890s, taken up by writers such as Oscar Wilde and graphic artists such as Aubrey Beardsley. We might even see *The Golden Stairs* as a languorous variation on an analogy with music cherished by Poussin and by Indian painters, a theme of synaesthesia that would later influence the rise of abstract painting.

Morris's activities branched out in other directions. He was concerned not only with industry's displacement of nature but also with its banishment of the traditional artisan. Effectively he came to reinvent that role, both in his practice and his preaching. This son of a banker applied his hands to the loom and the workbench, and 'craft' took up a newly privileged status as an exemplary remedy to society's fissures. Design movements in Britain and the United States would take up his cue. Morris also outlined a socialism of creativity in which the formats and handiwork of the peasant and of the powerless masses, those who have had so little part in this history, would be valued on a level with the masterpieces catching the eyes of the mighty. It remains a prospect.

Acceleration

USA, France, 1880s–1900

'Statue-mania': that was the great conduit for community aspirations in the course of the 19th century. It was an age when monuments to rulers, benefactors, legendary founders or lamented heroes sprouted in every available urban space. Below the big somebody who perched or strutted or pleaded or grieved, friezes on a plinth would underline the refrains of nationalism or of civic pride, accompanied by ornamental embellishments neoclassical, neo-Gothic, neo-Baroque. From the Russian and British empires to the now independent nations of Latin America, the skills of the modeller and the plaster-caster were employed to satisfy commissioning committees keen on historical allusiveness and on technological legerdemain. Both were followed by the bronze-founder and the marble-carver, enlarging on their maquettes. The ultimate apotheosis of this great outpouring of constructive energy, the most resilient emblem of an era of public earnestness that now seems faintly remote, was New York's *Statue of Liberty* [260]. A gift from the French to the American Republic, the streamlined neoclassical giantess was transported in sections of beaten copper from the Paris workshops of Frédéric Bartholdi in

261 Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Shaw Memorial*, Beacon Street, Boston, 1884–1900.



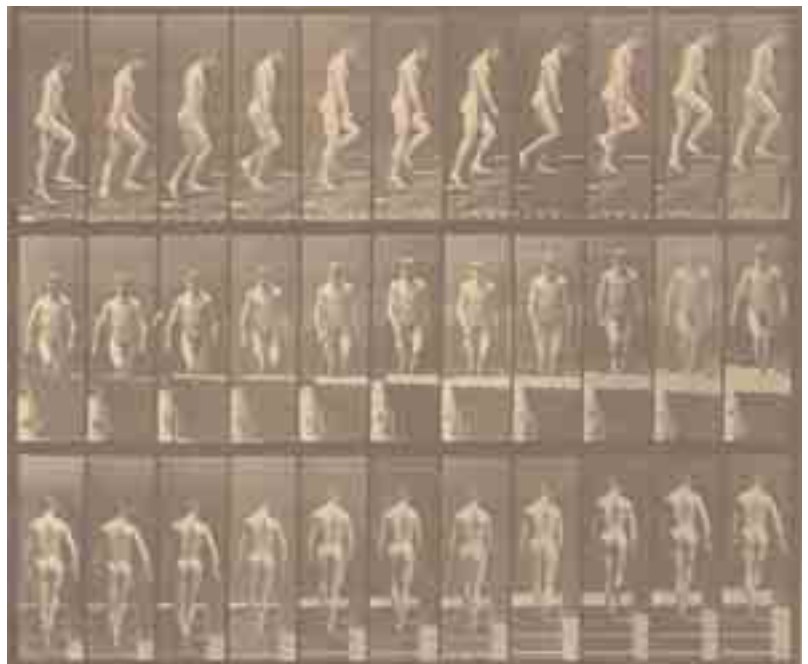
1886 and assembled in New York harbour on an armature designed by the engineer Gustave Eiffel, otherwise best known for the tower he designed for Paris's Exposition Universelle of 1889.

The idea of an American project – to transplant old Europe's aspirations, to reorient, restructure and give them fresh life – was taking on a new concreteness as transatlantic immigration quickened in pace. At the same time this was in some sense a traumatized nation. The most potent rhetoric to translate the agonies of the 1860s Civil War into the self-confidence of the late 19th-century 'Gilded Age' came from the Irish-born sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Study in Florence and Paris had acquainted him with the reliefs of Donatello and Ghiberti. Could not America's historical moment be reinterpreted in terms of the Italian Renaissance? In 1884 Saint-Gaudens began what became sixteen years' work on a frieze monument for Boston's Town Common [261]. His efforts commemorated Colonel Shaw, the son of a prominent Boston family who had led out a regiment of African-American volunteers in a brave but doomed attack on a fort of the slave-owning southerners. The sculptor worked from life studies of African-American soldiers, granting them an individuality rarely seen in academic art before. Not through empathy or affection, however: rather, through scrupulous respect for 'truth', the same spirit of keen, probing enquiry that seemed to drive Donatello when he designed *The Feast of Herod* [see 118]. But above the marchers and their mounted white commander a sorrowing angel wafts down from the softer end of Florentine fantasy, one more typically represented by the likes of Botticelli. She blesses them with an olive-crown of peace and clutches

poppies to her breast, emblems of evanescence and of opium dreams, as if all these deaths might transmute into some beautiful unreality.

America was there for the inventing, and by the post-Civil War period it was America that was doing the inventing. It had eclipsed Britain as a centre for technological innovation and was pulling ahead of Germany, advantaged by the makeshift novelty of many of its social structures. Over on the West Coast in 1872, Leland Stanford, the entrepreneur who had built the Pacific railroad, asked a photographer named Eadweard Muybridge to settle a question concerning his racehorses. Muybridge was an immigrant from England who had passed the previous six years pointing his camera at the wilds of California and Alaska, one of a generation of epic landscape photographers. Stanford's question to him was this: when his horses galloped, did all four of their feet actually leave the ground together? Devising a shutter mechanism sufficiently swift to resolve the issue took Muybridge five years – a process prolonged by his trial (and acquittal by a sympathetic jury) for murdering his wife's lover. The results, however, brought the photographer instant celebrity. To everyone's astonishment, the flying gallop familiar to art since the days of the Assyrians [see 42] turned out to have no correspondence to nature. Whatever people thought they saw, the hooves only lifted together when bunched. Fêted internationally for this discovery, Muybridge was lured to Philadelphia, the base of America's most rigorous academic Realist, Thomas Eakins.

262 Eadweard Muybridge, *Males (Nude): Ascending Stairs*, plate 88 of *Animal Locomotion*, 1887. The 'normal' nude, flawless and beautiful, had long been a basic element in sculpture and painting; now, in the 1880s, it entered photography. It is interesting that while Muybridge's friend at Philadelphia, the painter Thomas Eakins, was dismissed from his job for offending puritanical American sensibilities in his work with live models, Muybridge's encyclopaedic inspection of naked males and females met with nothing but praise. His publication was too expensive to be a danger to public morality; besides, it belonged with 'science'.



‘Realism’ in Eakins’ case was an agenda that required the artist to truly master the structures he depicted – a 19th-century intellectual muscularity for which we have already seen precedents in Menzel, Church and Repin, as well as in Saint-Gaudens. Human bodies being Eakins’ chief subject – explored in majestically sombre portraiture and in operating-theatre dramas, as if by a Velázquez retrained as a lab technician – he encouraged Muybridge to launch a project that involved some twenty thousand shots and that was eventually published in 1887 under the title *Animal Locomotion* [262]. The photographer persuaded physically exemplary specimens of the human animal (plus a few ‘abnormal’ ones) to perform characteristic sequences of action against a background grid, and shot them at tenth-of-a-second intervals. Muybridge described his work as an ‘investigation’, and indeed it constituted ‘pure science’, in so far as it lacked any functional agenda. What on earth was the need for this spectacular image-splurge? By the same token, of course, one might call it pure art. Either way, the principle stood: if it could be visualized, it should be visualized. It also drove forward Muybridge’s proto-cinematic experiments with moving pictures (the ‘zoetrope’). Naked-eye experience, hand-and-memory experience, familiar habits of vision and making – all these were now being insistently challenged. The momentum of technology was overruling all constraints.

You may note the faintly daft affinity between Muybridge’s scientific progressions and Burne-Jones’s musical sequences, and dismiss it as the author playing jokes with his image library. Not entirely. In the late 19th century repetition was emerging as an artistic principle in its own right – Monet, for instance, started organizing his landscape views in series from 1890, treating the same subject at different times of day or of season, while Degas took to cutting and pasting detached figure studies, teasing out their combined aesthetic resonances. What I am suggesting is that there was a surplus of motives for this new development. Mechanization and musical aestheticism overlapped, however much Burne-Jones might have turned his back on industrialism: they ‘overdetermined’ the look of new art, to use the jargon of Marxist historians. This is a pattern that will become entirely characteristic in art history the nearer it gets to the present. It is doubtless an effect of close-focus perspective, of having too much information rather than too little. But, as a rule, for any given phenomenon of the emerging field we now call ‘modernism’ there will be more explanations than we strictly need.

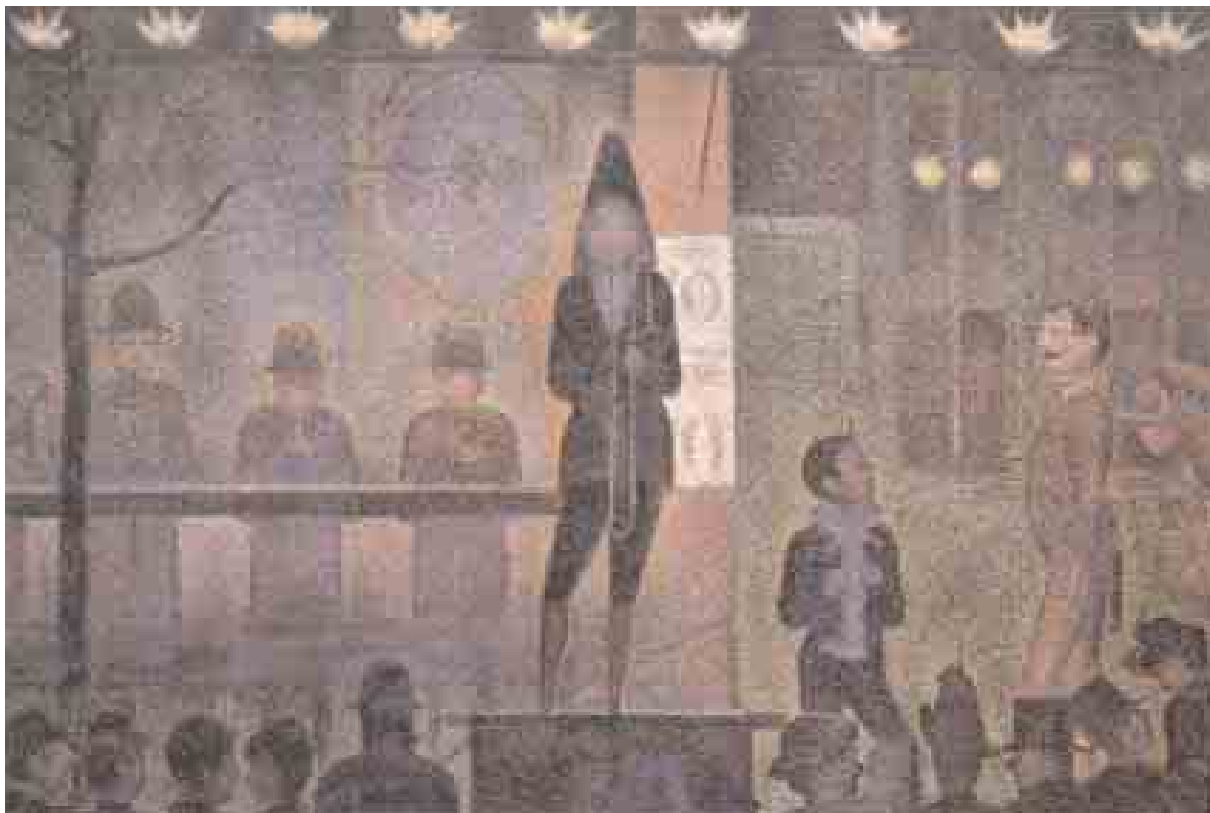
How does modernism start to emerge? At the risk of adding abstraction to abstraction, let’s recapitulate some of the leading artistic agendas floating around at the beginning of the 1880s. There were:

- (1) Idealism, seeking order and reason behind appearances (the tradition associated with the linear art of Ingres)
- (2) Realism – with a capital R – concerned with matter, physical experience and, by extension, with the political interests of the working classes (prime figurehead: Courbet)
- (3) Impressionism, intent to catch vision on the wing, just in the process of happening (see Monet)
- (4) Aestheticism, treating beauty alone as art's objective (Burne-Jones)
- (5) Romanticism – the objectless spiritual urgency of Delacroix (as of 1880 a distinctly marginalized cause)

All these ideas might seem at odds with one another, and yet soon they would overlap and cross-fertilize to create further 'isms' in an acceleration of innovation that matched what was happening in industry.

All those ideas had a certain currency across Europe and the States, but the chief rendezvous for their encounters was Paris, with its unique abundance of dealers and art schools. From the 1830s, bohemian life there had encouraged a risk-taking 'anything goes' mentality. In 1884 the twitchy trend-chasing of the metropolis induced some pranksters led by the wit Alphonse Allais to stage a spoof show of 'Incoherent Art'. A sheet of blank white board was exhibited under the heading *First Communion of Anaemic Girls in Snowy Weather*. One *Intentionist Painting* consisted of just that, a title. By this point the Impressionists – the butt of the jokes, perhaps – were already moving upwards into moneyed respectability. The talk of Parisian artists' cafés was turning towards fresh potential leaders for what would gradually become known as 'the avant-garde'.

From 1886, at the age of twenty-seven, Georges Seurat became the latest word: a painter of singular discipline, an individual of singular reticence. Waves of artistic imitation and critical irritation spread out around his challenging new exhibits. What provoked these reactions? On the most immediate level, all the expressive flecks and dabs of Monet's and Renoir's brushes had been superseded by a steady weave of small dots – particles of colours straight from the tube, laid side by side so as to mingle in the viewer's eye. This remorselessly mechanical technique supposedly traced the vision of colour back to its roots in the spectrum, obeying the analyses of recent optical science. The Impressionists had been content with the momentary incidentals of life, but Seurat said that he wanted modern phenomena 'stripped to their essentials'. He was exceptional among the artistic community in admiring (and in sketching) the soaring clean lines of Eiffel's futuristic tower when it rose above the skyline in 1889.



263 Georges Seurat, *Parade (Circus Sideshow)*, 1887–88. Seurat's methods of applying colour were derived from the 19th-century optical theories described in Charles Blanc's *Grammaire des arts décoratifs*. Blanc also commended Egyptian art, which is probably the guiding influence behind this strangely flattened design. The nearest analogue to Seurat's mood might be 'Soir du carnaval', a poem by his contemporary Jules Laforgue. The poet hearkens to 'the din of gaslit Paris' at 1 am, its singing and dancing, its dead drunk workmen wandering home. Yet he harks back to 'those fanfares of pride with which history resounds / Babylon, Memphis, Benares, Thebes, Rome ...' 'Ah!', he sighs, 'what a banal destiny!'

Seurat revered past masters of structural economy like Ingres and Piero della Francesca, but he also delved into the novel science of psychology to explore the impact of colour and line on the brain and the relationship this might have with music. He plotted his compositions accordingly. In the canvas shown here, *Parade* [263], he wrested the solemnity of an antique frieze from a bandstand placed outside a circus in a working-class quarter of Paris. The nine gas flares and the hooded trombonist lend the image the symmetries of a ritual. A half-absurd, lugubrious sort of ritual – a closed circle of artificialities, a ricochet of stimuli, a performance that insinuates that nothing much is real or palpable any more. How might all this bear on the realities of working-class life? What kind of irony, derisive or compassionate, lay behind Seurat's flattened and mechanized dolls? That remained a matter for speculation when meningitis suddenly carried off the artist in 1891. By then, Seurat's 'Divisionist' or 'Pointillist' separations of colour had begun to flourish among other painters in France, Italy, Holland and Belgium, where his air of covert political radicalism flowered into more explicit avowals of anarchism.

But by 1891 artists on Paris's inside loop were talking quite as much about Paul Gauguin, a 43-year-old former stockbroker who had left job and family to commit himself to a bohemian ideal of the artistic life. This

trajectory was taking him from an early Impressionist training into ever further-reaching quests after the archaic and primitive. Having already painted in rural Brittany and Provence and in Martinique in the West Indies, Gauguin was holding a farewell sale that spring before taking ship for a two-year stay in Tahiti. In 1895 he would set out again to spend the final eight years of a poverty- and disease-ridden career in the South Pacific. Gauguin's artistic direction had already been set, however, in the late 1880s, while he lodged with other hard-up artists in the Breton fishing village of Pont-Aven. It was here that a new cultural trend catalysed his work.

French culture had been predominantly secular from the time of the Revolution, and it had dismissed Romantic hankerings after 'the spiritual' from its mainstream after the advent of Realism around 1850. In the 1880s, however, they were finding a fresh voice in writers such as Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé. 'Symbolism', as the movement was soon called, leant on the new psychology and was also sustained by a revived, nationalistic enthusiasm for the Catholic Church. Its advocates gathered up previously marginalized artistic phenomena – Pierre Puvis de Chavannes's murals of classical arcadias, Odilon Redon's fantastical drawings – and brought them into the cultural foreground, proclaiming an outright opposition to the everyday and the factual. As the Symbolist manifesto of 1886 affirmed, the aim of art should be to submit the visible to the service of the invisible – the greater reality.

The Vision after the Sermon [264] of 1888 was Gauguin's response to this agenda, probably painted at much the same time as Seurat's equally 'hieratic' image ('sacred-looking', in other words: repeating, frontal, stiff, like the art of ancient Egypt or Persia or Byzantium – a value increasingly in vogue from this point). It shows Breton villagers gazing in at a mental image they all seem to see after listening to their priest, who has been preaching on the biblical text of Jacob wrestling with the angel. Gauguin as it were leant his own imagination over their shoulders, a jaded townsman wanting to see as they saw. Their 'rustic and superstitious simplicity' was a quality of spirit that might transcend the dowdy dispassion of suburban sideshow spectators. Gauguin also leant on the stained glass of medieval churches for the closed-off fields of intense colour, and on Japanese prints for the designs of the apple tree and the wrestlers. He could not wholly surrender to these influences – the learnt habit of giving the figures a certain depth of modelling kept showing through. Nonetheless, with this picture he established a new foothold on non-naturalistic territory.

There was a latent public aspect to Gauguin's Symbolism. Rather like William Morris re-educating himself as a weaver, Gauguin tried his hand at pottery and wood-carving, a painter resuming contact with neglected



264 Paul Gauguin, *The Vision after the Sermon*, 1888. The Breton village of Pont-Aven was excitingly alien territory to the cosmopolitan ex-stockbroker, struggling towards artistic independence, who lodged there in 1888 – as strange and captivating, in its seemingly medieval piety, as the art of distant Japan. Gauguin spliced studies of local women and their priest with motifs of wrestlers, a tree and a cow adapted from the prints of Hokusai. The field of vermillion that brings them together was a radical departure from the pictorial practices around him.

ancient skills. A younger artist named Paul Sérusier, having sat at Gauguin's feet in Pont-Aven, took his recipe for radical simplicity – 'How do you see these trees? They are yellow. Well then, put down yellow' – back to an eager circle of young Paris artists who styled themselves 'les Nabis' – 'the prophets'. In the early 1890s the Nabis transferred the patchwork-colour approach (*cloisonnisme*) to poster design and to folding screens, Japanese in manner, Parisian in content. In all this, there was a loose but fervent desire to extend the domain of art, to roll back the insentient deadliness of the capitalist system, to use 'decoration' as a virtual political weapon. Again, the idea of anarchism appealed, a utopian gleam on the horizon of the century to come.

Yet art remained a desperately personal quest for Gauguin, as the allegories he painted in Tahiti made clear. Still more so for Vincent van Gogh, the Dutch painter he joined for three stormy months in Provence after finishing the *Vision* in 1888. Like Gauguin, van Gogh had sought out painting as a kind of personal salvation, in his case after abandoning an early calling to preach among the poor. But the two-man artistic community van Gogh attempted to create in the radiance of the South notoriously

265 Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night*, 1889. Like Gauguin in his *Vision*, van Gogh spliced images in this modestly sized canvas. A peasant village from his native Holland nestles under the jagged mountains and cypresses to be seen around the Provençal town of St-Rémy, where he was at this point a resident in a mental hospital. The pattern of stars around the Milky Way is an astronomy of van Gogh's own invention. As his letters reveal, he, like Gauguin, was possessed by the attempt to create a new spirituality within art.

collapsed when extreme mental strain led him to take a knife to his own ear, causing Gauguin to flee in alarm. Twenty months after the crisis of December 1888, a recurrence of his disturbances dragged van Gogh to suicide, aged 38, just at the point when ten years of strenuous devotion to art were beginning to be rewarded with critical recognition.

The *Starry Night* [265], painted in the interval during his stay in a mental hospital in St-Rémy-de-Provence in 1889, might seem a climax to the spiritual turbulence that had driven van Gogh onward from painting the poor of Holland, via an encounter with Japanese prints and Impressionism in Paris, to a fervid engagement with the light and colour of southern France. 'Visionary', we might tend to say in front of this canvas; 'hallucinatory', even. But to Theo van Gogh, the art dealer brother who remained Vincent's chief confidant in the course of a passionate sequence of letters, this view of galactic swirls set over Provençal mountains, themselves set over an imaginary Dutch village, was rather too much a concoction of mere 'style'. Theo preferred the fierce, taut tussles his



brother was having with the flowers and fields and faces directly before him. The fact that there was talking space between the brothers, allowing this criticism to be made, suggests that the *Starry Night* was not actually the involuntary outpouring of a madman or a seer. More likely it was the outcome of a determination to create a symbol as embracing as anything Gauguin could deliver without falling back on the archaic mythologies favoured by his sometime friend. Gripping at the sky with his paint's ribs and grooves, van Gogh projected what he called 'a more wilful design than trompe-l'oeil exactitude' onto the sole reality immune to the 19th century's relentless changes. After his death, this plunge into the rhythms of the cosmos would rise up as the era's most exultant icon.

Wilfulness

Denmark, Norway, France, Mexico, 1890s–1900

What does it mean, to look out at the world? The question, lent a particular urgency by the advent of the camera, made the speculative oil painting practised centuries before by Velázquez and Vermeer seem compelling once again to 19th-century viewers. The latter was 'rediscovered' by the French critic Théophile Thoré in the 1840s, and his career of silent meditation was paralleled – as much by instinct as by imitation – by the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi from the late 1880s onwards. An early canvas of Hammershøi's [266] seems even more resistant to paraphrase than Vermeer's *Milkmaid* [see 188]. A certain woman is there, across the room, separated from the artist by a chair. She has her own concerns, and we shall not know them. That is enough: it is enough that we may settle our eyes in that direction. The language for this statement, so terse and yet so strangely lyrical, is tonal, running the gamut from silvery whites to luscious blacks. Like another would-be perfectionist, the American artist James Whistler who was currently painting river scenes and portraits in London, Hammershøi eschews the feast of brilliant chemicals now available from the artist's colourman. But as with the spectrum-roving Impressionists, everything is suspended in, or created from, an overall weave of buzzing brush movements, an atmosphere that sets viewer and figure apart.

A national precedent for Hammershøi's sensuous austerity could be found in Christoffer Eckersberg [see 238], painting in Denmark two generations before. The younger painter's career has often been slotted into a broader Scandinavian art world that burgeoned in the late 19th century. But the style contrasts within any such regional affiliation were just as sharp as those evident within Paris. Not far to the north, in the Norwegian capital of Christiania (now Oslo), another youth of good family named

266 Vilhelm Hammershøi, *Study of a Woman*, 1888.



Edvard Munch was crashing his way through the local bohemian scene while Hammershøi was quietly pondering his Copenhagen interiors. Munch went on to spend time in avant-garde milieus in Paris, where he absorbed the work of Gauguin and van Gogh, and in Berlin, where in 1893 he delivered himself of *The Scream* [267]. He had already written repeatedly about the image he intended to evoke, a memory from Christiania:

I was walking with two friends and the sun set and the heavens suddenly turned to blood and my friends continued walking. I stopped by the fence, deathly tired. Over the cold blue fjord and city was a flaming reddish yellow, and I felt a huge scream course through nature.

Scrawnily, scratchily, he blurted his singular experience onto cheap cardboard, turning van Gogh's pantheism inside out. All is horribly immediate: the world out there is none other than the 'blood' pounding in his veins. The far horizon whips back elastically, conspiring with the suburban walkway to squeeze the mind into gasping out its own emptiness. Throughout his early life Munch had lapped up pain from bereavements and estrangements; now in Berlin a bohemian desperado lifestyle helped whip up the desperate pace of attack needed for this fine-honed communication of derangement. It soon achieved popularity as an icon for a new world-view, one in which everything was at once inward-to-the-mind and alien, at once makeshift and all-engulfing – an ethos in which the boundaries of art and life began to blur. Friedrich Nietzsche, the self-proclaimed prophet of such a future ('The "real world" – an idea no longer of any use ... let us abolish it!'), had put down his pen in 1889, succumbing to terminal madness. Munch, rather against the odds, would paint on until 1944, achieving a niche in German avant-garde consciousness through his status as an outlandish urgent visionary from the far north.

'This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!' It was as if Nietzsche's pronouncements scrunched together possibilities hinted at by Impressionism: that all was flux, that 'temperament' was the only possible medium for human vision. What Hammershøi resisted, van Gogh with his 'more wilful design' had insisted: we put ourselves into whatever we see. It was an associate of the Impressionists, Paul Cézanne, who brought the ambiguities of that attitude most powerfully to the fore. Cézanne, coming up to Paris from his native Provence in 1861, had worked with the group in his youth. Rather in the manner of Courbet before him, he positioned himself within their company as the awkward provincial, coming at what he painted with an abrupt and bearish attack, stretching the value of 'sincerity' to its limits. From the later 1870s he was mainly

back in Provence, developing his work in solitude, so that it had become something of an unknown quality when Gauguin discovered it a decade later – in fact, Cézanne only really became a name in Paris after the dealer Ambroise Vollard took him up in 1894. As a result, slightly marginalized subcurrents in the French imagination resurfaced in novel form towards the century's end. The instinct for solidity shown by Courbet had been translated, in canvases such as this 1897 view of a quarry in Provence [268], into an engagement with a *plein-air* scene laid directly before the eyes.

Here too everything is drastically immediate. A strategy evolved during Cézanne's Provençal retreat has led him to build up the flanks of rock and foliage out of transparent hatchings of orange and green, laid to shimmer on the white of the canvas primer. They swell forward into full presence and merge back into indistinction, for this canvas represents a field of vision, and in such a spread of stimuli, according to Impressionist doctrine, there was no such thing as a line. The heat and the dapple of the

267 Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, 1893. This image went through several stages before Munch could hit the note that struck him as authentic to his own remembered experience. In a sense, his problem was one that had preoccupied Rembrandt: how to convey in physical form the feeling of consciousness, the feeling of feeling anything at all. The invention of the screaming head, surely the most quoted in all of modern art, was probably inspired by a Peruvian Inca mummy that was on show in an exhibition while Munch was in Paris.





268 Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire from the Bibémus Quarry*, c. 1897.

'We must render the image of what we see, forgetting everything that existed before us.' Thus wrote Cézanne in a letter to a younger painter. What Cézanne *chooses* to see is a selection of cherished reference points: the fruit and vessels on his studio table, the bathers in his mind's eye and, as here, the landscape of his homeland. 'The vibrating sensations rendered by this good soil of Provence' become his imaginative nourishment. This canvas finds him inside an abandoned quarry, confronting the mountain profile that takes on an obsessional importance for him. 'Will I ever attain the end for which I have striven so much and so long? It seems to me that I make slow progress.'

radiant hues are unremitting, bringing the distant Mont Sainte-Victoire as close as the quarry, even pumping through the cobalt blue of the sky. And yet there is a seismic pressure that buckles and tugs at the mountain's profile in its fight with the packed air. Just as the rock cleft takes on a quasi-sexual significance (again, Courbet supplied the precedents), the great Provençal landmark becomes Cézanne's personal emblem, symbol of a lifelong uphill struggle to do nature justice. How was such a thing to be done? Everything in nature, whether landscape or still-life, was invested with his desires, just as they also pervaded the dreamt-up figures of bathers that he persisted in struggling with. What could his art make real? Wherever the presence of the outward world seems deepest and fullest, it is there that the brushstrokes enacting it seem most nakedly flat.

During the decade before his death in 1906 aged sixty-seven, Cézanne communicated his vision of struggle and attempted construction to junior pilgrims from the Parisian avant-garde. In its accent on the process of making, it converged with an artistic development coming from quite a different direction – from sculpture. The quick-change trends and 'isms' that captivated painters were for most of the 19th century of only

peripheral relevance to the far more expense-conscious, commission-dependent business of statue-making. There was relatively little experimental activity outside the sculpture halls of the Salons, with their plaster forests of archly sexy nudes, pathos-wheedling infants and nobly ferocious beasts of the jungle. From 1880 onwards, however, the effervescence of avant-garde ideas started to spill over into three dimensions. In Paris, the 39-year-old Auguste Rodin had just made an impact with the uncannily fluid naturalism of a male nude (*The Age of Bronze*, 1878), and he was awarded a commission that year to create a giant bronze doorway for a projected museum. The opportunity prompted him to try out an explorative technique, treating the scores of figures involved as if they belonged to the Impressionist flux that Monet evoked in his painting. Getting his models to move freely around his studio, Rodin tugged their bodily gestures out of the soft, heavy clay, and he let the meaning of the resulting casts reside in this sense of handling and weight.

Impressionist ideas were simultaneously leading Medardo Rosso in Milan to try out an 'atmospheric' sculpture, done in wax – his figures being shown as it were in glimpses, floating through translucent, vaporous trails. The monuments that Rodin created out of his work on the museum doors project were rather more substantial, even though the intended Musée des Arts Décoratifs was never built as designed. Such familiar modern icons as Rodin's *Thinker* and *Kiss* derived their broody emotionality from his original conception of the grand portal, intended as a writhing riot of the spiritual extremities described in Dante's poem the *Inferno*.

Rodin's was a yearning to express urges and spiritual states that had one foot in the old Romantic tradition and another in the emerging ethos of Symbolism. But it also went with the intuition that a figure was a weight of mouldable matter, subject to the artist's creative impulses. Rodin could – and did – chop that figure up into component parts, recycle and recombine them, watch how the process continued and arrest it whenever it seemed to suggest something imaginatively potent. *Walking Man* [269] issued from such procedures. The torso from an earlier St John the Baptist was shorn of its head and arms and set on new legs for a retrospective exhibition held in 1900. The sculpture declares an attitude towards the world, but it is also a solid fact, even as Cézanne's canvas is a flat fact. A new kind of artistic will, unconcerned with the creation of imaginary space, breathes through both.

Prior to Rodin, no one but Michelangelo had presented the world with sculpture so fragmented and so nakedly *made* (note the undisguised joins at the hips). Rodin's critical champions often reached for that comparison during the violent public controversies that his commissions repeatedly caused. The unalike-nesses are no less striking – between a carver of stone,

269 Auguste Rodin, *Walking Man*, 1900. This surgingly dynamic yet surprisingly intimate fragment – it stands two-thirds life-size – was first exhibited at a show of Rodin's work that accompanied the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. By this time, some twenty years of controversies with fainthearted commissioning committees had, in the eyes of the progressively minded, established Rodin as the most charismatic figure in European art. But, following Rodin's death in 1917, the exalted, heroic sentiments that his sculptures project fell foul of progressive opinion. His critical resuscitation would not come until the later 20th century.



clawing out the figure that lurked within the block, and a pusher-about of clay, most of whose marble pieces were carved by studio assistants. Also between an artist whose world rotated wholly around the male body, and another who hungrily returned to the difference between man and woman through a large oeuvre of erotic sketches and figures. Sex – an idea, a psychological principle – was rising up as a concern in its own right, as the historical anxieties of the 19th century yielded to the brisker, harsher, altogether wilder spiritual pace that Nietzsche had prophesied, as we shall see in the chapter that follows.

Dates have a cheap arbitrary hold on the imagination. What we now call modernism was up and running well before the end of the 19th century, and little was precisely coming to an end – except, for Britons like me, the reign of Queen Victoria. Yet people everywhere expected the advent of the 20th century to mean something, and I too want to use it as a



270 Edouard Vuillard, *Annette's Soup*, 1900. 'Intimisme' is the term that has been used informally to describe the aesthetic that Vuillard and his associate Pierre Bonnard developed during the 1890s. Both artists, ensconced within a subtly nuanced fabric of bourgeois comforts, focused on the extremely near and familiar, in images refracted through memory. Their work has a certain kinship with the slightly later writings of Marcel Proust.

gatepost to lean on. What was the 19th century like? We could outline an upbeat, evolutionary version: we could track the indirect but necessary interrelation of technological transformation on the one hand and the rise of a critical, independent, self-conscious sphere of art on the other. Or we could conceive of a 'decadent' 19th century – many did towards its end – in which local craft traditions across the world were fatally undermined and an epidemic of mutant Romanticisms drove the imaginative to society's margins. There is equally a comical 19th century to be had, for those who want to savour its preposterous historicisms and all the cantankerous characters this summary has neglected – not least the American Whistler, straddling japonisme in Paris and Aestheticism in London, the irascible wit who sued Ruskin for slanderous criticism of his painterly abilities and was awarded no more than a farthing's damages. And then there is a tragical era, for those who find that the achievements of the great workers in the wake of Romanticism – Menzel, Degas, maybe even Cézanne – leave a bitter, dark aftertaste of despair and fragmentation, which outlasts the zest for flux they share with robust optimists like Monet and Rodin.

Well, here are two ways the century might sign off. One is the elderly mother of Edouard Vuillard, feeding soup in 1900 to her granddaughter, the painter's niece [270]. Vuillard, one of those young Parisian Nabis who had taken secondhand instruction from Gauguin, forged an extraordinary aesthetic boldness out of personal timidity – in this mirrored by his friend Pierre Bonnard, of whom more later. Typically, an early Vuillard is a sheet of brown card (this was the material's heyday: compare Munch, 267)

dabbed and dappled with some close-at-hand observation from the cosseted life of a reticent bachelor. In Vuillard's account of what it is like to look, pattern abolishes depth and almost engulfs individuals: the soft stubbing of his brush becomes a warm ambient drone. Yet this is a way of embracing his nearest and dearest in a circumspect love. The solid figure, the illusionistic world of old European painting has gone, but the all-in-the-head, subcutaneous sensations that replace it are welcoming. In the art laboratories of bourgeois Paris, civilization has effected a suave transition.

Alternately, here is a print engraved around 1903 by José Guadalupe Posada [271]. Posada was a one-time art-school trainee who was turning out ever more uproariously savage images for a publisher of sensationalist broadsheets aimed at the literate working class of Mexico City. ('The Unfortunate Antonio Sanchez Who Ate the Remains of his Own Son', 'End of the World to Take Place on 14 November 1899 at 45 Minutes Past Midnight!', etcetera.) Yes, Posada makes the best way to end. I want his *calavera*, or satirist's skeleton, to gather under its sombrero the enormous upsurge of graphic energy during the century's final two decades – not only the comparable havoc-making of James Ensor in Belgium, but the japoniste malice of London's Aubrey Beardsley and the Swiss Félix Vallotton. (Could one also smuggle in the warmer-hearted response to Japan made in the stage-poster lithographs of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec?) Let Posada's rowdy resuscitation of Aztec delirium stand as a token defiance to an age that brutalized the planet. Its legacies are not yet so far distant that one can feel wholly indifferent.

271 José Guadalupe Posada, *Calavera of a Soldier from Oaxaca*, 1903. The *calavera*, the animated skeleton, has been a continuous feature of Mexican folk imagery since Aztec times, brought out in street parades each year on the Day of the Dead. Posada gave these dead an irrepressible graphic life. This print was originally etched to commemorate the Mexicans who resisted a French invasion at the siege of Oaxaca in 1864. (The disastrous outcome of this episode for France was painted by Manet in his 1867 *Execution of Maximilian*.) Like many images from Posada's studio, it was recycled to illustrate a variety of broadsheet ballads.





BREAKTHROUGH / BREAKDOWN

Vitalities

Africa and Europe, 1900–1910s

In pre-modern times, a spirit of the forest might come to a man in a dream, telling him: make me visible, make me a mask. The man – one of the Dan, living in the hills above the Ivory Coast – would pass on the spirit's requirements to a carver, who would execute them in secret. On a sacred day in the calendar, the spirit would burst forth onto the village's common ground, feather-crested, fur-bearded, raffia-skirted, to strut and strike alarm in rivalry with other occupants of men's bodies.

A bigger and greedier rivalry sent European empire-builders striding into the African interior from the 1880s onwards. Traders and scholars followed. Colonial curiosity and ethnographic schemes created a market for 'fetishes', as the Europeans called objects with spiritual charge. Their access to the riches of African art was gradual – at first, people in villages often managed to fob them off with workshop cast-offs of no ritual value, although by 1900 the court sculpture from Dahomey had been shipped to Paris's Musée du Trocadéro and a British army had trashed the palace compound of Benin, looting and selling off four centuries of bronzes. The mask here [272] belongs to a body of work that would not be collected until a generation later, when anthropologists were told what I have related above of its origins. It was probably carved by a Dan artist named Uopie, and it was for a *bu gle*, a spirit whose warlikeness demanded aggressively forward-jutting features. But in due course, shorn of fur, feathers and function, it would join the much-collected carvings of the Baule and the Fang, relocated to the cool of a European gallery and of our exercises in aesthetic appreciation.

272 Uopie (?), *bu gle mask*, c. 1900–25. 'Now and again an ancestral spirit or *egwugwu* appeared from the underworld, speaking in a tremulous, unearthly voice and completely covered in raffia. Some of them were very violent.' No book more vividly communicates the fabric of village culture to which masks like this once belonged than the novel *Things Fall Apart*. Chinua Achebe wrote it in 1950s Nigeria, reimagining a self-sufficient world that had fallen apart not that many decades before, under the impact of colonialism. This mask comes from a culture a long way to Nigeria's west, yet Achebe's terse masterpiece speaks for a dislocation experienced by a whole generation across Africa, a wrench of context to which this exhibit has also been subject.

From 1900, then, the art of Africa – along with that of the recently colonized South Pacific – turned a sharp corner into the West's onrush of visual traffic, which had been gathering speed as it left the roundabouts of the 1880s. The era leading up the outbreak of world war in 1914 has been termed 'the great acceleration' by the global historian C. A. Bayly, and the transformations he describes in technology, economics and politics were more than matched by an unprecedented expansion of new forms of Western art. Among the many avant-garde groupings then operating in



273 Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Mother and Child*, 1907. Modersohn-Becker, who was pregnant when she painted this, worked with a model who had a small child. The turn of the 20th century was a time when female artists began to take up the female nude – Suzanne Valadon in Paris, for instance, or Britain’s Gwen John. Modersohn-Becker’s vision was interpreted after her death by her friend the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. ‘For that is what you understood: ripe fruits.... Women too, you saw, were fruits; and children, molded from inside, into the shapes of their existence.’ Rilke also wrote notable interpretations of Rodin and Cézanne.

Europe, one band in Dresden, particularly drawn to African and Oceanic art, styled themselves ‘the bridge’ (*Die Brücke*), as if their ‘primitivism’ might carry art forward into the future. But if images like these suggest an onwards-and-upwards historical progression, they are hardly adequate to the evidence; rather, we confront a jumpy dialectic of contrasting and criss-crossing media, styles and meanings. In this chapter I shall hop as briskly as possible across that free-for-all, in two sections each touching on the exceptionally complex run-up to the First World War. A transitional section indicates some of the readjustments that occurred during and just after that seismic event, after which the tensions will only become more deep-rooted, if more slowly shifting, in two further sections describing trends between 1920 and 1945.

Let’s set art’s onrush against a seemingly stable coordinate: artists still needed works they could exhibit. A content-rich canvas in which cherished values were given form remained Europe’s commonest unit of imaginative currency, and when it came to questions of form Paris remained the main arbiter of style. In this respect, Paula Modersohn-Becker’s *Mother and Child* [273] is in some ways an exemplary work of the 1900s, a time when countless artists across the world were absorbing lessons learnt from visits to the metropolis: *plein air* was spreading in

Monet's wake from Japan to Canada; Manet's example pointed devotees of the *chic* towards a cult of Velázquez; and that of Degas spawned new varieties of low-life, provocative realism. Modersohn-Becker returned from a Parisian excursion to her base of Worpswede – a north German village that was one of the era's 'artists' colonies' – bearing memories of Gauguin's simplified forms and of Cézanne's building of masses. She worked them into a new weighty harmony in a painting that affirms the classically timeless.

The French sculptor Aristide Maillol was taking the legacy of Rodin in a comparable direction, fashioning female nudes of an immense stability. But with Modersohn-Becker that artistic category shifts in meaning, taken up in a woman's own hands. Behind her lay several generations of female entrants to an expanding art education system. In fact, women had already come to dominate its intake, even if social structures still prohibited against their development of a further career. A few, like the battle painter Elizabeth Butler in England and the political realist print-maker Käthe Kollwitz in Berlin, had made an impact in traditionally 'masculine' fields of practice. The Frenchwoman Berthe Morisot and the American Mary Cassatt had each given Impressionism a powerful 'feminine' inflection, in so far as women were expected to focus on family, fabrics, flowers and mirrors, on reflectiveness and inwardness. Modersohn-Becker, born in 1876, was another who stuck with this gender separatism: she had no truck with the political consciousness-raising of the early 20th-century suffrage movement. Rather, she was ambitiously archaic. Her earth-mother icon lies somewhere between a symbol-bearing, breast-baring self-portraiture and her visions of the elemental rural realities of peasant existence at Worpswede. (Tragically, she died in 1907 a few months after finishing the picture, from complications following the birth of her own child.) And, as with many artists before, her archaism was intended as true modernity: for these fused bodies, their heads succumbing to the warm heaviness of the flesh, pay homage to the emerging piety of the newborn century. Mothers might bow down to it one way, lovers another – such as the equally fused figures of a woodcut of a *Kiss* by Munch, or of the sculpture of the same name by Rodin. Before all social constraints, beyond the reach of institutions and history, *life* was the great reality to be celebrated.

Life. A casting-off of 19th-century hang-ups; also, by connotation, immediacy to the eyes and to the other senses; systems of 'vitality' that surged through mind and world alike; sexual liberty; spiritual authenticity; the embrace of the entirely modern; and many other potential irreconcilables – all currently afloat in the air of avant-garde discourse.

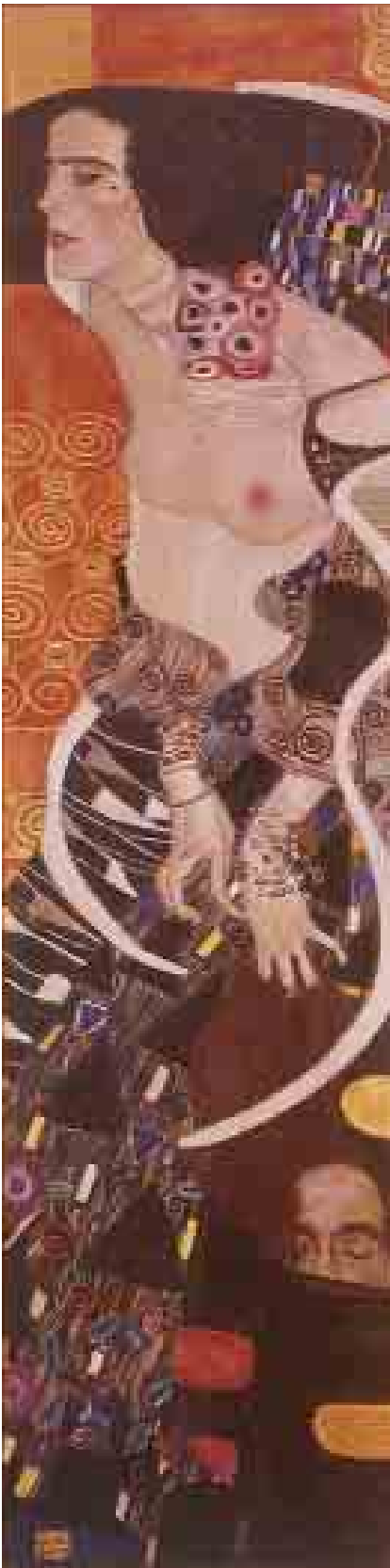
The same umbrella of progressive values might moreover stretch to include design aesthetics that shook off the deadening hand of historical nostalgia. Such was the direction that William Morris's rapidly internationalized Arts and Crafts Movement took from 1895 onwards. The founder's fondness for pre-industrial, pastoral motifs – not to mention his egalitarian aspirations – became smothered by the sleeker, 'organic' inventions of Henry van de Velde, previously a Symbolist painter in Brussels. Plant forms sprang forth and reanimated the constructions of industry, subverting the rule of the rigid and rectangular, their dynamically curling tendrils refashioned in steel, glass and ceramics. This radical machine rococo, dubbed 'Art Nouveau' or 'Jugendstil', shot across Europe via photographic art magazines to captivate forward-looking patrons from Glasgow and Paris to Barcelona and Budapest.

Gustav Klimt was one of those introducing the style to the Viennese elite. The painter and his associates – in 1897 he had led a 'Secession' from the city's stuffily historicist exhibiting body, a signal of his progressive credibility – wanted to update the old Rococo project of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art (see p. 276), for an age fascinated in fusing vision with music. The decors of the Secession orchestrated Klimt's gold-and-girl-spangled canvases within schemes of organic ornament, to scores by Beethoven and to iconographies based on the visionary philosophy of Nietzsche – or, rather, would have, had not Viennese patrons repeatedly jibbed at Klimt's blend of the arcane and the upfront erotic. Nonetheless, the painter found a comfortable niche among lovers of opulence for his glamorous chequerings of flesh and flatness.

Klimt's *Judith II* [274] evokes the dangerous, 'man-eating' modern woman of 1909 Vienna – tucking a head that might be the artist's into her bag – under the premise of lurid ancient legend, the kind of material that Symbolist artists had cherished through the previous three decades. From its manifesto launch in the Paris of 1886, the loose agenda of Symbolism had spread to interfuse with many artistic phenomena across Europe, yet wherever it went it promoted an accent on the eerie, the disorienting. So it is here. Islands of abstraction float deliriously from the tight-wound design, bearing a certain kinship with the patchwork designs being conjured up by Art Nouveau's greatest architect, Antoni Gaudí of Barcelona. Klimt's paths through Vienna society did not happen to cross with those of his fellow citizen Sigmund Freud: nonetheless, Judith's clawing hands and staring nipple point towards the jagged, confrontational art that his pupil Egon Schiele would develop in the ensuing decade – drawing himself masturbating, for instance, whipping up a provocative act for a psychologically wisened-up age. In fact, Klimt's rag-strewn-boudoir version of sexuality and

274 (opposite left) Gustav Klimt,
Judith II, 1909.

275 (opposite right) Henri Matisse,
Woman with a Hat, 1905.



of artistic liberty proved to have little staying power. Elsewhere in 1909 Vienna the architect Adolf Loos was publishing his radical – and rapidly influential – doctrine that all ornament was tantamount to crime.

Europe's will towards 'vitality' was protean. At the heart of the international art system, in the hands of a devoted believer in the French classical tradition, it erupted in paintwork of a volcanic unruliness. When Henri Matisse exhibited *Woman with a Hat* [275] at a big independent exhibition in 1905, it caused one of the public art scandals that Paris had caught a taste for ever since the days of Manet. Crowds came to jeer, and a journalist characterized the gang of painters that Matisse was leading as *fauves*, 'wild beasts'. Like the impeccably well-dressed Manet, Matisse himself made an odd butt for ridicule: an immensely earnest, strenuously self-improving 34-year-old from France's industrial north-east, who had

pushed his art forward through study of the most challenging representatives of the recent avant-garde.* Behind what he was doing – painting this portrait of his wife – there lay not only the scientific pigment-dividing of Seurat, but Cézanne’s use of the blank canvas as a ground on which to build and Gauguin’s recourse to bold blocks of colour.

As Matisse saw it, those tactics served a solid, constructive purpose. Like van Gogh, this northerner had travelled to the south of France to seek out its brilliant sunlight, and here he had discovered the power of clashing colour extremes – viridians and oranges, violets and lemons – to kickstart oscillations in the eye, pumping out a surplus of radiance. A picture could create light rather than capture it, could pulse as a living body pulses. The French tradition he believed in – that of Renoir, that of Chardin – was one in which easel painting celebrated dependable vessels of feeling with a reverent sensuality. That tradition could now be reconstituted on a new and firmer basis, as long as others were prepared to follow Matisse down the path of visual re-education. Outside the circle of his fellow exhibitors, however, it was chiefly patrons from America and Russia who obeyed that call, leaving him for some years a prophet without honour in his own country.

But then, *Woman with a Hat* is at least as defiant as it is constructive. Its fierceness must partly have been catalysed by Amélie Matisse herself, a hat-maker whose energies sustained her husband through his early career. Throughout that career, his imagination was sustained by fabrics and femininity, as indeed was Klimt’s; but here, untrammelled by Viennese mannerliness, Matisse took up his brush in a raw, slathering mode of attack. The cathartic blurt of energy seems to announce an unassailable, mess-with-me-at-your-peril authenticity. A year later Matisse found a comparable pitch in portraying his daughter as if with the vision of a child. Fresh-eyed *innocence* was partly the issue: this was a time when matchlessly poetic variations on Symbolist themes were being painted by the virtually self-taught – Henri Rousseau in Paris, Albert Pinkham Ryder in New York, Tivadar Csontváry in Hungary. But more than that, the prevailing zeitgeist suggested that markmaking had somehow of itself to embody vitality.

The former architecture students who launched themselves under the label Die Brücke in Dresden in 1905 found a seam with this potential in woodcutting. The organic grain of the woodblock, recently probed by Gauguin and Munch, promised to connect them not only to Germany’s distant past (to Dürer, even to Gero’s nine-century-old crucifix), but to the trophies of her newly acquired maritime empire, as collected in

* The ‘Post-Impressionist’ generation, as they would shortly be labelled by the English critic Roger Fry when he introduced them to London in a controversial exhibition in 1910.

Dresden's Ethnographic Museum.* Unlike 19th-century European sculptors, African and Oceanic artists practised 'direct carving' – cutting straight into the block without a preliminary model – and their examples incited the ex-students to improvise an exuberantly jagged hack-and-thrust. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, rough-hewing his *Bathers Throwing Reeds* [276], was trying out a new variant on the old Romantic idea that art is a process, a 'forever becoming' – modernizing it for an era when youth culture, naturism and sexual liberation were all the rage. That print is supposed to be Kirchner himself and his friends playing at savages at a favoured lakeside haunt, one sporting a jaunty erection.

Kirchner's procession of cipher-style figures takes its cue from narrative friezes carved in the Caroline Islands of the South Pacific. The blare of green and red nods to the new colour vibrancies of Matisse and his Fauves in Paris. But unlike that sober family man, the artists of Die Brücke were plunging deep into alternative lifestyles. Europe's old fantasy of the South Seas as a sexual free-for-all afforded them moral support. The complexities of this act only increased when the group decamped to Berlin in 1910. Internalized in cabarets or among streetwalkers and tram-cars, the savage strut became a stance of bristly psychological tension: avant-garde art took on a harsher edge, just as it was doing in Egon Schiele's Vienna. It was at this stage that a critic flipped over a familiar label. After the *Impressionists*, responding to whatever the eye received, here, spewing out whatever the emotions urged, came the *Expressionists* ...

Vitality meant excitement; vitality meant angst. In the Paris of 1907, Matisse's *succès de scandale* prompted a 25-year-old Spanish immigrant named Pablo Picasso to attempt to upstage him with a truly epic expression of alienation. During the coming decade, with the help of a masterly dealer, Matisse's younger rival would attain the ambition for which his energy, curiosity and inventive passion amply equipped him: he would settle into critical estimation as the era's linchpin, indeed as the most influential personality in art since Michelangelo. But at this point Picasso was a driven denizen of bohemia, little known outside a small circle in Paris and in his earlier base of Barcelona. Having bullishly charged through the available gamut of contemporary styles, he had now finished wringing a vein of Symbolist pathos out of deep-blue reveries on the great theme of 'life' – that word here being uttered with a tragical sigh.

The time had come for Picasso to commit himself to a towering canvas two and a half metres (eight feet) high [277]. He intended to multiply the Manet shock effect: that is, not simply to paint a lone prostitute

* Another such trophy would be the mask from New Ireland that we saw in Chapter 1, p. 25.



276 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Bathers Throwing Reeds*, 1909. Italian and French artists had dreamt of bathers by riverbanks for centuries, but only in 1900s Germany did the imagery become one of personal experience. Kirchner's woodcut is an evocation of the visits he and his gang would habitually make to the Moritzburg lakes outside Dresden. *Freikörperkultur*, 'free body culture', was a quick-growing trend in the new century, with the first naturist park opening in 1903 in Hamburg. Advocates argued that the ancient Teutons had once walked naked, just as Pacific Islanders were supposedly still doing at the far end of Germany's new empire.

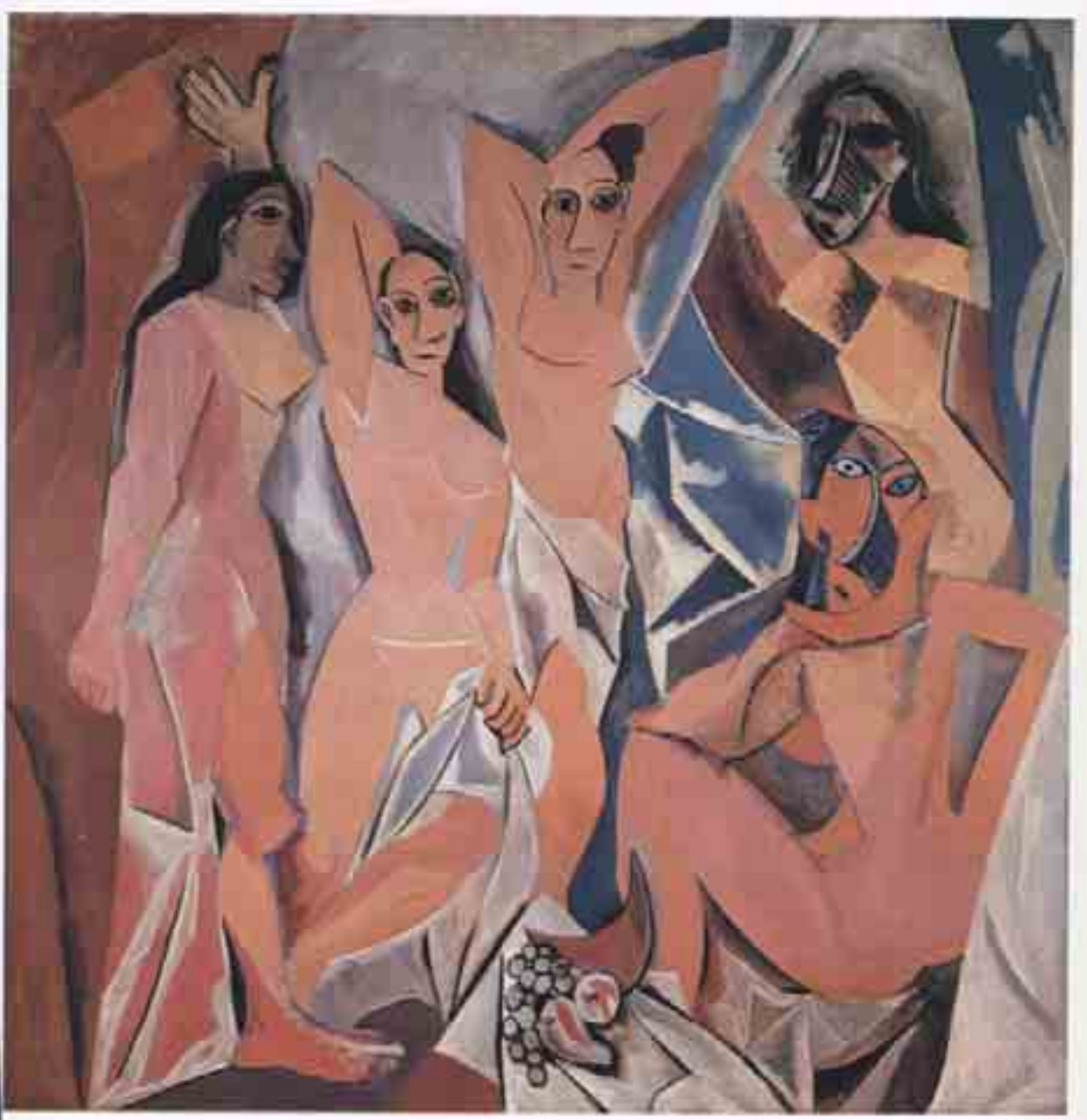
challenging the viewer with a 'What are you looking at?' stare (like the model's in *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*: 254), but a whole brothel of them. Multiply it also by pressing the whores' figures into the flanged, buckling forms created by El Greco. That was a patriotic manoeuvre of sorts: the multinational Mannerist had recently been rediscovered and reclaimed as the first major oil painter of Picasso's native land. To observers recently reattuned to Cézanne's clenched and buckling surfaces, El Greco looked astonishingly 'modern'. Thus Picasso could proclaim his own psychological realities on a monumental scale – not only his edginess concerning the female sex in general, but his edginess as a proud, defiant alien in Paris.

At some stage in the painting of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, however, the additional impact of a visit to the Musée du Trocadéro pushed Picasso's big ambitions beyond any possibility of resolution. By his own account, confronted by assorted African sculptures (including Akati Akpele Kendo's *Agoje!*), he suddenly felt for their creators' intentions: 'They were against everything – against unknown, threatening spirits. ... I understood; I too am against everything. I too believe that everything is unknown, that everything is an enemy!' Armed with a broad impression of

an ‘African look’, even if not with specific details that he intended to lift, he returned to transform the right-hand side of his canvas – then stopped.

At the time, Picasso’s friends felt that he had plunged into a disaster of incoherence. Turning the canvas to the wall, he refocused his energies on smaller, more disciplined guerrilla attacks on that hostile ‘everything’. It was only many years later, after these later pieces had been critically acknowledged as of crucial importance, that people began to regard the *Demoiselles* as a *necessary* incoherence. Along with the paintings of Cézanne, it seemed to point towards the decisive breakdown of relations between marks and

277 Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*, 1907.



whatever they stood for that would occur in his subsequent still lifes and portraits. But Picasso's intuition in the Trocadéro remained central to his own art throughout the following sixty-six years, however true it may or may not have been to the art of Africa. Habitually, Picasso grappled with figures – of women, of animals, of vessels – but without any trust in their outward looks. Rather, he fought to recompose or to wrest from them their essences. He willed himself into being a magician. He would confer on the international scene of the 20th century the aura of a village shaman – with all of his power for transformation, with much of his potential for cruelty.

Die Brücke and the *Demoiselles* lay only at the beginning of the West's ongoing re-education by contemporary societies on a far smaller scale. How did the trade proceed in the other direction? *Mother and Child* [278] exhibits features many European sculptors would aim for from the 1910s onwards: cleanly defined planes, masses either fused or distinctly jointed, a minimal sign language for features of identity in a laconically witty, fancy-top-knotted variation on Modersohn-Becker's humanistic theme. It was made around 1914 in Nala, near the Congo's Sudanese border. The woodcarver, it would seem, was working not so much to the behest of some spirit as to the rising demand for 'works of art', in the Western sense, that the local chief could present to visiting colonial dignitaries and the like. With the Zande people, a secular art such as this only came about under the circumstances of Belgian colonial rule. It might not appeal to the nostalgia of the 'primitivist' (as Kirchner or Picasso might then have been called). But, facing as it does into the common global stream of commodities, it is probably as significant a register of long-term 20th-century trends as the *Demoiselles*.

Questions, junctions

Europe, 1909–1914

For art in effect consists of finely crafted objects, doesn't it? Objects that demonstrate their own value: aren't they what the market requires? And so, it would seem, any artist must establish a niche for professionally turned-out product, whatever its mode may be. We have seen Matisse and Picasso at the chanciest moments of their loosely intertwining careers, a double helix that would determine much in the look of art over the next half-century. From defiance and incoherence, each would turn towards a concentration on their respective artistic means.

In Matisse's case, that involved learning from Islamic art, largely through visits to North Africa. The spatial rationale that had taken a long alternative course from European figuration ever since the 8th century remained resilient from Turkey to Morocco, with builders, tilers and

278 Zande carver, *Mother and Child*, c. 1914. The artist belonged to the retinue of a Zande chieftain. The Zande (or Azande) applied a striking design aesthetic to their own persons and homes, but they were not known for figure carving until colonial trade and tribute created a niche for prestige gifts. Here, carving skills otherwise employed to make chairs or drums were used to evoke a sight common in Zande villages: both the mother's stance and her hairstyle are typical of the region. This souvenir item was picked up by an important visitor to the Congo, the American zoologist Herbert Lang, during his 1909–15 expedition.





279 Henri Matisse, *The Red Studio*, 1911.

weavers collaborating with sunlight to create pervasively enhancing environments. The challenge for Matisse was to re-create this all-over visual stimulus on a canvas – an issue that had earlier been tackled by Iranians like Ahmad, the painter of the Tehran acrobat [see 236]. *The Red Studio* of 1911 was one of his boldest – indeed, most aggressive – solutions [279]. The receding space of an interior is annulled by an unremitting, dazzling vermillion throb: this is maximum-amplification pleasure-to-hurt. Art feeds on and authenticates art: among patterned ceramics, a mini-retrospective parenthesizes his studio's earlier figure-based production.

The 'imitation of nature', that old European prescription for painting, was no longer relevant. What formula was? By 1911 Matisse's reputation was international, quickly transmitted by Europe-crossing travelling exhibitions, and avant-gardes in Germany and Russia were alert to his innovations. These circles were connected in the person of Vasily Kandinsky. He was a former Moscow lawyer who had soaked up the Russian intelligentsia's

fascinations with audio-visual synaesthesia, mysticism and Slavonic folklore. These he imported to Munich when he committed himself to painting at the age of thirty, making the city his base from 1896. The grouping he led from 1911 (the *Blaue Reiter*, 'Blue Rider', named after their magazine) readily linked Matisse's colour intensities with theosophy. This Indian-influenced doctrine was a further strand in the transnational subculture of new spiritualities that had started to form back in Blake's days, over a century before. (In a different corner of the same warren of back-alleys, Georgiana Houghton had staged the first recorded exhibition of what we would now call 'abstract' pictures, her 'spirit drawings', in London back in 1864.)

'New age' doctrines gained a fresh impetus and a higher profile come the 20th century. By 1910 many ventures into the possibility of pure visual music or 'abstraction' were afoot among Central and Eastern European artists – the Czech František Kupka and the Lithuanian Mikalojus Ciurlionis, to name but two. Kandinsky's own breakthrough moment, as he described it, was when he re-entered his studio one evening to confront on the easel 'a picture of indescribable and incandescent loveliness ... depicting no identifiable object'. He had failed to recognize one of his own vibrant landscapes, which happened to be turned on its side. From now on, Kandinsky deduced, painting might dispense with depiction. The strategically minded lawyer in him remained concerned that the results should not be relegated to the status of *mere* decoration, 'like a necktie or a carpet'. The visual taste that informed *Composition VII* [280], his major work of 1913, was undoubtedly indebted to Russian folk ornament, with

280 Vasily Kandinsky, *Composition VII*, 1913.





281 Jacques-Henri Lartigue, *Delage at the Grand Prix*, 1912.

its delight in bright colour; nonetheless, he insisted, every component was spiritually dictated and crammed with symbolic intent.

The visible world had not simply evaporated in this new art. Rather, its essences had been distilled and newly set free, as formulas with which one could build a new pictorial universe. They were none other than those things that the eye loves to do: to pick out contrasts, to discern edges and closed shapes, to wander, to zoom and wriggle, to dwell deep in colour intensities, to hurtle and leap sideways. Over a concentrated span of four days, Kandinsky's brush busied itself over the great 3-metre (10-foot) canvas with the happy innocence of a bee exploring a flower bed.

But behind that final improvisation lay much linear rehearsal. If the great cohesive riot of sharps and softs seems to be dynamized with something of the rollicking surge of Lartigue's shot of a French motor race [281], that might not be entirely fortuitous. What if the spiritually essential and the mechanically ephemeral were simply two sides of one coin for 20th-century metropolitan humanity, caught up as it was in the inexorable onrush of electric streetlights, billboards and motor traffic? Indeed, Kandinsky's Blaue Reiter colleague August Macke was applying a similarly irradiated palette to the theme of department-store shopping.



282 Giacomo Balla, *Speeding Car*, 1913. Fast art, designed for quick impact. This is one of a series of images that started with Balla sketching the motor traffic hurtling down Rome's Via Veneto. Close studies of Fiats gradually made way for spiral and diagonal vectors representing an essence of dynamism – in effect, the speed without the car. Balla, in his forties when he painted this, had come to Futurism via the quasi-scientific, quasi-socialistic agenda of the 'Divisionists' who had painted in Seurat's wake. His signature here is a proclamation of commitment to the new movement.

What if inner psychology and outer technology both pointed the same way? This heady post-Nietzschean notion had been stridently proclaimed by the Italian cultural entrepreneur Filippo Marinetti when he published his brand-new *Futurist Manifesto* in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1909. Marinetti called on artists to jump up and swing behind the dynamic forces transforming their environment. Go faster! Get tougher! Dream of war, 'the world's only hygiene'.

Programmatically, a group of artists based in Milan responded by rerouting their Seurat-based Divisionist painting in Marinetti's direction. One tactic tried out by Futurist artists like Giacomo Balla was to overlay repeated images of moving figures [282], as it were to 'interpenetrate' – after all, claimed their leader Umberto Boccioni, no one could 'still believe in the opacity of bodies' after the 1890s advent of the X-ray. The flair of the group went into staging stunts and synaesthetic soirées, and into galvanizing youthful audiences on the international exhibition circuit. They soon prompted the launch of a like-minded 'Rayonist' movement in the Moscow of 1913, and of a 'Vorticist' one in London in 1914. (Each met up with, or vied with, local cults of 'the primitive' and of Cézanne and Matisse; no metropolis was now complete without.)

All these movements, it seems to me, bumped their heads against a problem: how do you use handcrafted media to communicate speed and instantaneity? *Why* use such media? The photographer Muybridge [see 262] had given the cue for the Futurists' imagery of repeating figures (along with a fellow investigator of movement, Etienne-Jules Marey in Paris) – but, more significantly, his work had paved the way for the cinema. The medium that had received its public inauguration in 1895 swiftly established itself as the most popular cultural phenomenon of the new century. It picked up all those narrative, historical and realist impulses that avant-garde painting by now had little use for. It appealed to, it even helped create a new *mass* public, irrespective of class divisions. And in the meantime that public had been presented – by mass marketing, from 1890 onwards – with an inexpensive tool called the Kodak camera that allowed just about anyone to instantly 'imitate reality' as the Old Masters had once striven to do.

Jacques-Henri Lartigue, eighteen years old when he covered the Grand Prix for a sports magazine, had been handed higher-grade equipment by his wealthy father at the age of seven. He still kept the childlike zest and lightning reactions that made him the exemplary recording agent of France's economic and cultural buoyancy during the early years of the 20th century, its so-called *belle époque*. In his case, psychology and technology truly were aligned. His picture has a *lightness* that no painting could ever quite hope to achieve.

What then was the business of the 'fine artist'? In the wake of his unresolved *Demoiselles* experiment, Picasso banded up with a former Fauve painter, Georges Braque. Both had been spurred by seeing a retrospective of Cézanne's work in late 1907: the Provençal's determined reconstructions of nature made them wish to create a more rigorously self-contained art. In their working dialogue between 1909 and 1911, the 'What are you looking at?' stance of those *Avignon* prostitutes turned into a tougher, more inward riddle. That is to say, from probing the conditions of exhibition, the two painters moved on to questioning the conditions of illusion. What makes you think you are looking at something three-dimensional when you are looking at a flat picture? Typically, Picasso and Braque picked away at the kind of effect that occurs top right in the *Demoiselles* [see 277], where a shaded diamond suggests a woman's bosom even as it breaks loose from neighbouring indicators of the figure. Confining themselves to dun, earthy palettes and to standard studio set-ups – mostly portraits and still lifes – they refracted their subjects through suchlike contradictions of suggestion and surface. The results were woven into a strange new coherence with the transitions of translucent brushwork – *passages* – that had been minted by Cézanne.

283 Pablo Picasso, *Glass and Bottle of Suze*, 1912. Suze is a mass-produced apéritif, and advertising for it would have been as ubiquitous in the France of the 1910s as that for any big consumer brand today. Early in 1912 Picasso had tried incorporating gloss paint and rubbings from woven cane in his Cubist canvases. That prompted his friend Braque to insert cuttings of wallpaper into the structure of his sketches (*papiers collés*). By late 1912 Picasso had added newspaper to the new visual language. Patchworks of scissored photographs and prints had been a popular domestic art form in the 19th century, but it was only now that collage emerged as a principle that could revolutionize representation.



It was an imposingly intellectual project, spectators felt – poles apart from Matisse’s love for the decorative and feminine. One critic, latching onto the hatched diamonds, dubbed it ‘Cubism’. But beyond that, its meaning remained radically ambiguous. Was it some kind of freeing up of fine art from the limitations of representing things naturalistically? Was it, as Braque sometimes suggested, a way of looking at objects that surpassed and transcended the window-frame vision Europe had been comfortable with ever since the 15th century? Perhaps it opened up some ‘X-ray vision’, perhaps even a ‘four-dimensional reality’ (one of the era’s mystico-scientific vogues)?

Furthermore, what did it mean when the duo turned from their habit of strewing the picture with isolated ready-made *signs* (such as the ‘6’ on Lartigue’s racing car) towards entirely constructing the picture out of them, as in Picasso’s *Glass and Bottle of Suze* [283]? This new practice of

‘collage’, begun in 1912, gave their Cubism a purchase on the realm of decoration (via the excerpts of wallpaper); on contemporary street life (the newspaper); and even on politics (‘The Serbs Advance’, reads a subhead at the foot – a Balkan war foreshadowing events in Europe two years later). Maybe simplest, at least in Picasso’s case, would be to read it as a declaration of artistic license. The imperious magician could turn whatever he chose into art with a few twists of his scissors and charcoal; could steep it in aesthetic suspense, even as an *apéritif* infuses a survey of one’s café table and the boulevard beyond with the brief grace of alcohol.

The conjuring trick with recycled components indirectly echoes that performed fifty years earlier by the Dahomean sculptor Akati [see 252]. A more specific debt to African art underpinned another venture from the same devil-may-care phase of exuberant creativity. Picasso moved from building still lifes out of papers to attaching flanges of card or wood to his picture surface, so that the clues suggesting his riddled and scrambled objects projected outwards in three dimensions. In this game of paradox, intent on abolishing the body of a *Guitar* [284] yet preserving its sound-hole, he turned to the pipes-for-eyes device favoured by West African carvers like Uopie [see 272]. As Picasso put it, their approach was ‘*raisonnable*’ – concept-led, that is. To make a projection stand for a hollow showed that visual signs could be freely swapped in meaning according to context, much as sounds can swap meaning from language to language.

He called the result a ‘picture-object’. Soon refashioned in sheet metal, it stood radically aside from the European sculptural mainstream, as indeed from the African, both habitually focused on solid figures. Was the work of Picasso and Braque therefore heading the same way as Futurism, with its longing to ‘interpenetrate’ bodies and spaces? Certainly, their overlapping planes and *passages* were eagerly adopted by the Italians as well as by Cubist imitators and aspirant abstractionists in Paris, while in the eyes of the St Petersburg intelligentsia ‘Cubo-Futurism’ constituted a single entity. In both capitals, with their frenetic pile-up of movements and manifestos, a surplus of motives for every possible artistic choice was now at hand – indeed, also for a reversion to a gambit that had first been ventured when the avant-garde was starting to gain momentum thirty years before. Unconsciously echoing the 1884 ‘Exhibition of Incoherent Art’ (see p. 351), with its framed blank board and its non-existent *Intentionist Painting*, a 27-year-old named Marcel Duchamp found a delicious way to shrug off six years of involvement in avant-garde painting. He brought a mass-produced bottle rack back to his studio from the hardware section of a Paris department store and declared it to be a new form of art, a ‘ready-made’. Art consists of finely crafted objects. Does it? Does it?

284 Pablo Picasso, *Guitar*, 1912.





285 Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2*, 1912. Duchamp's picture, like Balla's (282), shows an action rather than an object, drawing on sequence photography. Duchamp's brush-drawing is slow, intricate and obsessive, however, conjuring up a dream zone in which bodies and technologies meld. *Nude Descending a Staircase* is yet more elusively otherworldly than *The Golden Stairs* (a painting that may have helped inspire it: 259), and it irritated the Paris exhibition jury to whom it was initially submitted in 1912. Its rejection was a spur to Duchamp to abandon painting in favour of other forms of game-playing.

Machines

USA, Germany, Russia, Japan, 1915–1925

In 1915 Kazimir Malevich exhibited a plain black square painted on a plain white background, proclaiming that in its darkness pure feeling shone forth supreme – liberated from the distracting world of objects. By then Russia, along with the rest of Europe, was engulfed in the Great War that the wretched Futurists had begged for. They and the continent's myriad other groupuscules were expiring in the gathering cataclysm like so many punctured balloons. Yet under the pressure of the times, Malevich's 'Suprematism' – the radical new art that he was expounding, building his paintings out of 'non-objective' colour blocks – had a kind of defiant necessity. With a sufficiently violent wrench of context, just as solid might mean hollow and factory product mean art, nothing might mean all things.

The logic of a European artistic system based on imitating appearances – a system that had begun to take shape back in the 13th century – had been pushed to its limits by the recent acceleration of cultural transformations. It had in a sense broken down. The breakthroughs to various conceivable new systems that we have just noted – the matrix of contradictions that now gets called 'modernism' – had meanwhile been gathered up and freighted from capital to capital, making a notable entrée across the Atlantic in New York's Armory Show of 1913. Here one of Duchamp's canvases (his *Nude Descending a Staircase*: 285) gained him sufficient notoriety to justify his following it across the Atlantic to appear in person two years later, leaving war-torn France behind. Gathering a select following, this charismatic wit tried inserting a 'ready-made' – a urinal he entitled *Fountain* – in an independents' show in 1917. After all, he retorted when New York's realist painters blocked the move, 'the only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges'.

The sneer had a subtext of deference. In the vision that attracted European immigrants, America represented a future of shiny mass production, clear, clean and brilliantly heartless in contrast to their continent's ancient, snarled-up emotions. Such a prospect of modernity magnetized the mood switch that had started with Adolf Loos in 1909 in Vienna and had quickly spread across Europe – the forward-thinking losing patience with ornament and decoration in all their forms. One of Duchamp's associates, Francis Picabia, toyed with this hard-edged future by making facetious technical drawings of sex between machine parts. By contrast Paul Strand, a native New Yorker, lent the theme a devout intensity in *Wall Street* [286]. The shot was taken by the young art photographer in



286 Paul Strand, *Wall Street*, 1915.

1915. He was aiming for a break with the ‘Pictorialism’ of generations of predecessors who had modulated their prints towards the soft-focus effects of Impressionist and Symbolist painting. Yet in a sense the parallel development of the two media persisted: Strand’s severe new vision snared the early-morning office-goers of the great financial centre in a stark geometry of windows and shadows that strangely resembles the blocks and shafts then appearing in the Suprematist painting of Malevich. Another celebrant of American modernity, Georgia O’Keeffe, was just beginning a long career of abstracted homages to skyscrapers and flowers, translating this relish for bold hieratic shapes into the medium of watercolour.

The 1917 exhibition in New York was an ‘open’ one, and yet the committee drew the line at Duchamp’s *Fountain*. Duchamp’s friend, the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, may well have intended a gesture of solidarity in the face of their cover-up when he veiled the marble carving he was exhibiting with a velvet drape, asking visitors to explore it with their hands.* *Sculpture for the Blind* [287] looks towards Duchamp in another way as well. It foretells an aesthetic programme which that teasing speculator would subsequently outline – one for a ‘less retinal’ art, for an art less devoted to the entertainment of a solitary sense organ.

* I owe this point to Eric Shanes, *Brancusi* (1999).



287 Constantin Brancusi, *Sculpture for the Blind*, 1916.

This radical experiment came from a man who had grown up in the rural hinterlands of Romania. Brancusi had worked through provincial art schools to arrive in Paris in 1904, where he joined other sculptors who were interested in direct carving. Cutting straight into the block; doing away with the clay and plaster models that were the standard intermediaries of the 19th-century workshop – here was a method with a powerful appeal to an artist proud of his peasant origins. If direct carving connected the medieval past with the South Seas for the Expressionists of Dresden, for the Romanian it suggested a kinship between his native woodlands and those of West Africa. The Germans took it as a cue for jaggedness: Brancusi, attuned to the polish and idealism of African sculpture, honed his small but powerful repertory of images through a progressive streamlining. As Brancusi's images approached the truly minimal, they passed through different titles. A gritty recumbent head called *Sleep* in 1908 incubated the egg-like carving presented to 'the blind' in 1917 – which in turn would hatch a still sleeker *Beginning of the World* in 1920. As they progressed, these artworks came to depend ever less on the grain of their materials and ever more on the context in which they were set. To firmly distinguish the last of those pieces from any other featureless metal ball, for instance, the sculptor had it placed upon a reflective plinth. Somewhat like Canova two centuries before, Brancusi

gained international fame by conferring on his dreamy, glamorous surfaces an aura of open-ended loftiness. 'I give you pure joy. Look at the sculptures until you see them. Those nearest to God have seen them.' This mystic idealism was not exactly what the thoroughly atheistic Duchamp had in mind when he floated the prospect of an 'art of ideas'. Duchamp was conducting an intellectual guerrilla campaign against an artworld premised on painting, and his joys were sardonic and wry. Nonetheless, the acts of the two men – the emphasis on concepts, the emphasis on contexts – converge if we treat them as a prediction of what would happen in the later 20th century after the dominance of Picasso and Matisse had run its course.

By 1917 a kind of counterpart to Duchamp's activities had arisen in war-torn Germany. The Dada movement was christened at an experimental cabaret scene started in 1916 by draft-dodgers and exiles in the neutral Swiss city of Zurich. It was a name purportedly alighted on at random by opening a dictionary. Chance procedures like this – devoid of human will, 'mechanical' – may have been brought to Zurich from Duchamp's Paris circle by the Franco-German artist Jean (or Hans) Arp. They joined a ragbag of tactics from the recent avant-garde, now redirected in jittery fury against the 'civilization' that was currently destroying itself around them and, most particularly, against its hypocritical cult of 'Art'. Dada took on a keener political edge as it spread to the cities of the slowly buckling German empire. In Berlin, the spiky draughtsmanship of George Grosz poured scorn on every aspect of the German character that the pre-war Expressionist artists had liked to celebrate. (He even pissed on their canvases during a cabaret performance.) Grosz's friend John Heartfield (Helmuth Herzfelde, provocatively renaming himself in the enemy's language) specialized in uproariously satiric *montage* – the Cubists' medium of collage, applied specifically to photographs and to the avowed intent of discrediting all opponents of the Communist cause.

Otto Dix created *Skat Players* [288] in Dresden in 1920, eighteen months after Germany's defeat and the collapse of its imperial regime. A 28-year-old who had returned to art school after fighting on the Western Front, Dix was busy cultivating a hard-man image, freely revelling in the possibilities that Dada and the bombshells had together opened up. Here, he presents three war-mangled officers. They form one set of variations on a theme much frequented by sardonic imaginations throughout the 1910s and 1920s: the marionette, tailor's dummy, pinhead, harlequin, robot – the post-human residue of that discarded theme of 'life'. Dix has jammed them into a cosy café collage of newspapers and playing cards, even including his own passport photo. There they sit, still pleased with

themselves, stupid idiots who've been put through the mincer by a stupid government (one still wears the Iron Cross it gave him – pathetic!). And you, you hypocritical art-fancier who would turn a blind eye to them in the street, no doubt you like being told that you are stupid too!

Bad-boy manners and the searing force of his own witness to the horrors of trench warfare made Dix a major presence on the 1920s German art market. A turn in style also helped. From this point on he marched in step with an incoming continent-wide trend – a fresh desire for disciplined craftsmanship. The weather-change had started around 1916, coming partly from Italian painters who had tired of Futurism's limitations and wanted to return to the example of Giotto, and partly also from wartime Paris. Critics and painters in that unhappy city looked back on the pre-war experimental ferment and started to blame it for present misfortunes. The giddy style-riot had been symptomatic of an instability that had plunged Europe into disaster: now it was time to prune art back, regraft the new-grown shoots onto the continent's old and abiding traditions. So claimed the spokesmen of this 'call to order', who took heart from the fact that Picasso was currently showing an interest in classical imagery. When this revival of Old Master values caught on in Germany, during the early 1920s, it took on a sharp political purposefulness. The Dix who had jumbled media in *Skat Players* became a devotee of Renaissance oil techniques in order to nail down more ruthlessly the facts concerning a contemporary society that seemed locked in a terminal crisis. *Die Neue Sachlichkeit* was the way the critics saluted the punctilious, remorseless grotesquerie that Grosz and he started to practise: 'the new objectivity'.

The German empire's collapse had joined a global implosion of regimes, including that of its Habsburg neighbours in Vienna. Across the Atlantic, mass uprisings in Mexico had been unleashing the revolutionary mayhem dreamt of in Posada's prints; across Asia, the educated elites were now installing forms of government that promised high-speed modernization. With the overthrow of China's imperial dynasty in 1909, of Iran's Qajar shahs in 1925, and the demise of the Ottoman sultanate between 1908 and 1923, great and ancient traditions of court patronage and specialist artistry came to an end. The most momentous move of all came in Russia. In 1917 its masses and elite moved together to topple the rule of the tsars. Under the incoming Communist regime, the national aesthetic of gaily coloured folk decoration that had inspired Kandinsky's generation was more or less cut adrift. Instead, factions among the intelligentsia feuded as they attempted to steer the former empire towards their rival versions of modernity. They retained the sense of social responsibility driving the Realist painter Repin (see p. 345), if not his artistic language.

288 Otto Dix, *Skat Players*, 1920. 'If I can't be famous, I want at least to be infamous.' So claimed the heavily rebuked young Dix in 1919. He was ingeniously mischievous in his assaults on respectability. Here, he drew on horrific shots of the war-wounded published in the radical press, together with Dada collage techniques. The right-hand officer sports a prosthetic jaw of silver cigarette-packet foil inscribed 'Brand Dix', with the artist's passport photo attached. His jacket is cut from a cheap paper-based material used for clothing in Germany at the end of the war as stocks of other stuffs ran dry.



289 Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International*, 1919. The final structure would have stood 400 metres (1,300 feet) high.



The initiative quickly passed from the Suprematist Malevich to his rival, Vladimir Tatlin. Tatlin had visited Picasso's Paris studio in 1914. He was hooked by the projecting cardboard planes and extemporized strings of the picture-object *Guitar*; he saw in them a summons for artists to put new shapes out into the world. To *intervene* in that world, using ready-to-hand materials; to 'construct' upwards and outwards from their drawing boards, into the actual conditions of space and time that surrounded them. In 1919, while countless European communities were opting for restoratively classical monuments to their war dead, Tatlin designed a future-facing *Monument to the Third International* [289]. The Third International was the newly formed organization by which the Communist Party resolved to spread its revolution worldwide. A huge spiral of steel, enclosing stacked chambers (a slow-turning cylinder below, a fast one above, a tetrahedron between), would hurtle towards the sky, straddling St Petersburg's River Neva and embodying the hopes of the world's workers.

Tatlin's giant leap upward promised to surmount such previous world-surmounters as Bruegel's Babel and Boullée's visionary cosmic sphere [see 157, 223], not to mention Paris's Eiffel Tower. It would be art, it would be architecture, but not as they had ever been known before. Needless to say, it was brought to earth by the scepticism of politicians (in a country gripped by famine and counter-revolutionary invasions) – and also of Tatlin's colleagues. Insufficiently practical, in the view of Alexandr Rodchenko. He wanted art to get right away from crafting objects of privilege and to get it stuck into transforming living conditions. The new society might have a use for propaganda and design, but none for paintings and monuments. For pictures, it could employ the camera. Rodchenko's own camera aimed to jolt the passer-by with a street geometry yet more bracing than Strand's. He set about to giddy the spectator with views from the parapet or the gutter – as it were, to sweep him off his all too complacent feet. For all their differences both Rodchenko and Tatlin became known as 'Constructivists' – builders of a new society. Yet further voices in the same loose bag were arguing (as we shall see) that the *Monument's* skeletal dynamism pointed the way back to new possibilities for creating 'fine art' product.

To rebuild, first demolish. In the years around 1920, the twin themes of Construction and Dada had a natural reciprocity. The combination took on another flavour when imported to a nation that had been furiously modernizing for sixty years. Since the death of Hiroshige in 1858, artists in Tokyo – the renamed Edo – had bolted through oil-painting styles from *plein air* to expressionism as swiftly as the economy around them lurched forward. In the eyes of Murayama Tomoyoshi, returning in 1923 after a year in avant-garde Berlin, Japanese painters had thus become complicit in a segregation of 'art' from the contemporary realities around them. With equal urgency he assembled a grouping of friends who helped him stage exhibitions. The 'Mavoists' proclaimed a new continuity between creation and consumerism. Almost overnight, Murayama's flamboyant looks and rhetoric made him a centre of press attention.

A now-vanished Murayama assemblage [290] taps insistently into the fetishism of shopping. Duchamp's idea of the ready-made takes on a gift-wrapped allure, and that Western-style high-heeled shoe has connotations as erotic as the nape-hairs in an Utamaro print. From designating personal accessories as art, it was a short move to using body traces; indeed, the Mavoists took to attaching strands of their hair to copies of a short-lived review that contained shots of themselves cross-dressing in 'living sculpture' performances. Their work roughly mirrored that of the Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, who produced assemblages of detritus in 1920s Germany, and prefigured the later box pieces of Joseph

290 Murayama Tomoyoshi, *Work Employing Flower and Shoe*, c. 1923. Exhibits like these, sharply translating European avant-garde tactics to Japanese contexts, were accompanied by the manifestos of Murayama's Mavo group. 'We stand at the vanguard, and will eternally stand there.... We advance. We create. We ceaselessly affirm and negate.' The Mavo experiments briefly caught Tokyo's attention because the early 1920s were a highpoint for Japanese liberalism. By the decade's end, the militaristic elements that would lead the nation into the Second World War were in the ascendant.



Cornell in America. Almost as abruptly as their scene appeared, it evaporated. From 1925 some headed for leftist politics, some for theatre. As with other moments in avant-garde history, the photographic records now offer rich material for the nostalgia and aestheticism against which the original participants were trying to fight.

Behind vision, beyond vision

Europe, USA, 1920s–1930s

These, then, are some prevailing features of the artist's world after the traumatic wars and revolutions of the 1910s: a host of new – and for the most part 'harder' and leaner – stylisms, of open-ended significance. The mesmerizing power of what came to be known as the 'culture industry' – Hollywood, publicity, photojournalism, etc. The progressive agenda of visual re-education; the leftist agenda of mass revolution; the sheer intransigent agenda of breaking with *all previous forms* of human experience. And, contending or intermingling with them, yearnings for stability, restoration, tradition. In this section and the next I shall glance at the ways in which various artists and groups steered through these pressures.

Other 1920s initiatives reflected Russian Constructivism. In Holland a design avant-garde had formed around the magazine *De Stijl* in 1917, while in Germany Walter Gropius created a seedbed for progressive, socially

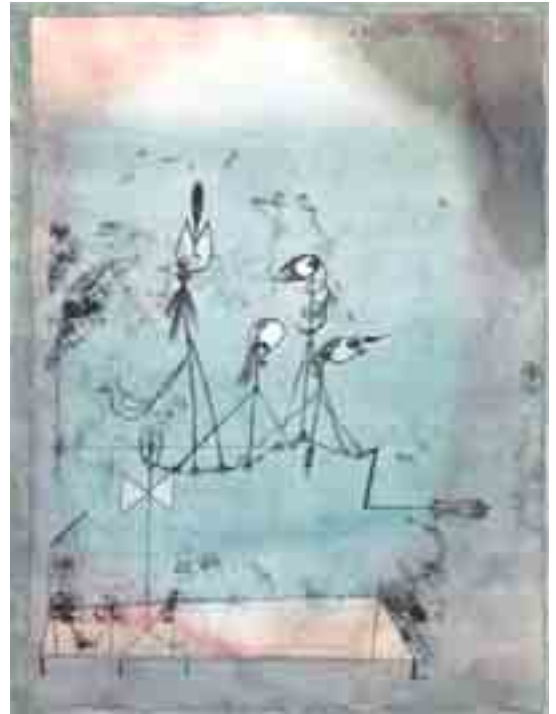
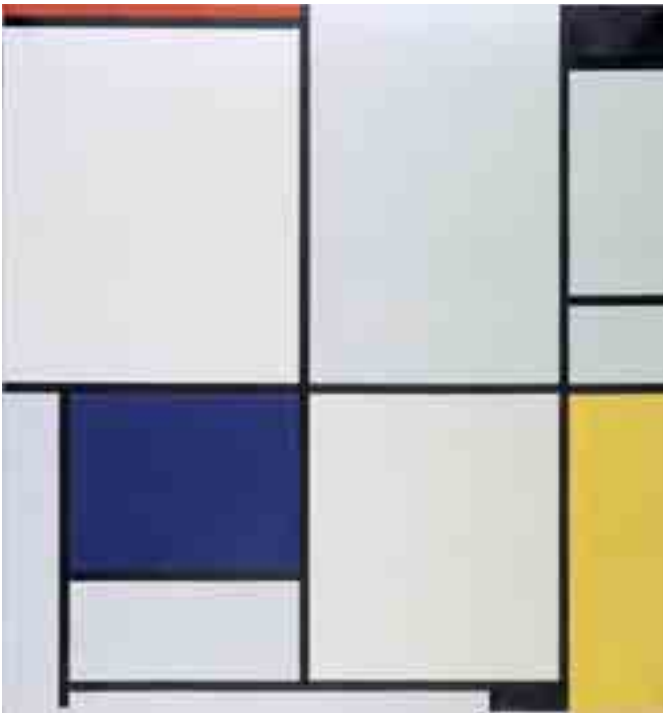
oriented design when he founded the college known as the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1921.* Painters participated in both. Piet Mondrian was a leading member of the Dutch group; like so many other visitors to 1910s Paris, this landscapist and dedicated theosophist had drawn inspiration from the Cubists' experiments. What Picasso and Braque were up to suggested that one could systematically analyse the cues that prompted vision. He set about paring down the components of his landscape images rather as Brancusi was paring down his figures, and with a similar intent: the nearer to simplicity, the nearer to the spiritually ideal. By 1920, he was left with an absolutely minimal grammar of signs – vertical lines, horizontal lines, primary colours. The sequence of explorations that led to this abstraction seemed to proceed with an inexorable reductive logic.

From this point on, the only way forward was to start building up again. In the 1921 *Tableau I: with Red, Black, Blue and Yellow* [291], Mondrian was asking the eye to focus on its own capacity to judge relations and balances, and on its own desire for clarity. Initially, the exercise seems bracing, refreshing, dazzlingly chill (that old Dutch taste for austerity resurfaces, which once we saw in Vermeer). And then, slyly, it begins to tantalize. The closed rectangle in the centre and its larger top-left cousin lead the dance of spaces, and all seems to turn around them, as if they catalysed a chemical reaction – an explosion of orderliness. The red, blacks and yellow open onto the world beyond the picture-edge, projecting the redesigned environment that De Stijl liked to dream of onto those undefined spaces without. Perhaps abstraction was really a new-created parallel to figure painting: a more potent way of inducing illusions.

Germany's Bauhaus aimed for a progressive probity, and it set standards for clean-lined, ergonomically efficient design that would be imitated all over the world. Yet its internal history, during twelve years of operation and two changes of location, zigzagged with tempestuous tensions between the host of charismatic innovators that it employed. One of these was Kandinsky, who joined it along with a friend he had made in pre-war Munich, Paul Klee. Klee – a dry, get-your-head-down-and-get-on-with-it presence on the staff – stalwartly pursued a visual investigation of enormous implications. It would give the college's democratic aspirations a whole new level of outreach.

Like Kandinsky, Klee was interested in relating art to music, bringing a more analytical intelligence to the issue. Like Mondrian, Klee picked apart and isolated the fundamental components of picture-making. In his hands, however, they turned into a toy-box. He played, trying out a

* Other important parallels to Constructivism include, in France, the projects of the architect Le Corbusier and the painter Fernand Léger, and in Poland, those of the husband and wife Władysław Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro.



291 Piet Mondrian, *Tableau I: with Red, Black, Blue and Yellow*, 1921. © 2007 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust, c/o HCR International, Warrenton, VA, USA. During the decade before this painting, Mondrian had progressively stripped his art down to a minimum of means. He eliminated natural appearances and all but orthogonal lines, relying on black and white and the primaries. In canvases such as this he started to explore the aesthetic appeal of this austere language, deploying a subtle combination of harmonic proportions and off-balance playfulness. In the flesh, the brushwork doing the blocking-in has a surprisingly hefty physicality.

292 Paul Klee, *Twittering Machine*, 1922.

variety without boundaries. In his drawings and watercolours, articulate academic thought reached out and communed with the anomalies of the solitary imagination, discovering dignity in doodles and resonant power in the frail and tremulous. Klee's investigations kept track with those of the expanding science of psychology. From the early 1900s onwards, researchers had been opening their eyes to the art of children and of the mentally ill. A kind of empathy underlies the daft charm of a pen-and-watercolour experiment like the *Twittering Machine* [292]; in a sense, anyone who chances their imagination on paper, whether skilled or unskilled, is risking absurdity. The title encapsulates what Klee has found himself making: a geometric hardware that flowers organically, bursting into song. In fact, this sheet of 1922 pitches into a reciprocity of hard and soft that had begun to resonate throughout the field of 'advanced' art. It innocently echoes the far larger, infinitely chillier masterwork of sexual-mechanical absurdity to which Duchamp devoted his ingenuity between 1915 and 1923 – the so-called *Large Glass*, one of the great all-swallowing black holes of modern art interpretation.

Mondrian and Klee, with their wish to re-educate the eye, seemed to put a question mark over the whole possibility of painting from observation. But, as I've indicated, during the 1920s other artists such as Dix were seizing on it as if onto a lifeline. The 'call to order' that Dix heeded in Germany had a separate voice in Italy, where Giorgio Morandi would

spend four decades from 1920 placing a small repertory of vessels on a tabletop under the muted light of his Bologna studio and responding to the resultant combinations. At the opposite extreme to this steady dialogue with the sullen otherness of objects lay the high-tension drama of Chaim Soutine in Paris.

Soutine belonged to a generation of Jews who were fleeing deteriorating conditions in the East European *shtetl* to make artistic careers in the West. After the war he crossed paths with other bohemian immigrants in the scene loosely known as ‘the school of Paris’, but he acknowledged no

293 Chaim Soutine, *Carcass of Beef*, c. 1925.



role model more recent than Rembrandt. The Old Master had often made an equation between oil paint and flesh, never more so than in a slaughterhouse canvas of 1655. It was this that prompted Soutine to haul to his studio the raw, decaying weight assailed in the 1925 *Carcass of Beef* [293]. His slashing cyans and vermilions enacted a ritual of total immediacy – as if he might force open the womb of the visible, re-enter and be one with it. Whatever we might term the instinct – ‘realist’ or ‘expressionist’ – its cornered urgency and pathos were as intense as anything in Dada.

Most ‘realisms’ built on 19th-century foundations. Edward Hopper’s *Night Windows* [294] transfers the cropped, abrupt visions of Menzel, Degas and Hammershøi to an unlocated slice of urban America. As in Menzel’s *Balcony Room* [see 246], windows – and a billowy curtain – confront us with a sudden moment in the mind. The stark, perturbing flash has an unresolved intensity that reflects back on the viewer (*voyeur*, perhaps) just as much as it evokes the severe American modernity that we saw in Strand’s photograph [see 286]. Hopper had studied in Europe for four years from 1906, but would spend the following six decades focusing on homegrown subject-matter. This work was painted in 1928, when his isolated characters and blocks of hard light were just achieving a firm niche in the nation’s consciousness. Hopper’s sturdily efficient organization of tones went beyond Manet’s in its accommodation to the age of the camera, reserving only a busy, listless scumble as an indicator of painterliness. (Cinema would return the compliment by quoting Hopper’s compositions in many of its sets.) This tamped-down touch, and the tart palette that reasserts in a wry, back-handed fashion the possibility of poetry, also appear in Hopper’s European contemporaries, among them Giorgio de Chirico in Paris.*

De Chirico was not a realist. Rather, for a few years during the 1910s this solitary and querulous Italian took his cue from Nietzsche’s rallying cry (‘The “real world” – an idea no longer of any use ... let us abolish it!’) to conjure up a dream imagery of deserted arcades at late evening, strewn with anomalous objects. Its eeriness proved a big stimulus to artists coming of age a decade later, such as René Magritte [295]. The Symbolist credo that art should ‘use the visible to express the invisible’ informed both de Chirico and Magritte: indeed, it may have been what the terse and reticent Hopper was holding up his sleeve. Beyond that, though, the analogy between the American painter and the Belgian collapses – as a glance at the eminently reproducible *Not To Be Reproduced* will show. The back in Hopper’s window backs up our trust in pictures serviceably enough: the doubled back in Magritte’s mirror doubles back on it.

* William Orpen and William Nicholson in London could also be brought into the comparison.

We have an instinctive urge to get between the twinned pieces of deadpan paintwork and find a face. In our rush, Magritte meant us to bump our heads against ‘mystery’ – the alien unfathomability not just of pictures, but of the very world we think we know. By a very different route from Mondrian or Klee – or Picasso before them, with his *Guitar* – Magritte was unstitching the logic of familiar sign systems.* There was a loose correspondence between the work of these artists and the intellectual activities of Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss professor who had analysed the logic of language, and also of Sigmund Freud, the Viennese medic who had opened up a multi-level theory of the mind. It is true that Magritte, working in a Brussels that had been one of the leading centres of Symbolist activity, found little of interest in the writings of Freud. But this was far from the case elsewhere.

Magritte was a signed-up member of a group headed by the writer André Breton in Paris. Breton, a bloodhound for intellectual excitement, had read Freud while working on a mental ward. He launched the ‘Surrealist Movement’ in 1924 in a bid to reanimate the by now dissipated energies of Dada. He wanted an avant-garde that would take the cause of revolution onto a deeper level by unleashing the subconscious mental energies described by the Viennese theorist. ‘Pure psychic automatism’ was his catchphrase for all or any method of tapping them. Like Magritte’s painting, Breton’s Surrealism was an intellectual proposition, bookish but intrinsically faceless. Like Dada, it launched out in declared opposition to ‘Art’ as such. But Breton’s yearning for moments when inner desires and the outward world would rise up to meet one another – thus crystallizing in a ‘super-reality’ – offered a fresh direction for tactics that the earlier movement had already initiated.

In the new agenda of automatism, ‘chance’ discoveries became necessary discoveries: the ex-Dadaist Max Ernst found surprise images by collaging recycled 19th-century woodcuts and by rubbing paper over wood and sacking, a technique dubbed *frottage*. Another immigrant from Dada, the sculptor Jean Arp, introduced a repertoire of abstracted, curvaceous, ‘biomorphic’ shapes. His forms had an affinity with the minimal signs floating in the canvases of Joan Miró [296], a further participant when the group started exhibiting in 1925. And here we see how convoluted the cross-currents of artistic elimination were becoming, like waters rushing down a drain. Miró had one foot in Paris but another in Catalonia: he was a native of Barcelona, the city of Gaudí’s playfully patterned Art Nouveau architecture. His art had begun on a note of gaily coloured mock naivety, but as of

* Compare the previously quoted statement by Picasso (p. 372): ‘I too believe that everything is unknown.’



294 Edward Hopper, *Night Windows*, 1928.



295 René Magritte, *Not To Be Reproduced*, 1937. 'My painting is visible images that conceal nothing', said Magritte. 'They evoke mystery ... Mystery means nothing. It is unknowable.' His words are hard to grasp. Especially when, in this case, we know that the picture came about when the eccentric English millionaire Edward James commissioned Magritte to paint canvases for his ballroom. Magritte depicted the back of James's head, twice over. Is this then an anti-portrait, which *refuses* to represent James? Or not even that, merely a paint surface without meaning? There is however the name of Edgar Allan Poe on the book on the mantelpiece, reflected in customary fashion.



296 Joan Miró, *The Birth of the World*, 1925.

1925, he had just encountered the work of Klee and his idea of play was radically changing. Here, the possibilities sketched out in Klee's little *Twittering Machine* are exploded over two and a half metres (eight feet) by a painter who was by his own account half-hallucinating from hunger and driven excitement. The form-fragments are just enough to hold in place a fury of hurled pigment-clouds and downpours of varnish. Miró has pitched himself into creating what lies before creation: *The Birth of the World*, reads the title. His art would later become more composed, regaining its former colourful charm. But in Miró's early thirties the work of 'the most Surrealist of us all' (as Breton regarded him) was as reckless in its reach for metaphysical bedrock as the old-age work of his fellow countryman Goya.

The Surrealist accent on the soft and organic as a counter to the hard and geometric became louder as another painter from Spain, Salvador Dalí, joined the group. Dalí brought along an expertise in sable-brush still-life rendering and his own fascination with Freud; also, his fascinations with shit and limp flesh. He looked hard at earlier fantasy artists such as Bosch and the French artist Grandville [see 242], whose illustrations provided a template for wide swathes of Surrealist product. Dalí adopted their visual double-takes in a method he entitled 'critical paranoia' – a weapon that he meant to wield in a culture war against the hardline rationalistic modernity proposed by Constructivist designers.

Dalí's 'hand-painted dream photographs' and his genius for publicity stunts turned him into the press star of the movement during the 1930s. But it was a venture of his into film that provided Surrealism with its most definitive icon. In 1929 he collaborated with Luis Buñuel on a short entitled *Un Chien andalou*. The script for the opening read as follows:

Night. On a balcony. Close by, a man sharpens his razor. He studies the sky through the pane and sees ... a wisp of cloud drifting toward a full moon. Cut to: the head of a young woman with her eyes wide open. One of her eyes nears the razor's blade. Now the cloud passes over the moon. The blade slices the eye of the young woman. [297]

In the cinema – the 'waking dream', the only visual format inherently aligned with Breton's agenda – a host of impulses converge in a sudden revolutionary encounter of jelly and steel, poetic, cathartic, unwatchable. One way to second-guess the nightmare historically would be to think of all that had happened to 'soft', naive vision ever since Muybridge's time; another, to think how the gazes that recorded and inspected had grown ever more intolerable. As with many moments in modernist history, there is a surplus of motives. But Dalí's and Buñuel's cinematic breakthrough to

297 Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, *Un Chien andalou* ('An Andalusian Dog'), 1929. Jelly is about to well from the cut (the eye used was actually a calf's). Then a transvestite will fall off a bicycle. Then a man will raise a hand crawling with ants. Then another will drag a piano laden with rope-bound priests and rotting donkeys. The scenario was conjured up by the two young Spaniards Buñuel and Dalí when they met in Paris. As Buñuel explained, 'No idea or image that would lend itself to a rational explanation of any kind would be accepted.'



blindness dazzles most of the visual artworks in its immediate vicinity more or less out of sight. Generically, the paintings, sculptures and drawings of the Surrealists have a look as if intentions were ghostily slipping through a 'medium' rather than actually inhabiting a material. In a word, they seem to me feeble. Dalí himself would be expelled from the movement by the doctrinaire Breton, who objected to his fondness for Fascism. But the activities of this 'revolutionary' group became inexorably drawn into service as an adjunct to the fashion world of the later 1930s, the time of Magritte's image. Its twinned heads of slicked-back hair turn out to belong to a millionaire patron. How deep was the mystery? How shallow?

Close ranks

Mexico, USA, Europe, Cuba, 1929–1945

Not entirely fair, I admit: artists need patronage. Diego Rivera was getting his from the US ambassador to Mexico when he painted *Crossing the Ravine* [298] in 1930, part of a mural sequence for the Palace of Cortés in Cuernavaca. Rivera was a participant in the 'call to order' that affected so many painters in Europe after the First World War. He had spent most of the 1910s in Paris, a scholarship student from Mexico busy trying out Cubism. But, having quarrelled with the Cubists, he took up with alacrity the suggestion of José Vasconcelos, a politician-intellectual in Mexico's





298 Diego Rivera, *Crossing the Ravine*, 1930.

radical post-revolutionary government, that he spend 1920 in Italy studying the medieval masters of fresco. Dismissing ‘ultra-intellectual’ experiment and embracing the people’s cause, Rivera returned from his studies to Mexico, where he swiftly evolved a supple language for the adornment of public buildings. Two other Vasconcelos protégés, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, worked alongside him in the new ‘Muralist’ movement. What seemed a tradition-hugging instinct in the European context might prove a socially progressive one in the Mexican: it offered an education service to a populace no more literate than that addressed six centuries before by Giotto and Lorenzetti. Here, in Cuernavaca, they were being told how their land had passed from Aztec hands to those of the conquistador who built the palace. *They*, Rivera insisted, were the tale’s protagonists, the muscle pushing history forward – however traduced by one promising power-seeker after another. They should reconnect with their old myths (an Aztec jaguar knight stalks the foreground) – which, if rightly interpreted, would point the way forward towards Marxism.

Unfazed by Rivera’s rhetoric but responsive to the vigour and warmth of his designs, Ambassador Morrow (whose fortune had come from the Wall Street bank in Strand’s photograph) built bridges for him into American institutional patronage. Soon Rivera was painting epic scenes of the motor industry in Detroit. The pluralism of capitalist art-lovers was challenged when he tried including a portrait of Lenin in murals for New York’s Rockefeller Center (the pictures in question were destroyed). Nonetheless, there was a niche in the United States for art on such lines. Rivera’s instinct for local roots and his tubular, easy-to-read figure language had a kinship with the work of the mid-westerners Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood, whose folksy ‘Regionalism’ became another major feature of the 1930s American scene. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 had sent long-reverberating shockwaves of unemployment and anxiety throughout the United States and far beyond. In the new mood of crisis, there were appetites both for a right-leaning art, asserting national identity, and a left-leaning art, proclaiming international solidarity. The Roosevelt administration, which swept in in 1932, became keen to co-opt artists into its political solution, the ‘New Deal’. From 1935 it initiated a Federal Arts Program, promising them a living wage for executing public works. Very largely these followed the Mexican Muralist example.

Wall Street had crashed during the last week of October 1929. Just over a week later, New York’s Museum of Modern Art opened its doors for the first time. Its director, Alfred Barr, now had a base for his mission to communicate European modernism to American patrons, American



299 (opposite) Naum Gabo, *Torsion*, 1929/1936.

300 Barbara Hepworth, *Two Forms*, 1933. A circle is scored near the far tip of the horizontal form, as if this were the eye of a bird. On the cloven form, a rippling line suggests the knuckles of a hand that clutches that bird. These nuances only underline the work's evident sexual connotations. Hepworth's later sculpture would have fewer figurative qualities, moving towards the abstraction of Gabo. Alabaster, a very soft stone quarried in the Midlands, was extensively carved in medieval England. It was also used by Jacob Epstein, the most important predecessor to Hepworth and Henry Moore in British modernist sculpture.



artists and the American public: to introduce them to Matisse, to the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, to exhibits from the Bauhaus ...

But let's come at the tensions of the 1930s from a different angle: let's set them on a tabletop. Exhibit A: Naum Gabo's *Torsion* [299], first created in Berlin in 1929. Exhibit B: Barbara Hepworth's *Two Forms* [300], carved in London in 1933. Gabo had moved from Moscow to Berlin in 1922 and would lose the original piece when he left there for Paris ten years later, reconstructing it in London in 1936. Throughout these bumpy transitions, linking up and falling out with other equally argumentative luminaries of Constructivism – beginning with Tatlin – Gabo held to a consistent aesthetic. Its nature was, quite literally, transparent. In his doctrine, modernity opened up the possibility of materials such as perspex, which opened up the possibility of shifting the focus of sculpture from the figure to the pure idea. Only the will to mould, saw and slot together a technical unity in space distinguishes *Torsion* from an algebraic equation. Tatlin had turned his tower-dream around the dynamics of the historical moment, but if Gabo's version of Constructivism represented any political aspiration it was a utopia in which the mind could dwell on abstract stasis.

Two Forms, by contrast, locks into physical circumstance, feeling its way into sex and stoniness at once. Hepworth had visited Paris early in 1933 and may well have seen a macabre sculpture by the young Surrealist Alberto Giacometti that presented a variation on the eyeball-slicing theme. She would also have seen the globular sexual reveries of the

middle-aged Picasso, now realigning himself with the latest avant-garde. In its push for a non-visual impact – an empathetic shudder in the gut and the loins – *Two Forms* is of a piece with such Surrealism, but it shows a warmer sensibility in its pull on the alabaster's grain and on its boulder-like irregularities. Britain remained central to global politics and economics, but it had been peripheral to the development of modernist art. William Morris's pastoral values retained a strong foothold during the 1930s, when the sculpture of Hepworth (along with that of her colleague from Yorkshire, Henry Moore) was coming to attention. Both artists, with their care for the found qualities of stone and wood, touched on this liking for landscape. The type of sculptural thinking taking place here – the piece-plus-piece formula, the pierced central form – came out of the radical new possibilities opened up twenty years before by Picasso's *Guitar*. But now, once again, things became *solid*: here, in miniature, was a model on which one could make statues once again. Hepworth and especially Moore would go on to become specialists in the modernist monument. If any artist were on Hepworth's mind, however, while she clenched these forms together, it was probably another British modernist, her lover Ben Nicholson, a creator of Mondrianesque relief panels. Twinned graffiti scored onto the locked stones allude to their intimacy – rock-art endearments, as it were. The Palaeolithic past was another of the new century's great rediscoveries.

Torsion and *Two Forms* come from contrasting hard and soft ends of the avant-garde spectrum, but aesthetically they would prove a perfect match. After Gabo's arrival in London in 1935, his linear thinking and will to abstraction would reroute Hepworth's work. Meanwhile, a little of her sensuality and feel for mass entered his own formal repertory. Each would contribute, together with Moore and Nicholson, to the tone of the culturally respectable 'high art' of the mid-century.

Yes, but let's gatecrash their tabletop soirée with Exhibit C: *Les Girls* [301]. The bronze figurine had been a cherished accoutrement of art-lovers' mantelpieces ever since the late 15th century, following in the wake of Donatello's *David* (Giambologna in the late 16th had been an outstanding master of the form). And then, in the mid 19th, a vogue for polychromy – that is, for introducing colour – had set in. Demêtre Chiparus in Paris was a master of polychroming techniques, employing the new stocks of ivory that Belgian traders were ripping from the Congo to insert rouged faces and hands in figures that responded to the rhythms of South Asian sculpture (the Chola *Shiva Nataraja* for example: 82) and to yet another, yet more glamorous rediscovery, the turquoise and gold of Tutankhamun's tomb, revealed to the world in 1922.



301 Demètre Chiparus, *Les Girls*, c. 1930.

‘Fascinating ...’, I hear Gabo and Hepworth saying: ‘*just get that out of here!*’ Actually, at the time of my imaginary early 1930s encounter, Gabo might not even have been bothered about dismissing *Les Girls* as kitsch. Chiparus’s operation lay at the heart of Art Deco. This was a style named after a 1925 ‘Exposition des Arts Décoratifs’ in Paris, a show that launched onto the mass market a modernistic, semi-post-Cubistic version of pre-war Art Nouveau. ‘Serious’ artists gave it a wide berth. It would have been the traitors in his own camp that worried the fractious Gabo, for instance Chiparus’s fellow Romanian exile Brancusi, with his all too sleek eye-pleasers ...

But the rise of strongman regimes through the 1930s would send the balance between so-called ‘serious art’ and so-called ‘kitsch’ into a terrifying lurch. In Russia, the wrangling Constructivists had faced increasing repression from 1925: in 1932, Stalin outlawed all avant-garde activity, in effect ordering Soviet artists to turn back to the model of



302 Vera Mukhina, *Factory Worker and Collective-Farm Girl*, 1935. This is the maquette for a 24-metre (79-foot) monument of stainless steel that surmounted the Soviet pavilion at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris. The factory worker and collective-farm girl brandished their weapons at a yet more gigantic Nazi pavilion that directly faced the Soviets'. This was the apogee of Mukhina's career. Born in Riga and trained in Paris, she aimed at a 'manly art' with some of the qualities espoused by Bartholdi, creator of the *Statue of Liberty*. This piece, she claimed, was to be 'a breakthrough into the future, to the light and sun, to the feeling of human strength'.

Repin (which now became 'Socialist Realism') and to look no further. In 1933, while Rodchenko retreated to the easel painting he had bid goodbye to eleven years before, Murayama in Japan was signing a confession of his ideological crimes to escape prison; and in the meantime Hitler was being elected. Italy, ruled by the Fascists from 1922, was the one zone where creative innovation and the cult of power overlapped not only in architecture and design (the ambiguities here are endless, wherever you look), but in studio work: as well as the painter Morandi, many others involved in the 1920s 'call to order', such as the sculptor Arturo Martini, willingly lent the regime their support. But it was Germany's, rather than Italy's, version of discipline that set the pace for the 1930s: the closing down of the Bauhaus, the parading of the work of the Expressionists in the 1937 touring exhibition of 'Degenerate Art', the recourse to that Neoclassical ethic of militaristic solidarity that was first expressed in David's *Oath of the Horatii*. All the veins of cinema-based mass culture – repetition, fitness and glamour – that *Les Girls* taps so ingratiatingly would feed into Nazi and Stalinist spectacle. The dictatorships' extra ingredient of heroic pomp currently seems more or less passé. Many a reader, passing their eyes over Soviet Russia's master-monument of 1937, Vera Mukhina's *Factory Worker and Collective-Farm Girl* [302], might well remark 'How quaint!' But in his insidious instinct for the inane, Chiparus remains an artist for today.

'It's fun!' The taste for untrammelled hedonism that ran strong in the democracies throughout the interwar years had a habit of overriding progressive intentions – witness the Rockefeller Center's swagger of Art Deco statuary, triumphing over Rivera's axed murals – and of co-opting avant-gardes, its neatest icon being the invitation to oral sex issuing from Méret Oppenheim's café banter with other Paris Surrealists in 1936, a teacup lined with fur. How much sense, in fact, does a progress-led account of the 1930s make? What if we were to steer against the customary historical current, turning from the up-and-comers to the has-beens?

A look back suggests that one function of Post-Impressionism had been to pave a way for tourism. Where easels had been planted, hotels soon sprouted: Pont-Aven, Tahiti, above all the south of France. The Mediterranean became a theme park for nostalgic cultural fantasies, and between the wars many of those who had launched them decamped from Paris to settle there. Not far from Matisse, painting a hothouse of odaliskues and fabrics in Nice, the still older Pierre Bonnard lived with his partner Marthe in a small coastal villa, quietly extending the possibilities of an art that had taken root under Gauguin's influence back in the 1890s. Maintaining both a Symbolist faith in inward experience and an

Impressionist faith in visual stimulus, Bonnard mulled over images of this small world with a strategic hesitancy – one smudge forward, two blobs back – refusing to let them resolve into immediacy. A recollection of Marthe in their bathroom [303] from 1936 probes and multiplies the fall of sunlight to create an iridescent ocean of memory, slowness and privacy.

The motif, to which Bonnard would return again, presents a kind of resistance or counter-history to the public themes of this chapter. One could weave a far more complex narrative around such private myths, taking in the slightly comparable visions of the Venezuelan Impressionist Armando Reverón, the yet more oceanic paintings of water-lily ponds by the elderly Monet (who died in 1926), the inturnd absurdism of Duchamp's *Large Glass*, and the many intricate autobiographical oeuvres of the period – Max Beckmann in Germany, Stanley Spencer in England, Frida Kahlo in Mexico, for instance. Increasingly available through mass education, 'art' was becoming a medium for self-exploration among countless thousands far beyond their circles. Meanwhile at the system's centre, Picasso, having for some years pursued a personal, quasi-archaic mythology of beasts and women, discovered – with the luck of genius – its potential public resonance when he was asked to contribute to a pavilion for the leftist cause in the Spanish Civil War at an international exhibition

303 Pierre Bonnard, *Nude in the Bath*, 1936.





304 Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937.

in Paris in 1937. *Guernica* [304], using his mythic repertory to show the effects of Nazi bombs on a Basque town, became the rallying point for an increasingly cornered progressive community, now glad to huddle around the figurative language many had dismissed two decades or so before.

After the protracted defeat of the Spanish Republic, other parts of Europe fell more quickly to the Nazis. The occupation of Paris in 1940 sent artists and intellectuals fleeing to the port of Marseille to seek a passage across the Atlantic. Joining Breton and other Surrealist luminaries on board the *Capitaine Paul-LeMerle* was a protégé of Picasso's, Wifredo Lam, who thus in 1941 returned to the Cuba he had left eighteen years before. With *The Jungle* [305], the large gouache on paper he executed two years later (no canvas being then available), the 'researches' of primitivists in Paris were reclaimed by an artist wishing to assert his African ancestry. While unmistakably a near-relative of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, it is an altogether more collected composition: Lam's alternation of columns and depths seems organized with an eye to the pictorial structures of classicists like Poussin [see 193]. But those hot depths belonged, in Lam's intention, to the Cuban hinterland his people had worked for white exploiters. From its sugar canes and tobacco he summoned up the deities of Santería, their folk religion, to loom and commune – half in cryptic defensiveness, like carvings in an African village, half to plant a big aggressive foot within the doorframe of Western culture. Lam had met Aimé Césaire, the Martinican theorist of *négritude* or black self-reliance, on his journey home, and like many of the Surrealists had also been reading Carl Gustav Jung's ideas about the

‘archetypes’ of the imagination. Starting from Lam’s picture of 1943, the anti-colonial movement would develop a new public use for the notion of myth. What happened after the other passengers on the *Capitaine Paul-LeMerle* made their way to New York – to converge with the European beachhead established there by Barr’s Museum of Modern Art – is material for the chapter to come.

As to the last choice of illustration for the present chapter, I feel uneasy, and also feel that it might be evasive not to explore that unease.

305 Wifredo Lam, *The Jungle*, 1943.

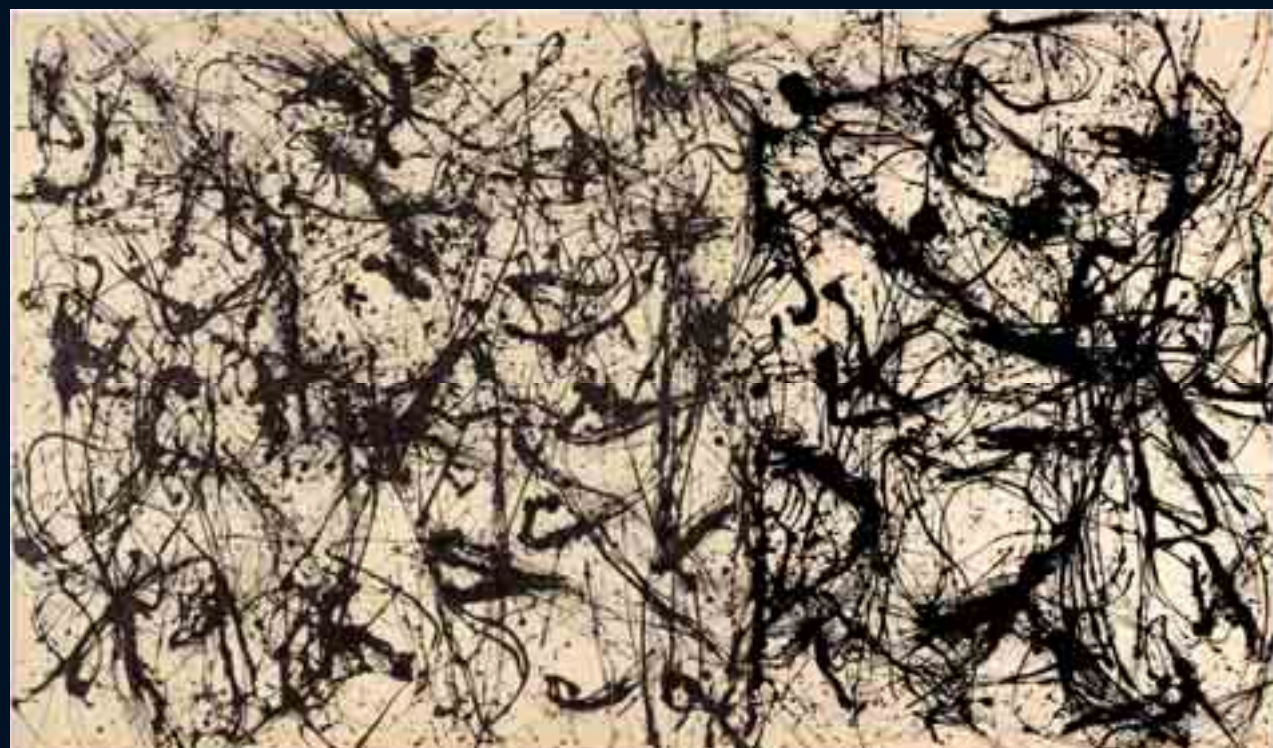


306 Felix Nussbaum, *In the Camp*, 1940. The camp was at Saint-Cyprien, on Mediterranean sand-dunes near France's border with Spain. Refugees who had fled Germany for Belgium and France were herded into it after the Nazis overran those countries in 1940. Bedding, heating and sanitation were virtually non-existent. Nussbaum managed to escape: he painted this and other memories of the experience while leading a covert existence back in Brussels. Previously his Jewishness had been an issue peripheral to his work, but his perspective now altered. A related canvas, displaying the same squalid background, gives prominence to the artist's own face. His glare is ferocious: he is determined to fight.

Several times here I have gone for what I feel is primary rather than what is derivative – to be frank, what I find more interesting: a Zande carving rather than a European primitivist sculpture; Lartigue's vision of speed rather than Boccioni's; Strand, not Duchamp, on America; Surrealism in film rather than in *frottage*. Here I am not sure. Felix Nussbaum was one of the many individualists painting through the 1920s and 1930s in what one might call a genteel minor key, steering a personal idiom between the naivety of Henri Rousseau, the laconic enigmas of de Chirico and the fantastical note struck by other Jewish artists like Marc Chagall. He fled Germany for Brussels when the Nazis took over in 1933 but was interned for two months after they invaded Belgium in 1940, an experience that *In the Camp* recollects [306]. In the following two years, working in hiding, he would turn towards the shrill marriage of Surrealistic myth and history painting practised by many London and Paris artists of this era, a phenomenon since known as 'neo-romanticism'; but here, his pictorial tactics are almost as stable and classical as those of the chapter's life-revering second image, Modersohn-Becker's *Mother and Child*.

In 1944 Nussbaum was on the last train that left Brussels for Auschwitz. My first instinct was to put some *photograph* at this point in the story. There would be a record of the atrocities of 1939 to 1945 by someone brave and compassionate – Dmitri Baltermants in Russia; Lee Miller, stepping out of Surrealist Paris; Robert Capa or some other among the journalist-artists who came together to form the Magnum agency in 1947. (The most celebrated, Henri Cartier-Bresson, spent most of the war as a prisoner of the Germans.) And it would offer us an opportunity to reflect on horror; and also, like monuments once did, a sense of dignity and meaning in the sheer act of witnessing. That might be in better taste. Here, the medium and manner that used to stand for 'European civilization' smear us in shame and bathos. Far (though not that far) from Dalí's charades of transgression, one man shits, one man slumps in a shit-brown blanket, one man wipes his backside. Which way does authenticity lie? Which way art?





FOREGROUND

Bombardments and ruins

USA, Britain, France, 1945–1955

For many at the time and more since, art in the mid-20th century revolved around a six-metre-square shed in a suburban hamlet on Long Island, New York. Inside, the brush of Jackson Pollock, fuelled from a can of enamel, flew low over a stretch of raw canvas covering the floor, whipping and splattering while the painter darted and dodged about his self-generated obstacle course. Enamel soaks into cotton and is quite soon touch-dry. Pinning up the results on the shed wall, Pollock could enact the transition from trance dance to art object – which we previously saw in the case of Uopie’s mask – in a single haul. Though not before re-enacting the ritual for the benefit of the camera: we have a shot of him mock-hovering a dry brush over *Number 32, 1950* [307], the sparest of the dizzy four-year run of canvases that came to embody modernist dreams of sheer, unqualified freedom.

‘Modernism’, ‘freedom’ and maybe even ‘art’ itself are words that seemed to carry an inbuilt American twang through much of the later 20th century. I say that as someone practising as a painter in England through some of that period; even more than earlier chapters, this concluding grapple with the art most immediately around us will have to be nakedly personal and tangential. Its final three sections, spreading out towards the place where I now stand, are informed (or maybe confused) by my ground-level experience of the multi-media conditions we now inhabit. The opening three, however, running through the decades during which New York replaced Paris as the world’s art capital, can at least set out from agreed historical ground.

We left New York in the mid-1930s, with its painters largely employed on the socially oriented mural schemes of the Federal Arts Program, yet also drawn to Alfred Barr’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and its challenging purchases from the European avant-garde. That interest was spurred by the arrival of avant-garde luminaries fleeing the Nazi takeover of Europe. Several Bauhaus teachers made their way across during the 1930s, followed by Mondrian and then by the Surrealists who had boarded ship at Marseille in 1941. The latter group sailed into New York society piloted by Peggy Guggenheim, an art-loving heiress newly married to their old associate Max

307 Jackson Pollock, *Number 32, 1950*, 1950.

Ernst. Under her patronage, Jungian mythologizing, rather like that of Wifredo Lam, caught on among young American artists such as Pollock – but so, gradually, did impatience with European condescension. The most promising of the city’s avant-gardists, Arshile Gorky, made his way past the innovations of Kandinsky and Miró and had shaken off the guidance of the Surrealist supremo André Breton by the time he took his own life in 1948. Meanwhile Pollock, putting an early hamfistedness and a drink problem behind him with his move to Long Island, pitched himself to ouflank his mentors – Picasso and, again, Miró – through sheer inner energy. Why not work from nature, a critic suggested. ‘*I am nature.*’

Pollock’s change of tempo from gnarled, mythic figure-stomps to an accelerated free-form fortissimo made good the Surrealists’ project of automatism at a time when the group itself was expiring. From many angles, it was swiftly recognized as the most compelling art of its time. It was a precarious achievement. Shortly after Pollock painted *Number 32*, the strain of performing his art for a film crew led him to hit the bottle again, setting in motion a personal decline ended by a car crash six years later. Its meaning was precarious too. Was Pollock’s art some holy ritual of liberated action? Or a gross, macho splatter of industrial materials by the can-load? Or a post-Cubist understanding of what painting now meant, a fusing of line and space?

The last interpretation was pushed by Clement Greenberg, a critic who made Pollock the standard-bearer for a forcefully argued vision of art’s destiny. The avant-garde cause in Europe had been fatally wounded in the course of its struggles with totalitarianism and kitsch; now, however, as Greenberg wrote in 1948, ‘the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power’. What were these ‘main premises’? The ongoing need for self-criticism: serious, modernist art must concern itself with its own specific means of operating – those being, for the painter, how marks related to flat surfaces, and for the sculptor, how forms related to space. By thinking about formal issues and ignoring the irrelevant clutter of representational demands, America’s artists might produce a public language to grace the nation’s global supremacy.

Greenberg’s advocacy helped dealers in home-grown talent to capitalize on the national economic boom that had taken off in the 1940s. How far his formalist doctrines related to Pollock’s intentions, or to those of other members of the New York School – the ‘Abstract Expressionists’, as they are just as often known: painters such as Clyfford Still and Barnett Newman – is another question. Certainly this generation shared in Greenberg’s sense of ambition: with a background in 1930s mural work for the Federal Arts

308 Mark Rothko, *White Center*, 1950. Rothko was ambitious for an art that might address the breadth and depth of human emotion. The format on which he concentrated from 1948 onwards was the upright over life-size canvas. It would present two or more alternate pads of colour on which the viewer might mull, their reciprocal pulsing suggestive of subcutaneous visions and, moreover, of internal dialogue. The vibrant colours of canvases such as this belong to a period when Rothko was still exuberantly excited by the new emotional realm he was exploring. Subsequently, his self-imposed ambitions started to afflict him, and in the late 1950s his work turned tragically sombre.



Program, they put forth gigantic, cinema-scale canvases. Like Greenberg they were on the attack, with grandiose rhetoric. If the critic spoke of Pollock ‘pulverizing value contrasts’, Mark Rothko, at the other end of the post-Surrealist spectrum, wished to ‘pulverize the finite associations with which our society increasingly enshrouds every aspect of our environment’.

Rothko, however, levelled his guns at commercial publicity, figuration and suchlike distractions so as to blast open a more intimate space for personal reflection. At home with Jewish cultures of reading and listening, he conceived of an art that expanded representation rather than excluded it, giving viewers access to a wider range of emotions. Less might mean more. The route he had adopted by 1950, in paintings like the two-metre-high *White Center* [308], was to coax big cloud-blocks of colour from the canvas



309 Graham Sutherland, *Palm Leaves*, 1947. Sutherland, a leading presence in postwar British art, liked to dwell on the qualities of tension inherent in plants and in his portrait sitters. The jaggedness of his visual language indirectly owed something to Surrealism. A hankering for spikes and a strident palette shows through here, even though the picture comes from a sojourn in the holiday resort of the French Riviera.

310 Russell Drysdale, *The Cricketers*, 1948. Drysdale was in his mid-thirties when he painted what soon became an icon of Australian national self-consciousness. He had a close personal acquaintance with the outback and also with recent developments in painting in Paris and London. *The Cricketers* derived from studies of a half-deserted late Victorian mining town in New South Wales. The eerie light thrown onto the stark tenement wall invests it with power, as if this desolation were a source from which to draw strength.

with a soft glazing-brush, getting them to pulse against one another – now drawing in, now glaring out – like alternate answers to any question the viewer might project on them. To the public, ambiguous but alluring emotional oracles; to artists drawn to the formalist doctrine, models for ‘colour field painting’, which fused pigment and canvas often through staining. The name by which the New Yorkers’ art became known straddled the same ambivalence. Did Abstract Expressionism revolve around issues of internal form, or around gigantic outpourings of selfhood?

Claiming that the true cause of modernism had migrated to Manhattan, Greenberg indicated that elsewhere there lay a strong hankering for tradition. Among the wider American public, the major artist of 1948 was Andrew Wyeth, turning to the medieval technique of tempera to paint bleak images of farm life in Maine. In Europe, the narrative realism that had become the international language of the left during the politicized 1930s was still being represented powerfully by painters like Italy’s Renato Guttuso. Alongside it, ruination and foreboding were themes that infused figurative art of the war-torn 1940s – from the shattered buildings of John Piper and the spiky plant-forms of Graham Sutherland in England [309] to an independent school of expressionists emerging on the other side of the world, Arthur Boyd, Russell Drysdale [310] and Sidney Nolan in Melbourne.

Artists peering at culture through the rear-view mirror were also securing themselves a niche. Balthus, an artist of international aristocratic origins based in France, painted rooms and streets and landscapes as if the pictorial spaces opened up by 15th-century masters like Piero della Francesca could be discovered again for the first time. A spicing of sexual reverie became his main hook on public attention. An altogether more spectacular impact was made by Francis Bacon with his studies – or desecrations – of a famous 17th-century portrait by Velázquez showing Pope Innocent X. Bacon had begun exhibiting his imagery in London in 1944: this *Study* [311] was painted nine years later. A piety turned upside down – what Bacon called the ‘exhilarated despair’ of a driven atheist – intertwined with an endgame reading of history. In Bacon’s studio, the Father of the Church was reduced to a terrified shimmer, caught between an outward and an inward void. Working from a photographic reproduction of the Old Master painting, Bacon jitterily transcribed the image and spliced it with a scream from a film still taken from the Russian director Sergei Eisenstein. For the art of painting, as Bacon saw it, there remained purely the challenge of delivering an instant, visceral shock. While they belonged to very different art worlds, Bacon and his fellow atheist Rothko each kindled a taste for a high-cultural hieratic with their insistently solemn portrait-format icons.



311 Francis Bacon, *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953.

London in the 1950s was without New York's momentum, but it had also escaped the traumatic cultural reckoning that befell other European cities when the Nazis marched in. In the space between, there was room for a variety of figure painters to flourish quietly. Two German Jewish refugees were developing acts that would later grab international attention. Lucian Freud, part of Bacon's circle, fixed his gaze on lone individuals with the fused passion for fact and pictorial tradition that we have already noted in Germany's *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, arriving at a fierce, awkward exactitude like that of the Danish painter Eckersberg. Frank Auerbach also directed his attention to the sitter across the studio, but grappled with what he was looking at through a tortuous trench warfare in inch-deep oil impastos, a melodrama of vision comparable to Chaim Soutine's.

A certain defensiveness hardened their personas. Was it permissible for a 'serious' artist still to work from observation, and if so, how? The



312 Alberto Giacometti, *Composition with Three Figures and a Head*, 1950. Giacometti's new style of the later 1940s stemmed from a keen analysis of the effects that sculptures create in exhibition spaces, and from a desire for truth to visual experience. 'If I made a sculpture of you according to my absolute perception of you, I would make a rather flat, scarcely modulated sculpture that would be much closer to a Cycladic sculpture, which has a stylized look, than to a sculpture by Rodin' (compare **17** and **269**).

question was posed by the recent Paris exhibitions of Alberto Giacometti. Giacometti had been the leading sculptor of the Surrealist group, but he caught Europe's attention from 1951 onwards by exhibiting a new art, created out of what he saw when he looked at other people. That seemingly straightforward agenda pushed him into a declaration of extreme difficulty. His tremulously worked figurines and canvases suggested that what he experienced of others was mostly their being apart from him, distanced by engulfing, insistent, empty space. Bodies withered under its pressure to appear as mere filaments of standing consciousness, only gathering substance where their feet rejoined the ground they shared with the viewer.

The results seemed to tally with the accounts of how people existed in the world given by Giacometti's friend, the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. At any rate, Sartre lent them his verbal support. In his doctrine of existentialism, Europe's leading intellectual fashion of the mid-century, individuals always existed within a situation, always in the eyes of others; they could never be complete to themselves. This philosophic assurance that he was making 'statements' may have encouraged Giacometti to create groupings such as the *Composition with Three Figures and a Head* [312] of 1950. His attention-thirsty sculpture, with its power to 'drink the whole space from the room right into its grasp',* had public potential: like Bacon's imagery, it seemed to offer a general, tragic statement about what it now meant to be human.

Was this a direct reflection of conditions in postwar Europe? Not really, in a causal sense: the distinctive stylisms of both Bacon and Giacometti had been incubated during the late 1930s. But a stylism needs a receptive audience to encourage it. And among cultured people living in the continent's bomb-cratered cities – adjusting to unaccustomed scarcities, to the emerging revelations about the Holocaust and to the advent of nuclear terror – a sombre gravity of purpose was widely felt to be morally requisite, however pursued. Could the fractured bronze statues of Germaine Richier or of Ossip Zadkine (sculptor of one of the Second World War's few notable memorials, at Rotterdam) give monumental dignity to humanity's predicament? Could any sort of art retain an authenticity in the face of contemporary history?

The exemplary artist, for European existentialists, was someone who had moved on from the evasive dreams of Surrealism to confront nothingness and stark absurdity. Wols, an alcoholic German exile in France scratching frenetic, figureless gestures on small sheets of card, was such a one. For others – town planners, for instance – abstract sculpture of a redemptive purity, such as we've seen from Naum Gabo, might point the way towards reconstruction.** Or else the sober modernist monuments

* The comment of a later sculptor, Richard Serra, quoted in Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination* (2001).

** Another exemplary practitioner of mathematical thinking was the Bauhaus-trained Swiss sculptor Max Bill.

of British sculptors Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, with their generalizing gravitas, might offer public-spiritedness an acceptable idiom.

In this context of earnestness, the exhibitions put on by Jean Dubuffet in the late 1940s offered a frisson of provocation, creating yet another of Paris's talking points for outrage (following Manet, following Matisse). Dubuffet clowned. He pretended the walls of the Galerie Drouin belonged to a school lavatory; almost as much as their grossness, it was the cheesy cheeriness of daubs like *Lady's Body* (*Fancy Handful*) [313] that aimed to offend. To achieve a surface worth defacing, Dubuffet had cooked up a stew of pigment, plaster, sand, glue and tar that he dubbed his *haute pâte* or 'high impasto'. For, needless to say, there was method in his muddiness. He was not alone in thinking that sheer grunge was the ground zero upon which European painting might start to rebuild itself: Antoni Tàpies in Spain and Alberto Burri in Italy were other early exponents of a trend that gave primacy to a picture's texture. But Dubuffet's insults to good taste were backed up by manifestos for another personal coinage, *art brut* or 'ugly art'. The insiders of high culture, he argued, should learn from outsiders. Genuine creativity was more likely to be found among eccentric solitaires, institutional inmates and stealthy graffiti artists than among sophisticates working with an eye to public approval.

It was a democratic impulse, carrying forward Klee's interests in doodles and children's drawings; but, in contrast to Klee's oeuvre, the work accompanying it was insistently programmatic. Each year another show, with another series of variations on a particular motif. 'Ladies' bodies' were the theme for 1950. Their rudeness was underpinned by research: this figure-type of the 'splayed female' had been traced by anthropologists as one of humanity's worldwide archetypal images. Others were trying to restart a European avant-garde – notably the painters from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam grouped under the acronym CoBrA. The Dane Asger Jorn, with his junk-shop canvases, and the Dutch painter Karel Appel, with his blaring bright beasts, pitched into the same predicament as Dubuffet. Old myths, new disfigurements, an unavoidable undertone of *déjà vu*.

Clean cut salesman

USA, Argentina, Italy, Tanzania, 1955–1964

In the same year that Dubuffet was launching his offensive of 'ladies' bodies', Willem de Kooning, a Dutch-born Abstract Expressionist, delivered a rude shock to New York critics who had considered figuration passé by exhibiting his own gross series of *Women* [314]. Previously, de Kooning had been renowned for hacking the shapes and spaces of figurative art to

313 Jean Dubuffet, *Lady's Body (Fancy Handful)*, 1950. The series from which this came was entitled *Corps de dames* – that is, bodies not simply of women, but of high-class 'ladies'. This item was subtitled *gerbe bariolée*, literally 'many-coloured bunch of flowers'. Writing about this series of paintings, Dubuffet became positively academic in his anti-academicism. 'I was interested in the brutal juxtaposition, in these female bodies, of the generalized and the particular, the subjective and the objective, the metaphysical and the

314 Willem de Kooning, *Woman and Bicycle*, 1952–53. The painter plunges into free-form chaos and into an elemental battle with his materials. Through all that, a figure insists on struggling forth, to bestride the canvas with the bravado of a screaming-drunk gatecrasher. Could she in fact be the woman of his dreams? De Kooning's big and raucous canvases introduced 1950s New York to psychic melodramas as intense as those of Chaim Soutine in 1920s Paris (**293**), but far more slapstick-exuberant.



pieces so as to create luscious stews of paint for the 'formalist' menu. Now he was exulting in the old, glorious stupidity of an image that looked like something, even if only like a battered indomitable hag. There were many such loose transatlantic parallels during the 1950s. There was not, however, much cross-fertilization. While 'American art' remained as yet an unlikely oxymoron to many snooty Europeans, the United States was now as confident about itself artistically as it was politically and economically. In 1955 MoMA staged a grand photographic equivalent of New York's hosting of the United Nations: 'The Family of Man', 503 images from 273 photographers, gathering the globe's human diversity under the big umbrella of liberal curiosity. Standing at the world's hub, in the great showcase of modernist architecture, one could look all possibilities in the eye.

For many artists making their way from this point, Pollock, with his upstaging of his European predecessors, provided a crucial reference point. One of them, Robert Rauschenberg, came at it from an entirely unfamiliar

315 Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955. Exhibits such as this, along with Rauschenberg's unruly three-dimensional assemblages, were often known in the 1950s as 'Neo-Dada', as if they revived the spirit of the late 1910s. In fact, the new aesthetic originated from exchanges of ideas at Black Mountain College, North Carolina. Around the turn of the 1950s, Black Mountain brought together visual artists, such as the German emigrés Josef and Anni Albers, with the poet Charles Olson, the composer John Cage and the choreographer Merce Cunningham, in highly fruitful creative dialogues. The latter two remained Rauschenberg's collaborators.



angle. If anything, he was closer in spirit to the Japanese Zen tradition that inspired his friend the composer John Cage. From Rauschenberg's point of view, a canvas like Pollock's *Number 32* was a 'landing strip' – simply a space that had been opened up for actions to occur and for the quality of attention to be enhanced. ('Action painting' had been the label that Harold Rosenberg, a rival critic to Greenberg, had coined for Pollock's act.) In the stance that Rauschenberg explored during the early 1950s, an artist became a person who invites whatever's out there in the world to meet up with whatever is inside the viewer, so as to activate a given stretch of space.

For instance? Well, a plain white canvas might hang on a wall, letting passing lights and passing eyes create mental events. Or another canvas might be laid on the road for Cage to drive a painted tyre over it. Or, running out of canvas, the artist might take the old quilt used to insulate his car, stretch it up on a board, go at it with a brush, then bring a pillow into the equation: *Bed* [315]. The interrelation of the marks was essentially irrelevant. This art was not to do with form, it was not even much to do with symbols: it was to do with what was there, with content. A content, in the case of mid-1950s 'combines' like *Bed*, of homely, roughed-up, casually assembled detritus, smacking of the downtown warehouse area of New York where Rauschenberg had set up his base. In this, as in much else, he acted as a trailblazer for the habits of subsequent artists.

It was a radically innovatory approach. Except, as Rauschenberg soon discovered, that various aspects of it had been anticipated forty years before by a French immigrant living uptown. Marcel Duchamp, the inventor of the ready-made who had spent most of that interval merely hovering in the doorway of the art scene, would from this point begin his rehabilitation as a central figure of 20th-century cultural history. But *Bed* focuses the possibilities of 1955 in many ways. The ruffled quilting echoes the ruffled brushwork with which Rauschenberg's partner Jasper Johns was concurrently reproducing the American flag on canvas, setting up another, more drily quizzical dialogue between what the artist makes and what he's presented with. The quilt's compartments cleave to one of the most abiding instincts of American 'hard-edge' abstract painters working in the wake of Mondrian – to go for the grid, as if right angles amounted to right thinking.

Whereas the messy daubings imposed on the quilt stake out the contrasting direction in which New York avant-gardists would take their ideas of art, Rauschenberg talked of trying to 'act in the gap' between art and life. Claes Oldenburg bridged it by fashioning giant, tackily painted papier-maché replicas of everyday products like toothpaste tubes or combs – 'soft art'. Others took the idea of 'action painting' as a cue to go one step further – to remove the label 'art' from studio products altogether and transfer it

to transient street actions by groups of people coming together to create 'Happenings'. As Rauschenberg himself became a big name, he ventured into dance collaborations and into the technique (newly available in 1962) of silkscreen-printing multiple images from blown-up photos. He turned into a multi-media, multi-sourced, globe-encompassing phenomenon.

New York's effervescent art scene, with its formalist versus anti-formalist shouting matches and its growing interest in objects and products, was buoyed up on a surge of economic growth and technological dynamism in the era of the nuclear 'arms race' and the 'space race' with Russia. But I want a broader sense of how the global scene was interrelating around 1960. I want to glance at three widely separated artists, each of them in late middle age. One, Antonio Berni, belonged to a Latin American generation following that of Diego Rivera. In the 1930s he had painted under the tutelage of another Mexican muralist, Siqueiros, and adapted old Italian figure techniques to depict the industrial unemployment of the global depression in his native Argentina. In the mid-1940s this type of left-wing realism lost prestige as abstractionist groups sprang up in South America – not just in Berni's Buenos Aires, but also, along the coast reached by emigrés from Europe, in Montevideo, Rio and Caracas. But at the end of the 1950s Berni reinvented his social commentary and gained a new audience. After a decade in which Argentina had put up an attempt at economic self-sufficiency under the strongman ruler Perón, the current government was courting US business while allowing the collapse of the rural economy and a demographic slide towards the cities to accelerate. In *The Great Temptation* [316], Berni spoke about this in an updated street language – a combination of collage, paint-splash and mock naivety almost as scabrous and intricate (a whore composed of clients' heads; the 'unreal' photographic blonde selling Chryslers versus the 'real' caricatural vagrants) as that of Otto Dix [see 288]. Berni's angry populism shared some of its techniques with responses to American product-penetration in Britain. There, however, the movement that Richard Hamilton launched in 1956 under the name 'Pop Art' celebrated a consumer culture that was booming. The ironies were suaver and generally more fond.

The Buenos Aires avant-garde of the 1940s included the sculptor Lucio Fontana, returning from Italy, where he had previously worked, to pass the war years in his native land. Fontana's career straddled not only continents but artistic constituencies. One of his hands had churned clay into gouged, inchoate masses, perhaps influenced by a variant of Surrealism that dreamt of utter formlessness,* while the other was styling it into chic, virtually Art Deco figurines. But, teaching in Buenos Aires in 1946, Fontana found himself in a

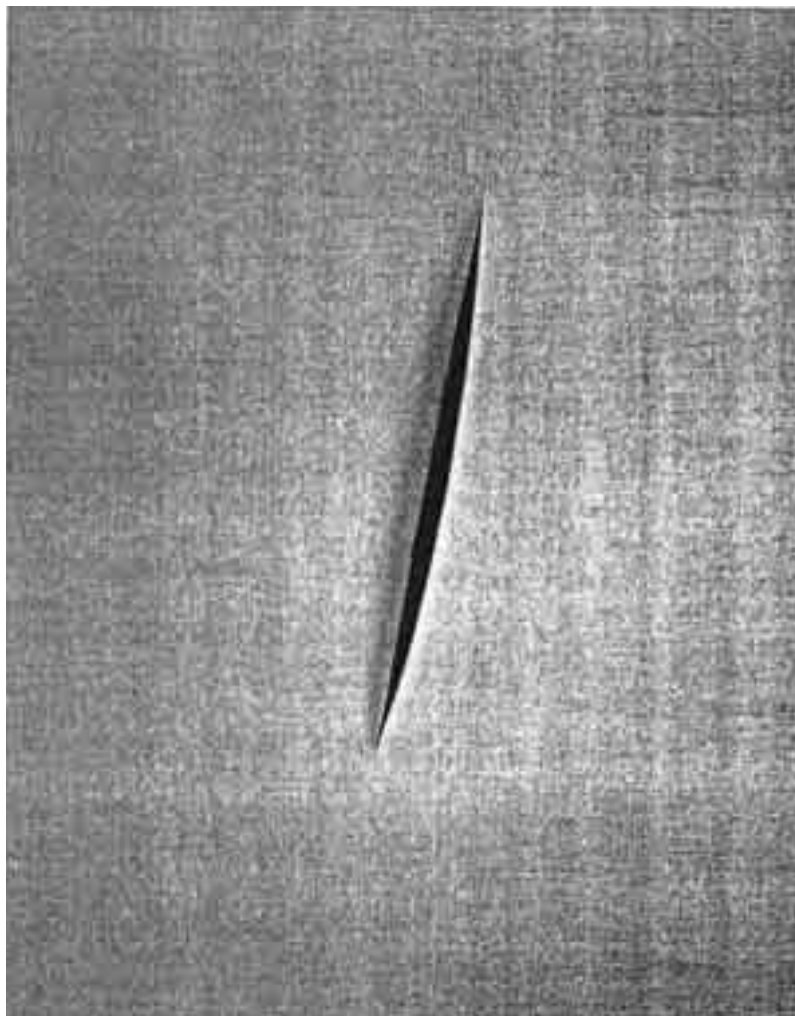
* This thinking derived from the French writer Georges Bataille, who fell out with André Breton – one of the many starting points from which one might outline an alternative history of modern art.

316 Antonio Berni, *The Great Temptation*, 1962. Recycled advertising material was the vogue in much early 1960s art, whether in Buenos Aires, London, Paris or New York. Berni encapsulated it within a world of lurid grotesques, creating the kind of phantasmagoria that has come to be known as ‘magic realism’ in discussions of literature. Through the 1960s he used similar techniques to invent a series of pictures about the lives of two street kids named Juanito and Ramona. For a while they became part of the fabric of Argentinian mass culture, with songs about them entering the pop charts.



position to draft a proclamatory *White Manifesto*. ‘Speed has become a constant in the life of mankind. ... We leave behind all known art-forms, and commence the development of an art based on the union of time and space.’ Dreams like that had previously been the property of Europe’s Futurists and Constructivists. They now got revitalized in a continent with a less troubled recent history. South American avant-gardes, such as the group led by Lygia Clark in Brazil, argued their way forward towards purely interactive forms of art activity (as it were, ‘Look – no objects!’), while others carried experimentalist strategies back to Europe: the Venezuelan Jesús-Rafael Soto conjured up ‘kinetic’ and optical disorientations in Paris, and Fontana himself returned to Milan to launch *ambienti*, environments that overwhelmed spectators with neon lights and sound. Hole-making became his hallmark. How better to make space immediate and visible? It reached a definitive form in 1958, when he started piercing canvas with Stanley knives [317]. A swift, clean plunge of the blade with indefinite symbolic possibilities – violent, sexual, metaphysical – an act multiplied and glamorized on canvases of turquoise, gold and magenta through the next decade. Fontana’s breakthrough may have been catalysed by seeing the monochrome canvases of intense blue pigment that Yves Klein exhibited in 1957. Before his early

317 Lucio Fontana, *Spatial Concept*
(*Waiting*), 1960.



death in 1961, Klein mesmerized Paris as a kind of Zen impresario, presenting for instance an orchestra playing a single note while naked female models rolled in paint to create body prints. Both specialized in dandyish gestures towards transcendence, poised between the infinite and the exquisite.

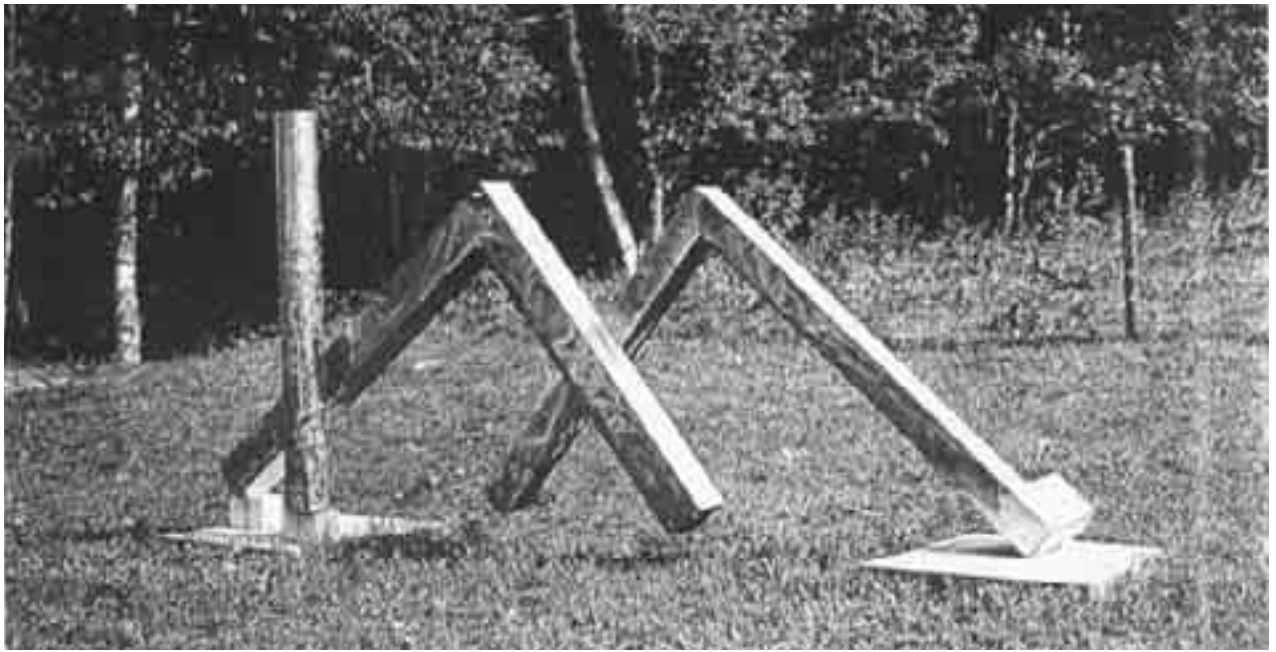
But my third version of the early 1960s returns to the United States, and to a factory-trained welder of steel fittingly named David Smith. Thirty years before, a new sculptural idiom had been developed by other metalworkers who started, under Surrealist influence, to create in three dimensions the kinds of wiry, part-organic structures previously only dreamt of in Klee's *Twittering Machine* [see 292]. The American Alexander Calder dangled such frailties to float lightheartedly with the breeze, creating his so-called 'mobiles'; Julio González, come like his friend Picasso from Barcelona to Paris, helped the great man when he turned intensively to sculpture in the late 1920s and himself welded bars and plates into skeletal recomposed figures. Smith took to this 'drawing in space' and expanded its expressive range in springy, airy frameworks marked by a defiant way-

wardness. A friend of the Abstract Expressionists, he would leave hints of figuration and stronger hints of two-dimensional picture-making in his free-standing pieces, as if he were exposing knots in his private imagination to the mercies of the weather and the passing viewer.

It was only during the few years before his death in 1965 that Smith started creating sculptures with a distinct three-dimensional volume, welding together box-components of stainless steel, which he presented with a whirring, glinting, flashing burnish that cancelled any impression of weight. One of his late works, *Cubi XXIII* [318], marks a junction in the evolution of this bold yet bristly sculptural language. It takes us back to its ancestry in pictures: return to the *Twittering Machine*, and you will see Klee's central M-shaped chassis mysteriously choosing to resurface on Smith's lawn in the Adirondacks in the form of a pair of giant strides forward. But maybe what these metal legs are bestriding is the Atlantic Ocean – for by 1964, America and Britain were opening doors to one another artistically, and the layout here, this abrupt sprawl of angles and beams, resembles the contemporary work of Anthony Caro, an English sculptor eighteen years Smith's junior. From this Anglo-American exchange, Caro would gain release from the stolidity and monumentality expounded by his earlier mentor Henry Moore. In fact, Caro would move towards a more radically abstract version of welding than Smith himself – bright-painted struts, reaching out into the space around them without the polite interface of a separating plinth, refusing to fold back into the flatness of an image. Meanwhile, others in London* were aiming to glean an equivalent glamour of surface from the use of coloured plastics – easing, as it were, the transition between Smith's big 'M' and McDonald's Golden Arches.

I apologize to Smith. That conjunction is a naughty way to drag down the memory of a major creative intelligence and fine doughty leftist. But the connection is not, I feel, totally illegitimate. Sculptors make moods out of their surfaces, and the jangly sanding of Smith's *Cubi* seems to me to be saying: out there is the world of shiny chrome, product packaging and hard sell – I'll go out to meet the beast on its own ground, grapple with it and drag it back, tamed, to my own private lawn. Berni's *Great Temptation* addresses the same terrain with a comparable resistant indignation, but here the surface (and this might be true of much early 1960s art, from South America to France to Eastern Europe) is actually more a charmed weathering, giving the dark direction of current events a patina of old myth. Fontana's cut, however, and the ferment of techno-accented

* I am thinking of 'New Generation' sculptors such as David Annesley and Phillip King.



318 David Smith, *Cubi XXIII*, 1964.

experimentation that it succinctly summarizes, plunge into the dark of the future almost because it is meaningless and post-human.*

Behind their scissors/paper/chrome lies the blind dynamism of a global capitalism hurtling ever faster forward: one might trace the same common steering pressure in an art phenomenon fuelled by old-fashioned competition in hand-and-tool skills. In eastern Africa during the mid-century, many Makonde people migrated from their base in northern Mozambique to seek work in what is now Tanzania's capital, Dar-es-Salaam. In the late 1950s some of them found dealers who would handle the kind of secular figurine we earlier saw produced by the Zande [see 278]. As a market developed among jet-setting Westerners, so did a rivalry in virtuoso chiselling and burnishing of ebony. Reading spirits and stories into the forms of forking offcuts, Makonde carvers brought out a profusion of extravagant, grotesque, one might say baroque inventions through the following decade. Alumasi Luhuma conjured history out of a tree-stump [319]. The thicker bole became the bad old days in Portuguese Mozambique, with the slaver sitting atop a stack of grimacing villagers, one blowing a twig-alarm to warn of his incursion. But rising out from the mêlée on another spur, a confident modern Tanzanian lifts up a lion-flanked torch of national independence, achieved in 1961. There are quite a few ironies a cynic might discern in an emblem of self-reliance produced as a token for tourists. The carvers themselves maintained a firm distinction between their market wares and their own ongoing sacred art of mask-making.

* Another work of the early 1960s that is relevant to this discussion is the powerful sculpture of Lee Bontecou in New York.

The cool war

China, Germany, Britain, USA, 1965–1973

In 1964 Rauschenberg carried off the Grand Prix at Venice's international Biennale exhibition. This unprecedented honour for an American was a signal to many nervous Europeans that a process of cultural subjugation was complete. The punchy, instinctual boldness of postwar New York art had marginalized other versions of modernism worldwide – including, for instance, the separately developed abstraction of a group from Montreal, the Automatistes. The US Central Intelligence Agency could derive some satisfaction from the result. It had covertly funded travelling



319 Aluma Luhuma, 'Ujamaa' Carving of Makonde History, 1965–70.



exhibitions and lecture tours by Clement Greenberg, America's leading critical advocate. It was keen to promote the notion that abstraction represented 'freedom', while America's Cold War rival Russia was tying her artists' hands with a backwards-looking insistence on figuration.

From another perspective, Russian painters like Gely Korzhev who reinterpreted 19th-century academic techniques – or sculptors like Yevgeni Vuchetich, coordinator of the colossal memorial to the Battle of Stalingrad – offered a stoic, restorative art to a nation that had suffered enormously during the war. For Russia's suppressed intelligentsia, or for artists in her East European satellite nations with their own inclinations towards abstraction, Constructivism or Surrealism, such doctrinaire Socialist Realism did not constitute 'art' at all. It was, however, adopted energetically after Mao Zedong's Communist armies gained control of China in 1949. The Chinese Left already had a disposition towards importing techniques, German Expressionism having influenced the protest woodcut movement that thrived in Shanghai from the 1930s onwards.

During the first eighteen years of Mao's reign, as 'the Great Helmsman' lurched about between pluralism and ruthless social experiments while veering the ship of state ever further away from that of his Russian onetime comrades, there was still political room for Chinese-style ink painting to coexist with the production of didactic Realist panoramas. Back in pre-revolutionary Shanghai, Wu Hufan had been a traditionalist dilettante connoisseur saddled with the opium habit that the British invaders of the 19th century had been so keen to promote. In 1965 Wu made his submission to the powers in charge at the Shanghai Institute of Arts. He presented them with a scroll that saluted China's new access to the technology of mass suicide, previously monopolized by America and Russia.

Celebrate the Success of Our Glorious Atomic Bomb Explosion! is, in the words of Julia F. Andrews, the expert in this field, 'one of the most beautiful demonstrations of brushwork to be found during this period' [320]. Neither she nor any surviving acquaintance can be sure what ironies may have passed through Wu's mind as he executed his exuberant outrage. The Institute accepted it without a blink; he killed himself in 1968, a year after Mao had incited the young to wipe out the nation's entire heritage in the Great Cultural Revolution. Perhaps his nihilistic scroll survived the process, unlike those of many of Wu's contemporaries, because it appealed so nakedly to the texture of reality that people everywhere now preferred – the predigested, the mass-mediated.

Painters had used photographs ever since they had become available. The first, it seems, really to make the second-handness of his imagery a crucial aspect of his art was Walter Sickert, the English disciple of Degas,

320 Wu Hufan, *Celebrate the Success of Our Glorious Atomic Bomb Explosion!*, 1965. China exploded its first atomic bomb in October 1964, staking its claim to join the United States (nuclear-armed from 1945) and the Soviet Union (from 1949). The beauty, or sublime grandeur, of the mushroom clouds that heralded the age of MAD or 'Mutually Assured Destruction' was often celebrated in contemporary writing, less often in visual art.

doing news-shot paintings during the 1930s.* In the 1960s the much-commented-on triumph of television as a dominant way of life in the West may have been a factor prompting artists to repeat Sickert's deadpan bow to the already-looked-at. It was another facet of the environment of commodities and consumerism on which Berni and the British Pop artists were commenting. Pop in America – a development independent of Britain – took off in 1962, launched chiefly by Andy Warhol's paintings of advertisements of soup cans. With these bright, bland, uninflected quotations – soon produced in the new medium of silkscreen – and with his exhibitions of simulated boxes for the household product Brillo [321], Warhol was felt to have pushed the querying of the artist's role, started by Jasper Johns with his repainted flags, to a crux. Nothing more contrary to the heroic originality of Pollock could be conceived.

A persona of charismatic passivity made Warhol a linchpin to the mid-1960s New York scene and a convenient hook on which to hang a cultural change – a transition from hot authenticity to cool insouciance, from defiant resistance of capitalism to quizzical sidestepping. Vibrant colours, numbing repetitions and an instinct for celebrity connected his pictures with a mass audience far beyond the reach of other New York artists. Their creator's critical edge, cancelled out in the work itself, can still be heard in a personal commentary that equated commodities with death. 'I wanted to paint nothing. I was looking for something that was the essence of nothing, and that was it.' Warhol was here explaining why he painted soup cans; he could well have been explaining why, in 1965, he too was making pictures from news shots of nuclear explosions. Maybe he was speaking for his Chinese contemporary.

Roy Lichtenstein, the other originator of American Pop, enlarged and modified printed comic strips on a giant, Abstract Expressionist scale, isolating the ben-day dots that made up the toning. Richard Hamilton, a founder of British Pop, pursued the same light-hearted logic by painting an enlarged section from a Lichtenstein: *unoriginal* was exactly the point. Further along the line, in Germany, a duo of emigrés from the Communist East launched their own 'Capitalist Realism' in the booming West. Gerhard Richter's suavely nullified transcriptions of photographs had philosophical objectives [see 332], but the giddiest parodic touch of the 1960s came from his colleague Sigmar Polke. Polke ventured not only to stamp on the ben-day dots by hand with a pencil-mounted eraser, but to do so rather *badly*. *Potatoheads (Mao and LBJ)* [322] is a vaporized variant on a far harsher image created by the French avant-gardist Niki de Saint-Phalle in the wake of the 1962 Cuba

* Degas himself had tried out a few paintings in this mode: before him, Louis-Léopold Boilly in the early 19th century had painted the 'look' of mezzotint engravings.

321 Andy Warhol, *Brillo Boxes*, 1969 replica of a 1964 original. At a New York show in 1964, Warhol first displayed wooden boxes screen-printed and stacked up so as to look like cartons of Brillo, a brand of steel-wool scouring pad. There were also boxes for Heinz Beans and Campbell's Soup, but 'Brillo' stuck in viewers' minds as the nub of Warhol's provocation. This was doubtless on account of the zing and panache of the box design. James Harvey, the artist responsible, attempted to sue Warhol for infringement of his rights (compare Bridget Riley's experience a year later, p. 432). Intriguingly, before turning to commercial art, Harvey had been involved unsuccessfully in Abstract Expressionism.

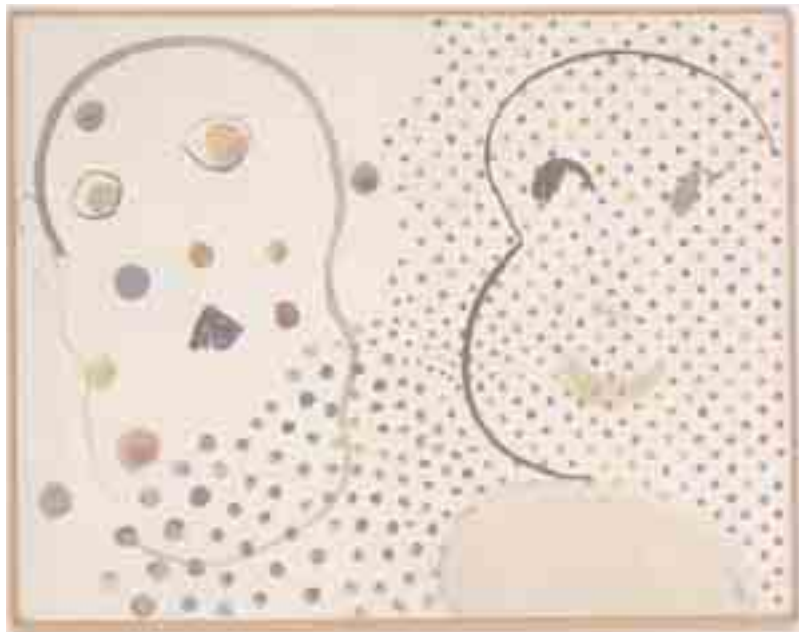


missile crisis. Her half-charred plastic assemblage* showed the leaders of America and Russia who had nearly brought the world to nuclear war as twin faces of a grotesque Dubuffetesque hag. But after that terrible moment Western anxieties deflated fast. By 1965 China was 'cool' – ironically, of course – and so was President Johnson, and so were potatoes.

Making these dumb lumps of stodge his signature motif, the youthful Polke was clowning with a theme that had engaged Dubuffet – that grungy matter was somehow 'good', restorative, healthy. It was an idea that also preoccupied Polke's tutor in the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, Joseph Beuys. Beuys was rising up as a European frontman to match America's Warhol. He was the charismatic activist, complete with trademark rig-out and personal myth: as with many a German predecessor (Kirchner for instance, with his skinny-dipping experiences: 276), it was crucial to his art that he had *lived* it. A tangled tale of his war experiences backed up Beuys's engagement with material textures as instruments of redemption. To

* Kennedy-Khrushchev, made in 1963.

322 Sigmar Polke, *Potatoheads*
(*Mao and LBJ*), 1965.



stack a chair-seat with fat, to muffle a piano in felt, to smear himself with honey – these, through a reasoning proclaimed in blackboard diagrams, were steps forward from the trauma of war to the future society in which it could be seen that *everyone is an artist*. Large perspectives – a feel for pre-history and natural history – led Beuys to don the mantle of a shaman and to raise an ecological theme that would loom large in art from the 1970s.

But, as of 1965, the giddy, fizzy scepticism of Pop was being joined by other consumer-culture stimulants. ‘Op’ was the inevitable tag an American journalist reached for when a MoMA show imported European and Latin American experiments in optically interactive art. One participant, Bridget Riley, found that the illusion-inducing tactics of paintings like *Arrest 2* [323] were immediately seized on by clothes designers. She objected strongly to this commercialization, and set about challenging the loosely framed American copyright laws. Riley associated her instant jolts to the visual system not with any futuristic desire for novelty, but with the same rooted unease – ‘the loss of certainties that Christianity had to offer’, as she put it – that served as a rationale for fellow British painter Francis Bacon (likewise a reacher for the shock-effect streak). She traced her works’ highly distinctive look back to a childhood experience of coastal Cornwall, with its sharp-shimmering contrasts of light, thus echoing an earlier generation of abstractionists such as Ben Nicholson, who had made the Cornish town of St Ives their base. In other words, her precisely conceived abstraction belonged within a tradition and constituted an attempt to develop its formal means.

Didn't that bring it into line with the critic Greenberg's programme for modernist art? No. Greenberg had another idea of what 'optical' painting should consist of, nothing to do with interactive illusions: he described it in recent criticism as a very-nearly-flat spread of interrelated marks, something the eye could settle on calmly and contemplatively. For him, the true successors to Pollock were abstract painters like Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis, staining canvas with the new, dazzlingly anaesthetic acrylic paints. The eminent lawgiver was putting forward his own version of the new ethos of cool, but by this time his doctrines, which had helped give American art its global prestige, were under assault in its citadel. As other New York critics noticed, Greenbergian modernism seemed to have spawned its own brand of kitsch, filling the foyers and plazas of corporate capitalism with anodyne abstractions. Moreover, Greenberg's ever-narrower discriminations seemed of a piece with the commercial trap of the 'signature style' in which so many postwar artists seemed to get stuck – a trap in which Rothko, for instance, was flailing despairingly long before his suicide in 1970.

Rauschenberg and Johns on the one hand and the Pop artists on the other had staked out dissenting stances; but the assault on Greenberg's intellectual position was led by a younger generation of intellectuals, who were determined to outflank him not just theoretically but practically.



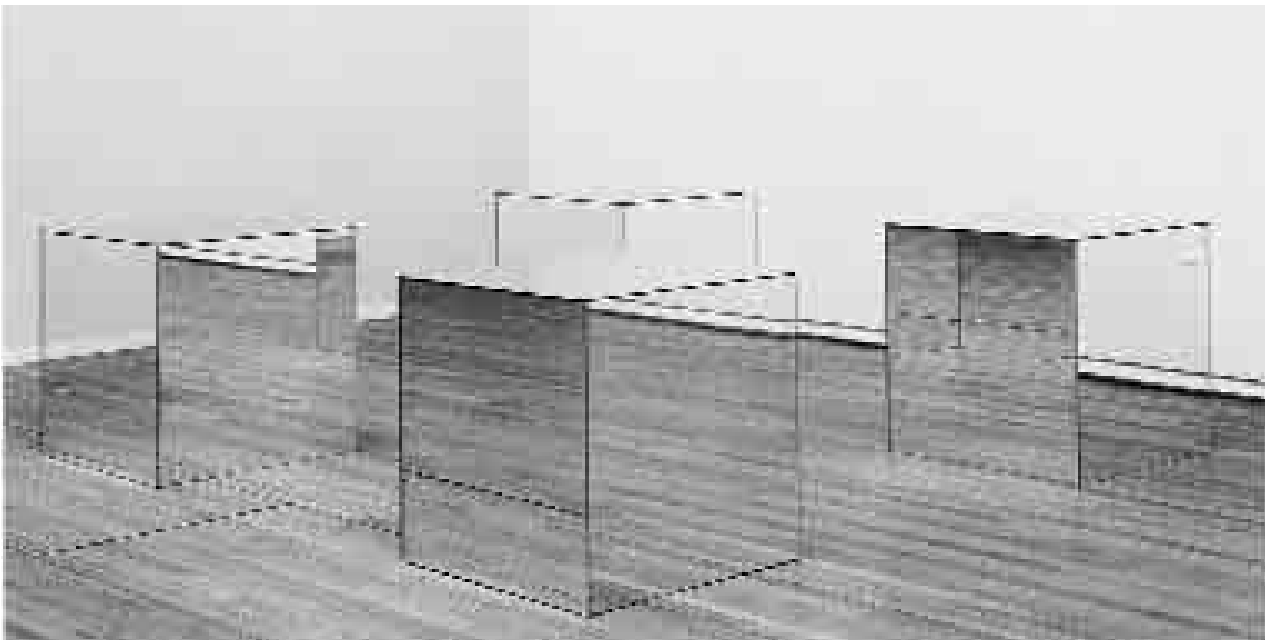
323 Bridget Riley, *Arrest 2*, 1965.

Among this brood, Donald Judd and Robert Morris thought up strategies to disrupt Greenberg's whole notion of contemplating art 'optically' – often arguing ferociously with each other as well. A re-creation of an exhibit staged by Morris in 1965 [324] demonstrates as well as any photo can the kind of provocative paradox that would soon be labelled 'Minimalism'. The mirrored cubes deny the viewer any 'inside content' or personal handiwork to focus on. At the same time, they spin off a delirium of reflections, both visual and verbal – 'Is this art?', etcetera, etcetera – all of them dependent on the conditions that the artist has wilfully set up.

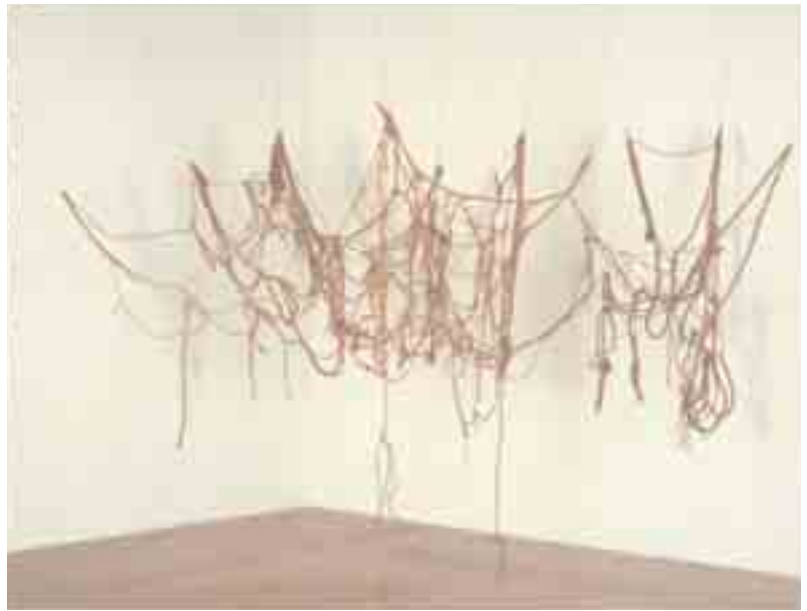
Morris had been studying Brancusi, with his honed-down objects and his emphasis on the right context for viewing. He had also been catching up with the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a colleague of Sartre's who was similarly concerned to stress that objects are never self-sufficient, that we always see them from within our own bodies.* Like Giacometti's sculpture with its fingering of empty space, this was an edgy nagging at the viewer's self-consciousness, an art defined in terms of what it wasn't. Its connections nearer home – with the almost as reflective surfaces of Smith's *Cubi*, with Warhol's empty Brillo boxes and with the new 1960s taste for shimmering, flashy 'photorealist' canvases – were of less concern to Morris. He was an impatient radical looking to free himself from 'the craft of tedious object production' altogether, and soon switched formats. Judd, by contrast, a graver sensibility, used similarly controlled repetitions and plainspoken

324 Robert Morris, *Untitled*, 1965, redisplayed 1971.

* Phenomenology, a philosophy focused on how things appear to us, was the theme developed by Merleau-Ponty. He published *The Phenomenology of Perception* in 1945.



325 Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, 1970.



shapes to focus the viewer's attention on just what an object was. For just that reason photographs of his work seem inherently misleading.

Minimalism was an arresting moment in a flurry of trends as hectic as that in Paris before the First World War. By 1967 Morris was trying to create an art of product-free 'process' by using floppy materials like felt, thus rubbing shoulders with the 'soft art' created in the wake of Rauschenberg's *Bed*. The maestro of felt, Joseph Beuys, may have influenced a younger New York artist, Eva Hesse, when she visited her native Germany in 1964; at any rate, she returned from this voyage redirected from painting into three dimensions. (Painting as a format was rapidly descending into avant-garde disfavour.) Two years on, Hesse was one of the female presences dominating a show heralding a new vogue, labelled 'Eccentric Abstraction'. An obsessive devotee of 'tedious object production', she was moulding latex to create translucent, tremulous, vulnerable exhibits that seemed to allude to bodily sensations and sufferings. The comparable sculptures of an older co-exhibitor, Louise Bourgeois, all but spelt out direct psychological metaphors, but Hesse's were more ambiguous. Thoroughly au fait with the polemics going on around her, she outdid the Minimalists' refusal to yield up self-sufficient visual satisfactions by a reluctance to fall in with any form of verbal rationalization. In 1970 Hesse began an experiment with latex-coated ropes [325], shortly before a brain tumour killed her at the age of thirty-four. It continues to entice speculation and yet to deflect it. An exposed and vulnerable straggle of nerves, of intestines? An 'anti-form' structure in space with neither body nor logic, a sculptural paradox? Perhaps it redreams, in three dimensions, the skeins of liberated action that Pollock had woven twenty

years earlier, consigning them to a haunted indeterminate limbo. In New York's Whitney Museum the latex is now decaying inexorably.

This might have obscurely satisfied one of New York's young critics-cum-artists, Robert Smithson. He rejoiced in Hesse's 'cosmic dereliction' and 'wonderfully dismal' drift. They coincided with his own desire to erode stable forms of aesthetic experience and his fascination with the idea of a sprawling art-indifferent cosmos. For Smithson, however, that 'vacant white room with lights' in which Hesse's work is exhibited could only serve to neutralize it, reducing it 'to visual fodder'.* He was the leading voice among a group who wanted to get beyond the inward-looking gallery system of Manhattan and give Rauschenberg's interplay of 'art' and 'life' a geographical dimension. A gigantic leap in scale, moreover: in Smithson's case, the quest led him to the uninhabited shores of the Great Salt Lake in Utah, where in 1970 he hired dump trucks to construct a *Spiral Jetty*, 1.45 kilometres long [326]. The vast quasi-Neolithic image disappeared under rising waters shortly after his death in a plane crash in 1973 (later, however, to resurface), an outcome that his embrace of ruination seemed to look forward to. Yet more transient was the similar form created by another 'land artist', Dennis Oppenheim, in 1973, when he directed a light airplane to trace the

326 Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970.

* Quotes from 'Quasi-infinities ...' (1966) and 'Cultural Confinement' (1972), in *Collected Writings* (1976).





327 Dennis Oppenheim, *Whirlpool, Eye of the Storm*, 1973. Oppenheim, one of a generation of American artists looking for spaces to oppose to the confines of the gallery, hired a light plane to vapour-trail the spiral of a tornado in the cloudless skies over the Mojave Desert, recording the event on video. A sequence of shots would later hang on a gallery wall, accompanied by typewritten documentation.

vector of a tornado in the skies over the Mojave Desert [327]. Oppenheim was aiming for an art that revolved around transferring one type of system or event onto another. In another photographed action, he lay with a book on his bare chest until sunburn painted its negative image on his skin.

The gesture lay at the mildest, most orderly end of the countless ‘performances’ and ‘body actions’ that preoccupied avant-gardists for more than a decade from the early 1960s. The Zen ethos that informed the composer John Cage fuelled the stage performances of the Korean Nam June Paik, ceremoniously smashing a violin in 1962, and the Japanese Yoko Ono, who offered scissors to spectators in 1965 and sat impassive while they snipped her clothes away piece by piece.* Yet cues for cutting were coming from all directions. The Stanley blade that had sliced Fontana’s canvas in 1960 foreshadowed the meat-cleaver taken to beef carcasses in the ‘Aktionen’ of Hermann Nitsch in Vienna, Gordon Matta-Clark’s power-saw ripping a roof-to-floor seam through the fabric of a Brooklyn house in 1973, and the razor blade with which Gina Pane scored her own stomach in 1974. Intensive theoretical agendas were put forward to tap into nameless reserves of energy and aggression.

In a sense it was the word that held sway, whether over flesh or earth. In the late 1960s it was the ‘conceptualist’ who presented the impeccable avant-garde stance: the artist who steered free of commodities and capitalism by producing no objects at all. The old Intentionist gag from 1880s Paris – the artwork consisting of nothing but a title – went through many a rerun. The West Coast artist Bruce Nauman exhibited deliberately dumb phrases written up in neon: it was one of the many tactics he tried out to snarl up viewers in the predicament of having to be an artist, having to think of something to do. Another of them was repetitious actions performed on video – a medium that Nam June Paik had claimed for the purposes of art when he bought a brand-new Sony Portapak camera in 1965. Random information unrolling in time – sheer unedited recorded fact – could now become the ‘content’ to which Rauschenberg had attuned viewers’ eyes.

Words; time; the artist’s own body; the breadth of heaven and earth. When Greenberg had talked about ‘modernism’, he had meant a trail of tightly focused formal rethinking that he believed had begun in 1860s Paris with Manet and which had passed, via Cézanne and Picasso, to mid-20th-century New York. In whatever sense such a trail had ever existed, it was evident by 1973 – the year of Picasso’s death – that it had evaporated into thin air.

* Both were members of Fluxus, a loose international grouping that from 1962 onwards organized events from New York to Germany. It was run by an impresario named George Maciunas who shared Oppenheim’s interest in systematizing seemingly silly things to do. Beuys was an occasional participant.

Plural / postmodern

USA, Germany, Canada, India, Australia, 1969–1989

Oppenheim backed into the poetry of his 1973 *Whirlpool* action as if in denial. 'I've never been one to react positively to nature. ... There was only theory, for the sake of art.' The shot we have illustrated was presented, as was common practice in 1970s galleries, with typewritten factual coordinates as part of a documentary sequence. It was a decade when a sceptical art-world orthodoxy discouraged the pleasure of looking at pictures and when a limited economic recession discouraged the business of selling them. The shifting of international artistic activity into time-based formats like performance and video adds to the difficulty, which hampers historians from this point forwards, of satisfactorily illustrating new developments with static images. But maybe we can still track some factors and themes that underlay art's exponential, eye-boggling expansion.

The high utopian hopes released by the postwar boom were most flamboyantly expressed in the student uprisings that flared from Paris to Tokyo in the late 1960s. Afterwards, the 'counterculture' habitually took to guerrilla tactics in its ongoing argument with capitalism, or else internalized it. Partly this was a pull-the-house-down project: for instance in 1971 the German conceptualist Hans Haacke tried to use an exhibition at New York's Guggenheim Museum to expose an exploitative real-estate operation in which some of the museum's board of trustees were indirectly complicit. (His show was stopped.) But on a wider level the slogan that 'the personal is the political' caught hold. To take on the city, 'the revolution' must first take over the home and the head. Gender became one of the main arenas for radical activity. The international feminist movement of the 1970s challenged the male domination of a Western artistic mainstream that stretched back to ancient Greece and, in particular, took issue with the macho stereotypes of modernism represented by Picasso and Pollock. It sparked a long-running debate as to what might replace them.

This debate drew on and encouraged the expansion of artforms. Ana Mendieta studied and taught on the 'Multimedia' course started by the University of Iowa in 1970. Her art, informed by a reading of world mythologies, started with quasi-ritual, cathartic nude performances, but by the time Mendieta met up with New York feminist groups in the mid-1970s, she had moved to the making and photographing of effigies in landscape that she called *siluetas*, 'silhouettes'. With pieces like the 1981 *Isla* [328] she put forward an archetype of clayey, material fecundity once embodied in the Neolithic 'Lady of Pazardzik' (see 16) and since displaced from the cultural hierarchy. Such symbols epitomized one possible direc-

tion for feminism. But as Mendieta's choice of title suggests, a humbly fashioned image could spark connections with other areas of struggle. By naming her body-substitute 'island' she pointed to Cuba, the country she had been sent away from at the age of twelve. She suggested that exile and isolation were her condition not only as a woman in the art world, but as a latina from a nation the United States had long attempted to suppress. The position was part provocation, part one of pathos. Exactly because of that pathos – because of the way that such imagery continued a long tradition of inturned female self-portraiture – it became the kind of essential statement about 'woman' that another, more theory-based wing of the feminist movement sought to demystify, largely through documentarist tactics.

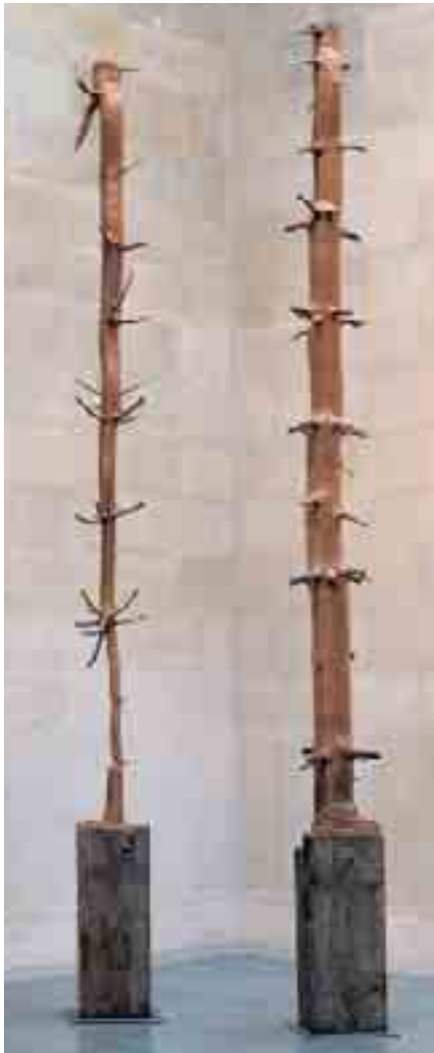
Mendieta's fall from a New York apartment window in 1985 gave the pathos of her imagery an additional dimension – much as Eva Hesse had retrospectively become a feminist icon after her death in 1970. But by wading in an Iowa creek to re-create the Cuban nature-religion of Santería (celebrated forty years before by Wifredo Lam), Mendieta had also stepped deep in another current of the counterculture: the emergence of green sensibilities. Her photo of a transient mark surrendering to nature's flows is of a

328 Ana Mendieta, *Isla*, 1981.



piece with the records taken by the English artist Richard Long of tracks trodden through meadows or of stones rearranged on remote plateaux. Here were small exemplary gestures, aimed at redressing the increasingly catastrophic relationship between humanity and the planet it occupies. Larger gestures came from Beuys during his later career: in one instance he bypassed the demarcation between artist and activist in submitting to the 1982 Documenta – the five-yearly international survey show held in the German city of Kassel – a scheme to plant the streets with 7,000 oaks. Arte Povera, a group convened by the Italian curator-critic Germano Celant in 1967, worked in something of the same spirit. The exhibitors' improvisations with 'poor' materials – soil, vegetables, even live animals – were meant to set art on a new, humbler footing. Giuseppe Penone laboured 'like a carpenter' (in his own words) to reverse relations between nature and manufacture, revealing the flows of life within a building beam [329].

329 Giuseppe Penone, *Tree of 12 Metres*, 1980–82.



Penone's chiselling connected him with skills from his own rural background, and also with antecedents in Italian art – not just Fontana's blade gestures, but the carvings of Michelangelo, exposing the figure hidden within the marble block. Light-fingered, hands-off, deskilled conceptualism could thus switch back into a labour-intensive reinvention of fine handicraft. Feminists who introduced the 'women's preserve' of needlework into the art gallery likewise switched the emphasis back from theory to practice – and hence to assiduous productivity. Penone had first exhibited his quite literally pithy idea in 1969, but he was still repeating his demonstrations in 1982, the date of the piece shown here. The point was to grasp a concise transformative principle – a way of working wittily against the given grain – and to cleave to it.

That, as a visit to any modern art museum will show, has become the orthodoxy of countless sculptors ever since, whatever the specifics of the materials they subvert. Having noted this, one can also perceive a certain levelling out, by the time of this *Tree of 12 Metres*, of the revolutions in three-dimensional thinking represented by Minimalism, by Hesse and Bourgeois and by land art. Since sculpture had parted company with the figure in the mid-1960s, inhabitable space had been the main arena for artistic innovation in the eyes of the metropolitan art world. Come 1980, the focus of fashionable attention was moving back to painting. To explain this switch, we need both to step back and to expand the focus.

The 1960s reaction against Abstract Expressionism was not confined to Minimalists and Pop artists. Philip Guston, one of New York's leading abstract painters, came in his mid-fifties to regard the tremulous, meditative signature style for which he was renowned as a trap. He reached back to his youthful training in the politicized, anti-racist figuration of the 1930s,



330 Philip Guston, *The Studio*, 1969.

and beyond that to the comics of his childhood. 'I got sick and tired of all that Purity! Wanted to tell Stories', he noted shortly after painting *The Studio* [330] in 1969. The picture wraps up the Old Master philosophical self-portrait – Velázquez's *Las Meninas* [see 186], for instance – in the sinister, ludicrous garb of the Ku Klux Klansman. The whole tradition had become absurd, complicit in political evil: 'What kind of a man am I, sitting at home, reading magazines, going into a frustrated fury about everything – and then going into my studio to *adjust a red to a blue*.'

Holed up in the small hours, solitarily smoking, solipsistically daubing, Guston was in a sense trying to reconnect with the wider world beyond the domineering New York art scene. The United States was in the midst of its disastrous Vietnam War, and artists from other big cities were directly addressing the nation's miring in violence. In Los Angeles the sculptor Ed Kienholz was assembling tableaux like *The Portable War Memorial* of 1968, using life-cast soldiers, a Coca-Cola machine, café tables, taped music and a stuffed dog to characterize an insane continuum of consumerism and militarism [331]. The gross, riotously satirical 'Funk' sensibility of Kienholz's West Coast scene was closer in spirit to Dix, Berni or Tanzania's Makonde carving than to anything from the cool-mannered Atlantic seaboard. Guston may have been returning to figure painting, but Leon Golub had been practising it ever since his training in Chicago in the late 1940s: he was now starting to use it as a testimony against the napalming of Vietnamese civilians, smearing and scratching images of the atrocities overseas onto wall-high lengths of raw linen.

As of 1970, the racked and sombre realism of Golub lay outside the pale of critical consideration in New York, while Guston's craftily crude new 'stumblebum' style predictably fell foul of it. As of 1980, both artists, both in their late middle age, had become 'what's happening'. Why?

Broad incremental trends have to be borne in mind. Throughout the postwar boom, the states against which the counterculture was taking aim had been steadily pouring money into arts policies and education. The pluralistically inclusive politics that funded new-media artists like Mendieta in Iowa had yet more clout in West Germany. There, the 'economic miracle' fostered a renewed commitment – after twelve years of

331 Ed Kienholz, *The Portable War Memorial*, 1968.





332 Gerhard Richter, *Woman Descending a Staircase*, 1965. From the early 1960s, Richter specialized in finely tamped-down paint surfaces in which not a trace of expressive vitality could be discerned. He worked on the principle that the camera has a privileged access to the objective world and that working with what it recorded offered the painter a kind of philosophical freedom. Sometimes Richter cancelled out all information from his images, sometimes – as here – their content and their design are thoroughly classical. The decision to paint the time-honoured woman-on-stairs motif of Duchamp and Burne-Jones (**285, 259**) may be a sly artistic in-joke.

Nazism – to the arts in a culture that had long led the world in the study of aesthetics and art history. That philosophical attitude ran deep in the country's own painting, notably in Gerhard Richter's cool, distanced, neutralizing look at photo-imagery [**332**]. It also licensed a limited cultural space for anarchic satirists like Richter's friend Polke, and for activists like Polke's tutor Beuys. One challenge for German artists was to test those limits. When the painter Georg Baselitz tried, metaphorically, to pull Germany's trousers down and expose the shame of its Nazi past, the Berlin police closed down his brutally expressionistic exhibition. That was in 1963. But in 1972 Anselm Kiefer, a pupil of Beuys's who had recently scratched at the same wound by photographing himself taking Nazi salutes, was taken up by a leading dealer in Cologne, and a career of colossal ambition and productivity was launched on its way.

Kiefer gave himself elbow room to probe the trauma of the generation before his own (much though he alienated many compatriots) by setting it in a context of mythology. Like Mendieta, he read, made analogies, synthesized. Had not Hitler also been an artist at heart, were not the two of them hideously akin? The artist wields his big idea, willing the transformation of the merely physical, dreaming of its ascent to another plane. ... Was he not Icarus [**333**], the boy in the Greek legend who wanted to fly, an overreacher crashing palette-and-wing to earth, to Germany's battle-scorched acres? Here was a more portentous reading of the absurdity of the solitary artist. Guston matched paint with smoke: Kiefer equated it with fire and ashes. His increasingly convoluted cosmic symbolism prompted an increasingly encrusted material weave – 'oil, emulsion, shellac and sand on photograph, mounted on canvas' reads the caption for this enormous production. The specifics of German history gradually fell away from Kiefer's work, leaving a grandiose, ruinous lyricism capped with written scrawls of rough grace that returned it to its origins, back in the wordy agendas of conceptualism. Like many other emergent arts of the 1970s, his work fingered the edge between text and image, its most spectacular product being a titanic foreboding library of lead-lined books, the *Zweistromland* of 1991.

Did Kiefer's output constitute a new template for painting? It had various affinities with other practices drawn to myth and psychodrama (that of Ken Kiff in London, for instance). In fact, as Cologne dealers promoted Kiefer and Baselitz on the international market in the late 1970s, it emerged that a generation of poetically ambitious painters had been lurking in the wings, waiting for a cue. Among what became known in Italy as the Transavanguardia, Francesco Clemente shared Kiefer's taste for mystic melange. Among New York's 'neo-expressionists', Julian Schnabel aped Kiefer's clotted textures and monster scale. If neither had

333 (right) Anselm Kiefer, *Icarus*
(*March Sand*), 1981.



Kiefer's touch or his philosophic scope, both had an instinctive feel for the emergent art scene, one in which such qualities were more or less disposable. A corresponding generation of would-be patrons had been lurking offstage during the economic recessions and aesthetic austerities of the 1970s, waiting for the bull market of the new decade to make experimental investments in wall display. Their purchasing was swayed largely by artistic charisma rather than by critical approval. A loose largesse with image quotation bespoke self-confidence: this was one reason why the insistent second-hand, facetiously goofy possibilities of 1960s Pop painting – the side of it represented by Polke's *Potatoheads* – swung back into style.

A bushfire of art-buying raged through the New York of the early 1980s, catching wherever the breeze veered. A resident named Jean-Michel Basquiat was avid to be consumed. A young African American who had been escaping his middle-class father by chancing it with street kids, he scrawled his 'tags' (signatures marking out urban territory) on walls where the white gallerists were sure to see them, and was duly whooshed up into their system as they turned their appetites towards graffiti art. He was handed a gallery basement and as much art materials and cash for drugs as he could use. Long before an overdose carried him off in 1988, his paintings had become an inspiration for younger artists. Basquiat's *Warrior* [334] of 1982 offers a way of locating that reputation in the terms of this book. Someone with an utterly sure pace of marking has cast an eye on Guston – and on Dubuffet's graffiti-oriented act before him – and moved

334 (opposite) Jean-Michel Basquiat,
Warrior, 1982.





335 Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still No. 13*, 1978. When the New York artist Cindy Sherman started creating her own black-and-white ‘film stills’ in the late 1970s, she was reviving a recently obsolete picture format. A carefully composed still of this type, meant to project a film’s flavour and glamour to passers-by outside a cinema, seems to hark back to the early 1960s. Sherman acted out and photographed a long series of such compositions, seeking out every stereotype within the communal mythology of Hollywood to which she could adapt her chameleon looks. The exercise seemed to ask what pictures are and what people are, questions that found a wide resonance.

on fast. It’s a young man’s painting, with all the excitement of Géricault’s *Chasseur* [239]. Two other 19th-century reference points seem relevant: Ren Xiong’s snarled-up, attitude-striking *Self-Portrait*, with its almost as choppy rhythms, and Akati’s *Agoje!* [253, 252]. I’ve no idea if Basquiat had a picture of the latter among the art books in his basement, but I’ve no doubt that the territory-staking and the jumpy bricolage of both ‘African’ artists is more than a superficial coincidence. But that aesthetic of bricolage, in Basquiat’s case, was for much of the time a matter of playing with the written word, and here it lies at cross purposes with the focus of this book.

The theory-alert intellectuals who had set the tone for the art world through the 1970s were largely hostile towards the painting boom, but they had a way of encapsulating the quotation-hugging zeitgeist: they called it ‘postmodernism’. In principle, that might mean any artistic development taking leave of the Picasso-to-Pollock modernist lineage spelt out by Greenberg, from Rauschenberg and Warhol onwards. In practice, we’ll use it here to denote a shift in thinking about images that might have been heralded by those mid-century artists but that was only entrenched as an orthodoxy during the 1980s. Broadly, it was this: never mind the particularities of the medium or the circumstances of origin – any sort of picture is in effect one more spread of information, making itself available to the spectator. Or, as the manners of the age liked to put it, ‘the customer’.

One could state this axiom of the ‘information age’ cynically – reflect on how even the insistently ‘authentic’ Pollock played to the camera, and describe Oppenheim and Mendieta as mere purveyors of escapist landscape. Equally, one could use it as a bridge to link different traditions of imagery. The work of New York’s ‘Pictures’ group – including such artists as Cindy Sherman [335] – played around exactly such themes. In the process, photography increasingly came back under the same roof as other visual practices. A history that had inevitably ranged far beyond the reach of this book converged with that of painting, largely because the camera was the tool of documentarists and other radicals of the 1970s who had worked on the assumption that painting was obsolete.

Some of them, such as Jeff Wall, an academic in Vancouver, smoothed the dialogue between media by composing and directing their ‘cameraworks’ around art-historical resonances. Behind the wasteland traversed by the trailer-trash trio in Wall’s 1985 *Diatribes* [336], the knowing viewer can trace the landscape-and-figure dispositions of Poussin [see 193], or the more recent suburban mock-pastorals of Manet [see 254] – or maybe the compassionate social intentions of earlier 20th-century photographers, resuscitated by actors during an era of right-wing reaction. The less knowing gallery-goer might be allured by the two-

metre (seven-foot) lightbox that gives the picture the radiance of a shopping mall advertisement or a computer screen – the medium on which Wall's pictures would later be adjusted digitally. Transparent as no oil painting can ever be, Wall's studiously staged cibachrome toys sceptically with photography's supposed transparency to the actual world.

Projects like this proved the most critically acceptable face of 1980s picture-making. By the time of Basquiat's death in 1988, art-world fashion had veered once again away from painting itself, not least because of the tackiness of much of the product made to catch the market. But, viewed more broadly, the slow, inherently sensual practice of painting had meanwhile spread out, with the extension of education and middle-class leisure, to become the focus for countless meditative privacies across the world. Guston's *Studio* speaks for developments way beyond the waves of so-called 'bad' painting that followed in its wake. We can only glimpse at them here.

336 Jeff Wall, *Diatrobe*, 1985.



337 Bhupen Khakhar, *Two Men in Banaras*, 1982.



That transition to a private space might be one way of approaching Bhupen Khakhar's *Two Men in Banaras* [337]. The opening up of a gay sensibility, a subtext for artists like Johns and Warhol, was moving to centre stage in New York in 1982 as curators developed themes of 'minority' representation. It was another matter to come out as gay in the close-woven, morally conservative social fabric that India continued to present. Khakhar may have been emboldened by his friendship with the Londoner Howard Hodgkin, a painter of enclosed, private pleasures using a more coded, colour-dependent idiom.

Behind their exchange, a fraught history of India's relations with artistic 'modernity' – an alien import? a self-willed development? – might be retraced, proceeding at a separate pace from the West after the days of Tara and Ravi Varma (see p. 333). The world-travelled writer Rabindranath Tagore, late-flowering in the 1920s as an idiosyncratic Symbolist draughtsman, founded the art school of Santiniketan in his native Bengal to nurture a distinctively Asian artistic consciousness – a response, in a new context, to the nationalisms that had motivated European art before the First World War. Here, artists from the urban middle classes explored the country's ancient craft traditions. Yet charisma tended to cling to individuals who had stood before easels in Europe – Amrita Sher-Gil bringing Parisian

values to Indian subject-matter in the 1930s, the expressionist Francis Souza travelling from Goa to London in the 1950s. Baroda, the art school in Gujerat where Khakhar trained in the 1960s, approached India's own tradition with modernistic rigour, as a formal 'language' to be analysed. The kind of large-scale narrative canvas that Khakhar was beginning to paint by the early 1980s aimed to open up that language to accesses of personal emotion: in fact, the career of Baroda's main teacher, K. G. Subramanyan, followed a similar trajectory. Khakhar was also drawing on a distant precedent, Siena's Ambrogio Lorenzetti [see 103–6], for his vision of the flow of humanity and landscape behind the lovers – not because all sources of imagery are equivalent in the postmodern world, but because a few seem to offer painters models for returning to their one-time role as creators of communal imaginative space.

Communal solidarity was the hope of many artist-activists on the Left during the 1970s and 1980s. Westerners teaming up on big street murals looked towards Mao's China, where peasant artists in the province of Yunnan were producing arrestingly colourful posters of collective farm labour, or towards Kinshasa in the Congo, where painters like Moké were evolving a sharp street idiom for describing post-colonial realities. The most monumental and didactic of all Western communal projects was Judy Chicago's five-year *Dinner Party* project in America (completed in 1979), which involved scores of 'sisters' in stitching tablecloths and throwing and painting vulviform plates for a giant vulvic-triangle table, laid out to greet the patron saints of feminism.

A very different direction for educational activism emerged in Australia when the art teacher Geoffrey Bardon took up a posting in 1971 at Papunya in the Western Desert. At this camp, where Aborigines had been resettled in a government drive towards 'assimilation', he introduced acrylic paints and hardboard and invited them to memorialize their experience of the land. Thus under-employed stockmen – and as the movement spread, women – began to unpackage the sacred geographical symbolism of the world's oldest continuous art tradition. It was a carefully channelled influx. Wishing for a distinctive ethnic idiom, Bardon recommended an earthy palette and an abstinence from familiar comic-book motifs – 'nothing whitefella', as he put it. Even so, the emergent style's hallmark feature, the 'dotting' long practised by Aborigines, may have had a thoroughly contemporary resonance. As Vivien Johnson, the scholar of the movement, notes, 'Can it be only coincidence that television, whose images are also composed of dots, came to Papunya in 1971?' It may be no coincidence, then, that these pixellated map-images soon became a highly saleable sensation, as dealers moved in to trade on their



338 Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri assisted by Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, *Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming*, 1980.

exotic cachet. The rise of Aboriginal art to world renown was ensured when, alongside art-world ‘names’ and workers of ‘traditional’ ritual, practitioners were included in a grandiose postmodern curatorial jamboree, the exhibition ‘Magiciens de la Terre’, held at Paris’s Pompidou Centre in 1989.

As Bardon recognized, some of his protégés were as poetically ambitious and as self-conscious as any art-world name. The brothers Tjapaltjarri – Tim Leura and Clifford Possum – were carvers before he arrived at Papunya. With Clifford’s assistance, Tim painted *Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming* [338] for Bardon in 1980. The canvas is 7 metres (23 feet) long and weaves a path through the landmarks of the painter’s homeland – its six rest-places, its curling windbreaks, its rippling waterholes – that is his own passage through time. The three islands of superimposed pattern form a retrospective of three earlier pictures that Tim had overlaid on the landscape, surrendering its meanings to the whitefella; he himself, at his journey’s end, surrenders and reunites with his ghostly forefathers, at one with his ‘dreaming’, the encompassing myth assigned to his life. It is a sombre-hued admission of cultural defeat. Also, perhaps, one of the moments when the art of the postmodern era comes closest to a private statement of communal scope.



World spectacle

from the 1980s

What's too close blurs in the vision. The contemporary scene, which is typically corralled into 'art fairs', startles, captivates, alienates, above all overwhelms in its profusion: no one can really tell how it all is. Still less reducible to order is the indefinitely complex virtual 'multiverse' that has opened up over the last decade via the computer screen, terrain I'll leave to future historians. I'll try to pick out a few themes from the middle ground of fixed imagery in a loosely chronological fashion. But everything here is still very much in play.

That includes the ghost of *Tilted Arc*. When did the Western avant-garde tradition breathe its last? On the night of 15 March 1989, when contractors tore down Richard Serra's sculpture in Federal Plaza, New York City [339]. Serra had arrived on the art scene in the late 1960s. He participated in the early days of video, making 'structuralist' pieces that, like Morris's mirror cubes, tersely confronted the viewer with the conditions of their own watching. But the steel trade in which he had worked offered him a uniquely physical means to wake people up. He stacked steel slabs to teeter precariously, so that they gave anyone walking into their ambit a frisson of bodily alarm. The poise and keen sense of placing that Serra brought whenever he intervened on a site in this way soon made him the most critically respected sculptor in America since that earlier stubborn steelworker David Smith. Thus it was that a pluralistically minded federal authority commissioned



339 Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, Federal Plaza, New York, 1981.



340, 341 Mona Hatoum, *Corps étranger*, 1994.

him in 1979 to bring his art to a nondescript public space in downtown Manhattan. Whatever other qualities it may have had, the 36-metre (118-foot) steel wall that went up two years later succeeded in the aim of waking people up. It alerted enough of the local office-workers into outright opposition for a judge sympathetic to the right-wing populism of the new Reagan regime to bring a case for its removal. It was rusty, it was ugly, it got in the way, people claimed at the 1985 court hearing. Despite many appeals by the now beleaguered ‘advanced art’ community, they eventually got their way.

‘Its sweep exists simultaneously *here* and *there*. ...’ So Rosalind Krauss, *Tilted Arc*’s most renowned critical advocate, had claimed at the hearing,* explaining how Serra’s type of sculpture, rather than showing bodies as figures, activated the viewer’s own bodily awareness by bringing it up against an immediate obstruction while hurtling the eyes onward and outward. With hindsight we could shift the terms of her description to ‘there’ and ‘not there’. At one end, a thumping physical reality; at the other, a cause célèbre, ‘discourse’, mere wind. As *Tilted Arc* made its way from the one state to the other, there was a widespread feeling that the old avant-garde impulse – to deliver a salutary aesthetic shock, to clear a space for critical reflection – was ceding to the free-flow of consumers and information in a world of unchecked capitalism. (The Berlin Wall, to which the sculpture’s enemies had often compared it, went down a few months later.) Swathes of art production through the last twenty years have probed that vanishing of the modernist endeavour like a tongue exploring a missing tooth. Wised-up retrospects on 20th-century architecture and design have often provided a language for doing so, starting with the so-called ‘Neo-Geo’ movement that hit the limelight in New York as the painting boom was declared passé in 1986. That label came from Peter Halley’s repainting of gallery interiors with the geometric grids once favoured by idealists like Mondrian, now recast as sinister networks of control.

But let’s switch to the work of a sculptor quite as aggressive as Serra, Mona Hatoum. *Corps étranger* [340, 341] expresses in a concise form an instinct that gained prominence as the avant-garde impulse receded. Rather than intervene, enclose. Installations of one kind or another had played a subsidiary role in experimental movements from the time of Dada onwards, but during the 1980s a host of different agendas together established the modified interior as an obvious format in which to work. In a sense, artists were modelling themselves on their overlords, the curators, and seizing control of the conditions of viewing. Hatoum, wanting ‘a complete experience that involves your body, your senses, your mind, your emotions,

* Italics added.

everything', might conceivably have been swayed by the ambient aesthetic of her native Arab culture. But, operating in London and Paris, by the early 1990s she had at her disposal a technology that could brutally disrupt any familiar Western image of the figure. Whoever steps inside her cell is plunged down a switchback ride, conducted by a torchlit endoscopic camera, through the internal passages of her own 'foreign body'—the eye seen in the illustration being but a momentary daybreak in a moist, bizarre, interminable tunnel. (Speakers play back heartbeats: the sonic has become another of art's new dimensions.) Has this disruption feminist, or, as the artist would prefer, internationalist resonances? Does it distil an experience of surveillance that now surrounds us everywhere, from London to the Lebanon? Well, it is a sensation, it exceeds meaning; as such, Hatoum's nightmare inversion of Serra's macho gesture becomes another type of consumable curiosity.

To illustrate the rise of video installation in this way is merely to jump in on broader, longer-term trends. The evolution of video, from its beginnings in Nam June Paik's information barrages and in 'structuralist' work like Serra's to its more recent accent on mesmerizing, high-production spectacle, had been largely at the hands of the American artist Bill Viola. Hatoum would also have known an earlier engulfing installation, *20:50* [342]—the room that the British artist Richard Wilson had filled waist-high

342 Richard Wilson, *20:50*, 1987. Wilson, a British artist, re-created this piece in several different galleries across the world after it made an impact at a London show in 1987. The room was turned into a pool containing engine oil (the '20:50' of the title), with a trench for viewers inserted through its centre. Wilson chose oil because it is highly opaque and reflective, and he wished to transform the gallery space by doubling it. Formally, what he was doing developed on the virtually objectless mirror sculptures of Robert Morris (324), but the eeriness of the new sculptural experience astonished all who entered. Wilson's *20:50* was the forerunner of many more such enveloping environments.





343 Damien Hirst, *A Thousand Years*, 1990. Vitrines or glass cabinets took on an interest for 1980s figures such as Jeff Koons as a concise way of isolating an object as 'art'. Here Hirst, a 25-year-old who had recently been employed in a mortuary, split a vitrine into two chambers with apertures in between. In one was a house for maggots to hatch into flies, in the other a cow's head to feed them and a UV grid to kill them. This closed circle, with its baleful demonstration of life and death, was presented with an arresting clinical precision. It immediately caught the eye of the patron Charles Saatchi, initiating one of the most influential partnerships in

with sump oil in 1987, inviting the viewer down a walled passage into its shimmering, unfathomable midst. Formally, her *Corps étranger* resembles *Green Light Corridor*, an edgily constricting neon-lit environment put together by Bruce Nauman back in 1970. This was one of the West Coast artist's declarations of awkwardness as if for awkwardness's sake: nothing too comfortable for you, nor yet for me. In fact, the Californian art scene had specialized in queasy, spectacular provocations ever since Kienholz's scabrous tableaux of the 1960s.

The late 1980s, however, was the point at which the mixed-media orgiastic grotesquerie of Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley's 'sad' displays of thrift-store dolls seemed to chime with other developments in the American art world. The shock caused as AIDS cut in on a previously hedonistic zeitgeist brought in pathos alongside their bathos: Robert Gober was creating an eerie, fastidious sculpture of mourning out of truncated furnishings and limbs. Shame loomed large in the era's emotional fabric. So did shamelessness. The same scene in New York that had spawned Peter Halley's 'Neo-Geo', 'neo-conceptual' art-world manoeuvres produced in Jeff Koons one operator able to captivate the public at large.* Koons had a new rationale for exhibiting a shiny new vacuum cleaner in a plexiglass vitrine – a gesture blatantly modelled on Duchamp's ready-mades and the 1960s Brillo-box displays of Warhol. His art lay in his own careerism, and in his will to co-opt the efforts of others. It thus made perfect expressionistic sense to commission photographers and model-fabricators to present the 1990 Venice Biennale with images of himself and his wife, a well-known porn star, having sex. With a leech's instinct for the veins of consumer desire and a relish for its juicy dumbness, the former salesman blithely suckered all the self-importance out of American aesthetics, replacing it with fun – busty babes hugging pink panthers in Bavarian porcelain, giant puppies covered in pansies.

By 1988 Koons's professional attitude to art-career management was already being noted in London by Damien Hirst, a student at Goldsmiths' College who would play a large role in steering his own generation of 'young British artists' to a position of global prominence during the following decade. Attitude rather than visual branding was the selling point: the 'yBas' sculpted, painted, did performances, made videos, seemingly united only by their chutzpah and irreverence towards their American predecessors. How is the 'look' of exhibiting during the 1990s to be identified? For an answer I'd turn to Belgium, and to Wim Delvoye, a one-time participant in New York's neo-conceptual scene [344]. Yes, that is a life-

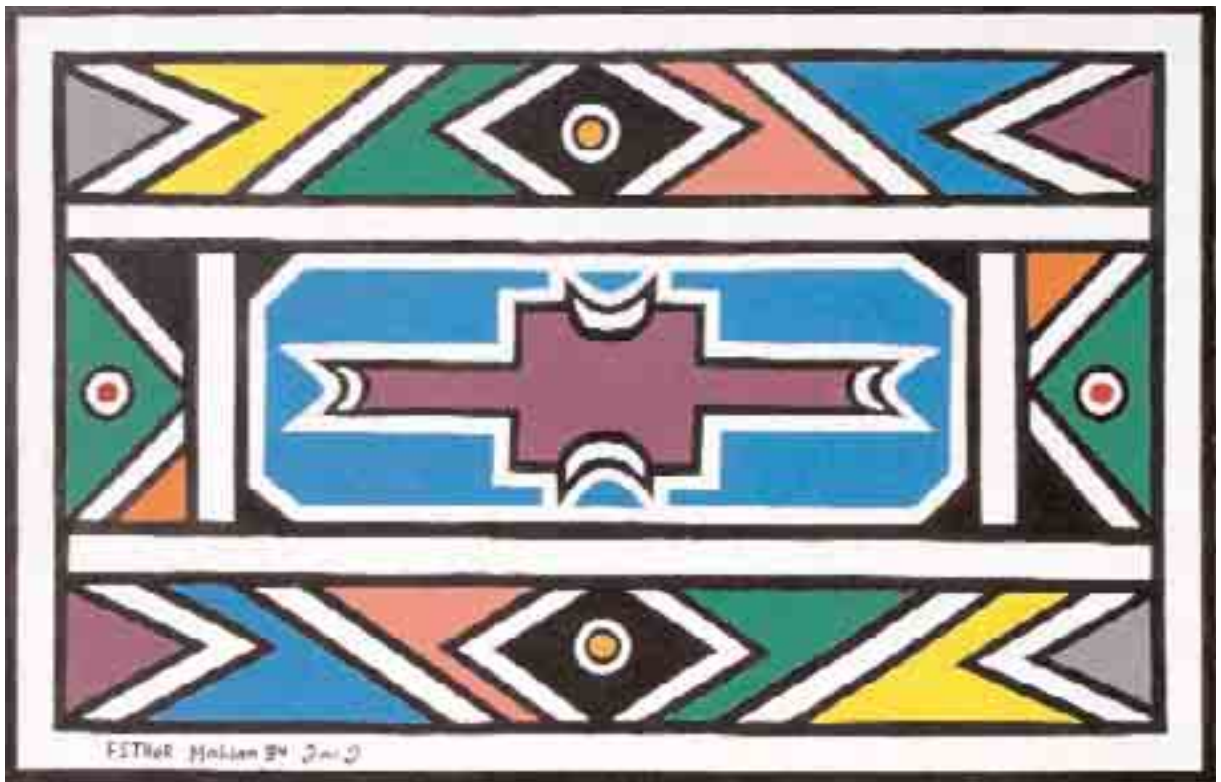
* Another label used for this scene was 'Simulationism', referring to the writings of the Frenchman Jean Baudrillard, with their vision of a world in which everything is simulated.

size Nissan cement truck with panels of baroque ornament, carved out of teak. Maybe you break out in laughter at the gargantuan one-liner; maybe you are simply stopped in your tracks by the effrontery of its gratuitous presence. Serra's urge to confront you has been diverted, lured inside one of the grandiose new art spaces that have grown up in concert with such work. But this exhibit, too, so infinitely more popular in its wish to amuse, is likewise 'there' and 'not there'. Somewhere in the vicinity, a curator's label is likely to inform you that 'Delvoye is questioning ...'.

And indeed, the prompts for discourse spiral indeterminately out of sight. The art historian might trace the ancestry of Delvoye's sardonic wit back to that earlier master of Belgian deadpan, René Magritte. (In much the same way, *A Thousand Years* [343], the 1990 vitrine in which Damien Hirst sealed up some flies to cohabit with a rotting calf's head, has often been seen as the giant grandchild, in its gleeful blackheartedness, of the paintings of Francis Bacon.) Equally, one could relate the transformation tactic employed in this sculpture to the precedent of Penone's tree-beam –

344 Wim Delvoye, *Cement Truck*, 1990–99.





345 Esther Mahlangu, *Untitled*, 2002.

though of course Delvoye is working entirely against Penone's own grain. What could be more calculated to offend the ecologically minded than this splurge of tropical hardwood? What could be less carpenter-like than to outsource the fabrication of his concept to Indonesia – where, we are told, carvers in three villages laboured eleven months on it? Thus we are prompted to chew over what Delvoye calls 'glocal' issues. Does this art belong to the virtual globe of capital and spectacle? Or to the local, hand-and-eye, sweaty realities of a Javanese skill tradition that for centuries has fused Dutch-colonial and Chinese influences?

In India and the Islamic world, the ornamentation of a truck is a matter of proprietorial self-respect rather than of spectacular provocation. The Western visitor is likely to be allured by the good faith and expressive flair of cultures in which visual intelligence seems pervasive rather than isolated and commodified. Multinationals are attentive to such sentiments, as well as to the profile enhancement that sponsoring art can provide. So when the manufacturers BMW commissioned a range of 'artists' cars' in 1991, their art advisers took their cue from the Paris 'Magiciens de la Terre' show two years earlier, inviting not only well-known Westerners but one of its novice exhibitors, the South African painter Esther Mahlangu. Mahlangu, who started out adorning house exteriors in Ndebele villages, has subsequently taken her art everywhere from churches to New York record stores, and has adapted it to large-scale canvases [345].

It dovetails with an agenda set out in the 1960s by a fellow BMW recruit, the American abstractionist Frank Stella: ‘To keep the paint as good as it was in the can.’ That idea of self-sufficient visual pleasure – of ‘beauty’, perhaps – was marginalized in the following decades, in so far as art remained a zone for radical rethinking. Perhaps it can now be let loose? Again, large swathes of contemporary art, not only in painting but in the pure-light world of video and digital exploration, toy with this possibility. They often insert intellectual get-out clauses in the small print of the artist’s statement, as if afraid of seeming dumb. Mahlangu’s blazons, with their finely judged shuttle of stimuli, seem like turn-of-the-millennium demonstrations of another Stella aphorism: ‘What you see is what you see.’

Though not to historians, of course. It’s their business to trace how Ndebele women like Mahlangu’s mother started adapting bead patterns to house-fronts in the mid-20th century as a way of asserting family pride at a time when their husbands were being press-ganged into Johannesburg’s migrant labour system. Their motifs began as ciphers for luxury commodities, celebrations of the consumerism that so angered Berni in Argentina. So we glimpse how Mahlangu’s art somehow coexists with that of a fellow South African, Jane Alexander – though also how the world of images gets

346 Jane Alexander, *Vissershok*, 2000.





347 Juan Muñoz, *Three Men with a Yellow Ball*, 2001. Muñoz's figures are yelling with laughter, hurtling giddily forward as if on a fairground ride – except that we hear nothing, and they stay pinned to a gallery wall. It was just such *non-experiences* and *non-events* that were the stuff of Muñoz's art. The Spanish sculptor, who died aged forty-eight in 2001, specialized in placing figures in uncanny relationships with the gallery space and with the viewer. He was an expert in distance – in figures being *over there*, rather than fully present – and in this sense his work developed on the thinking of Giacometti.

no nearer to homogenization. The photomontage *Vissershok* [346] is named after Cape Town's municipal dump, which here plays host to six of Alexander's painted plaster models. Further shots in a sequence take them elsewhere in the city. These and other child- or doll-sized personae are also regrouped in spaces where spectators are free to wander around them and to interpret as they will – up to a point. Like many artists who began exhibiting in the 1980s, Alexander works by creating multiple elements and recombining them as the chance arises, an approach one might term 'modular'. Among them, various sculptors – for instance Juan Muñoz in Spain [347], Stephan Balkenhol in Germany, the Brazilian Ana Maria Pacheco working in London [348] – started to find new uses for the figure. Through its scale, its gestures, its costume and its colouring, a figure has a sure psychological ratchet on the attention of the viewer, and to this extent it is bound to check the drift towards free-for-all interpretation.

Mutated figures became a familiar feature of 1990s exhibitions, coinciding with the culture of queasy spectacle beloved by the yBas while gesturing towards anxieties about a post-gender, post-identity, post-human future. But in Alexander's case, her forlorn troupe of half-in-halves lock into the past. The midget on the oil-drum plinth with his one hand yielding, one fist clenching, with his black-rimmed eyes peeking through a grey carapace; the impotent stuffed suit who seems to dream him; the deathly phantasms who drift between – all pick at the psychic scars that the apartheid system left on its operators, whites like Alexander. Her pictorial technique is more akin to 1920s leftist montage in Germany, which her family fled in 1936, than to the digital morphing common elsewhere in 2000. Likewise, her compatriot William Kentridge has grounded videos that tackle the post-apartheid agenda in the hard graft of old-fashioned academic draughtsmanship.

One could see their moral earnestness as steering against the current of back-slapping flippancy that dominated the 1990s international art scene. Or one could see both truth-telling and relativism as facets of modern art's broader imaginative matrix, which brings to the fore now the heated, now the chilled; now grunge and gravity, now virtuality and air. Alexander's wasteland, so much harsher than Jeff Wall's evocation of a scruffily suburban multiracial dialogue fifteen years earlier, may prove to be more in tune with the darkening political mood of the post-millennium decade.

The modular strategy of figure sculptors like Alexander also underpins *Dispersion* [349] by Julie Mehretu. This is a large canvas built up from a variety of what Mehretu calls 'characters' – small graphic units adapted largely from architectural diagrams, though Chinese brushwork is another source. Using these, she is replacing the cool analysis of modernist design made by the 'Neo-Geo' generation of the late 1980s with a more

348 Ana María Pacheco, *Land of No Return*, 2004. Pacheco has worked since the 1970s in England, but the primary reference point for her wood-carvings is the great sculptor of her native Brazil, Antonio Lisboa (224). This ensemble was installed under strong lighting to stand on the floor, inviting viewers to walk among its life-size figures. As with Lisboa and other Baroque sculpture, the work urged its audience towards gripping, overwhelming religious emotion, and yet Pacheco kept its storyline open-ended. She wished to 'explore, rather than confirm, the expectations that onlookers bring with them', she had claimed in an earlier statement.

349 (overleaf) Julie Mehretu, *Dispersion*, 2002.

frenetic agenda. These vectors and subsets are meant to symbolize dynamics operating abstractly on a worldwide level. Mehretu's status as an Ethiopian-born US citizen may inform this ambition, but then attempts to 'think globally' pervade contemporary culture. They have been made, for instance, in the grandiose later projects of Kiefer – epics that Mehretu seems to imitate in scale, if not in texture – and in the digital photographic composites of Andreas Gursky. By simulating high-tech image-layering with a freehand pen and brush, Mehretu also seems to be clawing compositional skills back from the computer's now well-established monopoly.

Dispersion, Mehretu's title, could equally designate any number of contemporary artistic practices. Handing out information, or goods, or quite simply food has become an exemplary procedure for various artists wanting to reinvent social consciousness-raising, from Felix Gonzalez-Torres in the New York of 1990 to Thomas Hirschhorn and Rirkrit Tiravanija in the international scene of the 2000s. But this *Dispersion* remains very much a focused image, rooted in a particular time and place. We are in the New York of 2002, watching one of ten thousand artists trying to digest the impact of 9/11 through her imagination. Is it too raw,









350 Luc Tuymans, *Diagnostic View*, 1992. A disease may exhibit facial symptoms. A photo is taken so that the doctor may diagnose the patient's problems from afar. But suppose a painter came and worked from that photo. ... No malady would remain, merely a tenuous chain of image memories. Such was the rationale behind the *Diagnostic Views* that the Belgian painter Tuymans produced in the early 1990s. His thinking was one step on from the photo-fixated philosophy of Gerhard Richter, but placed an equal emphasis on the diseases and guilty secrets lurking in Europe's recent past. The washed-out elegance of Tuymans's painterly touch has ensured it a wide audience.

351 Thomas Ruff, *Portrait*, 1988.

too reactive, this attempt to symbolize that atrocious spectacle-to-end-spectacle? Or do we agree with the artist when it's put to her that she is being too bombastic? 'I don't think that my work is hyper enough.'

There and here

If researching art history has taught me anything, it is that Mehretu's apocalyptic melodrama, which might have seemed 'state of the art' in 2006, will look problematically dated ten years later, and that by 2026 it will have settled into history as a significant contribution to a 'revival of drawing', or some such theme. To end this book on a slightly less journalistic note, I'll reach back into the late 20th century for my final images.

To introduce Thomas Ruff's photography might seem like one more demonstration of a cliché that has spread across the world ever since Robert Rauschenberg reanimated Marcel Duchamp's thinking in the late 1950s: 'Anything can be art.' To call something a cliché doesn't stop it being true; but there isn't room here to explore all the uses, rich and provoking or hollow and pretentious, that people have made of that wisdom. What I'm interested in is the ways in which images can hold the attention. In 1988 Ruff started treating that issue by displaying passport-like pictures blown up to reach from ceiling to floor. Yet even when reduced to fit the printed page, it seems to me that his images makes us think what it is to look. Here is the most primary of all visual cues, a human face [351]; moreover, here is a trace of a single individual as real as you or me. But by a subtle pervasive deflection Ruff has tried to empty out all its potential content, creating a flat spread of visual fact as abstract as Mahlangu's canvas. A picture, that's all we're looking at.

Or are we? 'We grew up in the seventies', Ruff told an interviewer.* (He spent most of them studying with the influential German documentarists Bernd and Hilla Becher, at Düsseldorf.) 'Sometimes it was better not to tell what you were thinking.' As radical culture hunkered down in the wake of its 1960s exuberance, as one channel of that energy headed into the terror tactics of Germany's Baader-Meinhof gang while another slipped back equivocally into ties and careers, the individual became locked into a stand-off with surveillance systems that now extends throughout the Western world. The flat spread of printer's ink that we see here backs onto the secret, unknown territory that is contemporary private life. The nameless friend whom Ruff asked to look 'neutral' back in 1988 was stonily preparing himself for the advent of

* Philip Pocock, in the *Journal of Contemporary Art*, 1993.





CCTV and the iris scan. Like the equally anti-romantic paintings of his Belgian contemporary Luc Tuymans [350], Ruff's camerawork puts us face to face with surfaces and invests them with a moral dimension.

And I think that here we are near the nub, if not of all art, whatever that may be, at least of the kind of human activity with which this book has been preoccupied: a way of making things that involves looking intensely *at*, and *in*.

Also, an activity that involves reaching beyond the visible. The timeline I've plotted has zigzagged far outside my base in north-western Europe without ever truly encircling the globe, and a book from an Asian Pacific perspective, for instance, would have a very different tale to tell. Its final chapter would dwell on other avant-gardes, starting with Japan's Gutai group, who reanimated the radical spirit of the 1920s Mavo artists in 1955, and going on to the Taiwanese ex-painter Tehching Hsieh. How might we describe art if we focused on the sequence of 'one-year performances' that Hsieh commenced, without publicity, in New York in 1978? To pass a year locked up silent and alone in a cage; to pass a year punching a clock every hour on the hour; to pass a year without letting a roof come over his head; to pass a year not, in any way, participating in art. ... There is much that we too might have to abandon. In February 1989, a month before *Tilted Arc* came down, the Beijing exhibition 'China Avant-Garde' announced the advent of a generation of experimentalists almost as uncompromising as Hsieh within the People's Republic. Yet an alternative last chapter to this book would also want to dwell on painters such as Zeng Hao and Fang Lijun, who started creating an imagery for 1990s Chinese modernity, not to mention the generation of 1990s artists who explored Japan's mass culture of comics and animation, headed by Takashi Murakami.

In the early 1970s, while most of the radicals around him in Tokyo were determinedly not producing art so as not to yield up more commodities to the system, the Korean-born Lee U-fan took the controversial step of opting to paint. 'We must stop creating and start seeing', Sekine Nobuo, his friend in the Mono-ha, the 'object group', had written. Lee slightly adjusted that agenda, approaching it with pigment and canvas: 'Man will have to learn to see everything as it is.' He has since worked in Europe and America and has written of his admiration for Lucio Fontana and Anish Kapoor, a British-Asian sculptor who is also concerned with hollows and the actualizing of space. To East Asian viewers, Lee's canvases may seem framed to the dictates of an imposed art culture; to

Westerners, they seem to open onto the ‘Chan’ or Zen Buddhist tradition explored by painters such as Mu Qi seven hundred years before [see 97]. They are likewise windows onto the themes of presence and absence, matter and void that have stolen up on this book as it draws to a close. A canvas of 1990 [352], one of a series entitled *With Winds*, presents us with marks indicating that there is something other than marks, other than words about them too. There is. It seems good to halt here.

Has art a history? At the level on which I’ve described matters, only just. At moments, as I wrote, I seemed to glimpse all the static images reproduced on these pages coming together as facets of a single great verb, an ever-varying wave of the human imagination. But if art is such a verb, then this is not its grammar – merely a glance at a few general ways in which social circumstances have shaped its usage. What is beautiful in a work of art, what changes the life of the viewer, lies far beyond the range of such a description. Go in closer, to finer-grained art histories. Better, get close to the work itself. Best, make things. What happens next in art is up to you.

TIMELINE

	30,000 BCE	10,000 BCE	5000 BCE	3000 BCE	2000 BCE
GLOBAL	— before 40,000 bce LOWER PALAEOLOGIC — 40,000–10,000 bce UPPER PALAEOLOGIC —	• c. 10,000 BCE END OF ICE AGE			• c. 2000 bce WIDESPREAD DROUGHTS, CIVILIZATIONS IN RETREAT
AFRICA	c. 130,000 bce EMERGENCE OF <i>HOMO SAPIENS</i> • c. 75,000 bce Blombos Cave, patterned ochre		• c. 5000 bce Tassili paintings, Sahara [10]	• c. 3100 bce START OF EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD IN EGYPT ————— 2650–2150 bce OLD KINGDOM IN EGYPT	• c. 2470 bce Menkaure and Khamererneby [26] • c. 2300 bce Seneb and Sentyotes [27]
EUROPE	• ?100,000 bce Norfolk, knapped flint [2] • c. 31,000 bce Hohlenstein-Stadel, figurine [4] • c. 28,000 bce Chauvet, cave paintings [5, 6] • 25,000 bce Dolni Vestonice, Czech Republic, clay figurines • ?17,000 bce Cave complexes at Lascaux and Altamira • c. 14,000 bce La Madeleine, fragment of carved antler [7] from 10,000 bce MESOLITHIC PERIOD IN EUROPE from 7000 bce NEOLITHIC FARMING IN EASTERN EUROPE from 5500 bce NEOLITHIC FARMING IN CENTRAL EUROPE • 5000–2000 bce Cavalls, cave paintings [1] • c. 4500 bce FIRST EUROPEAN MEGALITHS • c. 4500 bce ‘The Lady of Pazardzik’ [16] • 3200–2500 bce Scotland, stone balls [20] • 3000–2000 bce Stonehenge • 2800–2000 bce Cycladic figurines [17]				
ASIA	• ?250,000 bce Berekhat Ram, grooved tufa [3]	• c. 10,000 bce Japan, first Jomon ceramics • c. 9600 bce Göbekli Tepe, megalithic temple [11, 12] from 9000 bce NEOLITHIC FARMING BEGINS IN S.W. ASIA 7000–4000 bce METAL-WORKING DEVELOPS IN S.W. ASIA from 7000 bce NEOLITHIC FARMING IN CHINA	• 3500 bce SUMER (IRAQ), EARLIEST CITIES • c. 3200–2200 bce China, Liangzhu culture, jade <i>cong</i> [23] • c. 2800 bce Sumerian seal [25] • 2600–1900 Indus cities • c. 2500 bce Niigata ‘flame-style’ Jomon vessel [15] • c. 2250 bce Stele of Naram-sin [28, 29] • c. 2200 bce Indus cities; Harappa figurine [24]		• c. 2000 bce ‘BMAC’ culture (Turkmenistan), axe-head [30]
AMERICAS		from 10,000 bce ARCHAIC PERIOD • 7000–2000 bce Utah, ‘Holy Sprit’ rock paintings [8]			
OCEANIA	• ?35,000 bce Australia, pictographs				

	2000 BCE	1000 BCE	500 BCE	0	300 CE
GLOBAL		1200–800 bce 'DARK AGE' DISRUPTIONS IN S.W. ASIA, EGYPT, S. EUROPE			
AFRICA		1550–1070 bce NEW KINGDOM IN EGYPT c. 1375 bce Bek, Akhenaten relief [37] c. 1340 bce Thutmose, bust of Nefertiti [38]		500–200 bce NOK CULTURE, NIGERIA c. 250 bce Nok terracotta figurine [65]	
EUROPE	GREECE	2220–1450 bce MINOAN ERA c. 2220–1000 bce AEGEAN CULTURES c. 2000–1000 bce BRONZE AGE IN EAST MEDITERRANEAN c. 1550 bce Thera mural [32–36] 1450–1200 bce MYCENEAN ERA	c. 330 bce Ilissos grave relief [48] c. 330 bce 'Marathon Boy' [49] c. 150 bce Nike of Samothrace [50] 80 bce Bronze head from Delos [52]		
		- from 800 bce THE HELLENES RECOGNIZE A SHARED CULTURE 650–450 bce ARCHAIC ART IN GREECE c. 590 bce Kouros from Attica [43] 490–330 bce CLASSICAL ART IN GREECE c. 480 bce 'Kritios Boy' [44] c. 480 bce Kylix by the Triptolemos Painter [45] 447–432 bce Parthenon reliefs [47] 330–50 bce HELLENISTIC ART			
	ITALY		? 753 bce ROME FOUNDED 700–400 bce ETRUSCAN CULTURE	- from 150 bce ROME DOMINANT IN MEDITERRANEAN ? c. 40 BCE Hagesandros et al., <i>Laocoön</i> [59–62] c. 11 CE Wall paintings at Boscotrecase, S. Italy [58] 75–80 CE Rome, Colosseum 113 CE Rome, Trajan's Column [63, 64] 176 CE Rome, statue of Marcus Aurelius c. 280 CE Head of Probus [67]	
ASIA		c. 1800–800 bce BRONZE AGE IN CHINA - from 1750 to 612 bce ASSYRIAN CULTURE 1700s–1100s bce SHANG DYNASTY IN N. CHINA - from 1500 to c. 100 bce PHOENICIAN CULTURE c. 1050 bce Bronze <i>yu</i>, ritual vessel [31] c. 750 bce Inlaid ivory throne ornament [41] c. 750 bce Tuva, coiled panther plaque [40] 640 bce Nineveh, relief of asses in flight [42] - from 612 bce PERSIAN EMPIRE c. 500 bce BUDDHA TEACHES c. 470 bce Persepolis reliefs [46] 326 bce ALEXANDER'S CONQUESTS REACH THE INDUS RIVER 268–233 bce EMPIRE OF ASOKA IN S. ASIA 221 bce QIN EMPEROR UNITES CHINA 202 bce–220 ce HAN DYNASTY RULES CHINA	c. 138 bce CHINESE OPEN SILK ROAD TO WEST c. 120 bce <i>Boshan</i> incense burner [54] c. 120 bce 'Flying Horse' bronze [55] c. 80 bce Xinjiang, Hellenistic wall hanging [53] c. 50 bce Sanchi gateway [51] c. 33 CE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH		
AMERICAS		c. 1200–800 bce Mexico, Tlatilco ceramic [39] c. 1000 bce Mexico, Olmec heads, San Lorenzo [21] c. 900 bce Peru, Chavin temple building [22]			

	400	600	800	900	1000	1100	1200
AFRICA	• c. 340 Sarcophagus from Carthage, N. Africa [68]		from 630s MUSLIMS CONQUER N. AFRICA				IFE KINGDOM, NIGERIA, brass head of king [95], c. 1200 •
WESTERN EUROPE		from 410s ROMAN POWER COLLAPSES WEST OF GREECE • 540s San Vitale, Ravenna [70]	from 711 MUSLIMS INVADE SPAIN —750s–850s CAROLINGIAN ART, W. AND C. EUROPE • 800 CHARLEMAGNE CROWNED HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR		c. 600–900s <i>INSULAR ART</i> , Lindisfarne Gospels [72] —930s–1000 <i>OTTONIAN ART</i> , C. EUROPE • c. 975 Gero Crucifix [80]	• c. 1120 Vézelay tympanum [83] • 1140s St Denis, Paris: <i>START OF GOTHIC ART</i> • c. 1180 Monreale mosaics [85]	c. 1000–1200 <i>ROMANESQUE ART</i> , W. AND C. EUROPE • c. 1080 Bayeux Tapestry [84]
EASTERN EUROPE	• 313 CONSTANTINE LEGALIZES CHRISTIANITY WITH THE EDICT OF MILAN • 330 CAPITAL OF EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE MOVED TO BYZANTIUM		—750s–840s ICONOCLAST MOVEMENT IN BYZANTIUM		• 988 RUSSIANS ADOPT ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY		• 1131 <i>Virgin of Vladimir</i> painted in Byzantium [86]
SOUTH-WEST ASIA		• 622–632 ISLAM FOUNDED BY MUHAMMAD • 640s MUSLIMS CONQUER PERSIA • c. 710 Great Mosque of Damascus [71]			• 1000 Qur'an of Ibn al-Bawwab [79]	—1037–1243 SELJUK POWER IN C. AND W. ASIA — Tomb of Zumurrud Khatun [90], 1220 •	
					—750–1258 ABBASID CALIPHS IN BAGHDAD —		
SOUTHERN ASIA	—240–510 GUPTA EMPIRE • c. 450 Sarnath Buddha [69]	• 650s–60s Mamallapuram rock carvings [76] • 775–842 Java, Borobodur temple [75]		—800s–1200s KHMER EMPIRE IN CAMBODIA — • 950s Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho [81]		• c. 1050 Shiva Nataraja, Chola bronze [82]	1100–1200 MUSLIMS INVADE N. INDIA • 1200 Head of Jayavarman VII [94]
EASTERN ASIA	• 350–400 GU KAIZHI 'FOUND'S' CHINESE PAINTING • c. 600 <i>Nymph of the Luo River</i> scroll [78] • c. 600 UNIFIED JAPANESE STATE		—618–906 TANG DYNASTY IN CHINA • c. 700 Dunhuang cave tableaux [77]	—794–1185 HEIAN / FUJIWARA ERA IN JAPAN —		• ? c. 1070 <i>Night Revels of Han Xizai</i> [96] • 1072 Guo Xi, <i>Early Spring</i> [91] • c. 1130 <i>Choju giga</i> animal scrolls [92]	Jokei, <i>Ungyo</i> [93], c. 1203 •
					—960–1278 SONG DYNASTY IN CHINA —		
AMERICAS	—200–500 MOCHE CULTURES IN PERU, portrait ceramic [66] —300 bce to 900s MAYA CITIES AND RITUAL CENTRES, MEXICO —		• 790 Mexico, Bonampak murals [74] • c. 800 Mexico, Campeche ceramics [73]				DOMINANCE OF INCA IMPERIAL SYSTEM from 1197 •
OCEANIA	• c. 300 SETTLEMENT OF EASTER ISLAND						SETTLEMENT OF NEW ZEALAND, c. 1200 •

	1250	1300	1350	1400	1420	1440	1460	1480
GLOBAL				1200s–1300s MONGOL POWER ACROSS EURASIA				
				1340s–50s 'BLACK DEATH' PLAGUE ACROSS EURASIA				
EUROPE	1200–1300 HIGH GOTHIC				1300s–c. 1520 LATE GOTHIC			
				c. 1380–1450 INTERNATIONAL GOTHIC				
				• c. 1400 WOOD-ENGRAVING BEGINS				
	SPAIN			• 1360–90 Granada, Alhambra, <i>Court of the Lions</i> [113]				
	• c. 1205–10 Chartres, Five Hebrew Patriarchs [87]			• c. 1405 Sluter, <i>Two Pleurants</i> [115]				
	FRANCE	• c. 1245 Rheims, <i>Visitation</i> [88]		• 1350 <i>Le Dit du Lion</i> , illuminated in Paris [110]				• c. 1465 Barthélemy d'Eyck, <i>Le Livre du cuer</i> [131]
		• 1243–48 Sainte-Chapelle, Paris [89]		• 1375–81 Jean Boudolf, <i>Apocalypse</i> [111, 112]				
				from 1369 BURGUNDIAN PATRONAGE IN NETHERLANDS AND FRANCE			• 1455 Van der Weyden, <i>Portrait of a Lady</i> [123]	
	NETHERLANDS			• 1420s OIL PAINTING DEVELOPS IN NETHERLANDS				
				• 1434 Jan van Eyck, <i>Madonna of Chancellor Rolin</i> [116]				
EUROPE	GERMANY	• c. 1250 Naumburg, <i>Last Supper</i> [99]						
		• 1285–97 Giovanni Pisano, <i>Haggai</i> [100]				• c. 1440 <i>St Anthony</i> panel [120]		
		• 1303–6 Giotto, <i>Arena Chapel</i> [101, 102]				• ? 1440s Donatello, <i>David</i> [126]		
		• 1333 Simone Martini, <i>Annunciation</i> [108, 109]				• c. 1450 Mantegna, <i>St James</i> [121]		
		• 1339 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, <i>Good Government</i> [103–6]				• c. 1460 Piero della Francesca, <i>Resurrection</i> [122]		
		• 1340s PETRARCH ADVOCATES 'HUMANISM'						
	ITALY			Niccolò dell'Arca, <i>Lamentation</i> [124, 125], c. 1463 •				
				1400–80 EARLY RENAISSANCE				
				Gentile Bellini, <i>Seated Scribe</i> [129], c. 1479 •				
				• c. 1416 Ghiberti, <i>Flagellation</i> [117]				
ASIA				• c. 1420 BRUNELLESCHI'S METHOD OF PERSPECTIVE				
				Donatello, <i>Feast of Herod</i> [118], 1427 •		Botticelli, <i>Allegory of Abundance</i> [127], c. 1482 •		
				Masaccio, <i>Expulsion from Eden</i> [119], 1427 •		Giovanni Bellini, <i>Madonna</i> [128], 1487 •		
	EASTERN EUROPE			• c. 1410 Rublev, <i>Trinity</i> [114]				
						• 1453 OTTOMANS CAPTURE BYZANTIUM		
	IRAN	• 1258 MONGOLS SACK BAGHDAD					Bihzad, <i>Yusuf and Zulaikha</i> [130], 1488 •	
		from 1300 DEVELOPMENT OF PERSIAN PAINTING						
		• 1330s Mongol <i>Shahnama</i> [107]						
					1307–1506 TIMURID ERA IN PERSIA			
	INDIA				1206–1526 SULTANATE OF DELHI			
ASIA				• 1390s POETRY OF KABIR				
	JAVA				1293–1500 MAJAPAHIT EMPIRE			
						• c. 1450 Garuda lamp [133]		
	CHINA	• c. 1250 Mu Qi, <i>Six Persimmons</i> [97]						
		from 1250s CHAN (ZEN) PAINTING MOVES TO JAPAN						
				1260–1368 YUAN (MONGOL) DYNASTY				
					1368–1644 MING DYNASTY			
				• 1372 Ni Zan, <i>The Rongxi Studio</i> [98]				
AMERICAS				• 1325 AZTECS FOUND TENOCHTITLÁN (MEXICO CITY)				
OCEANIA				1200–1500 MOAI ERRECTED ON EASTER ISLAND [18, 19]				

	1480	1500	1520	1540	1560	1580	1600
GLOBAL		• 1492 COLUMBUS SAILS FROM SPAIN TO AMERICA • 1498 PORTUGUESE SAIL TO INDIA VIA AFRICA • 1519–22 MAGELLAN'S EXPEDITION CIRCUMNAVIGATES GLOBE					
AFRICA	from 1300s POWER IN NIGERIA MOVES FROM IFE TO BENIN CITY	• 1490s to 1560s Sapi production of Afro-Portuguese salt-cellar [153]					
EUROPE	SPAIN				1516–56 REIGN OF CHARLES V OF SPAIN	El Greco, <i>Agony in Garden</i> [163], 1590–95 •	
	NETHERLANDS		• c. 1505 Bosch, <i>Garden of Earthly Delights</i> [139, 140]		• 1551 Aertsen, <i>Meat Pantry of an Inn</i> [155] • 1563 Bruegel, <i>The Tower of Babel</i> [156, 157] • c. 1580 SPLIT OF N. AND S. NETHERLANDS		
	GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND	• c. 1492 Dürer, <i>Self-Portrait</i> [136] • 1498 Dürer, <i>Four Horsemen</i> [137] • 1510 Grünewald, <i>Small Crucifixion</i> [139] • 1517 LUTHER BEGINS PROTESTANT REFORMATION	• 1529 Hüder, <i>Landscape</i> [138] • 1533 Holbein, <i>The Ambassadors</i> [152]		1560s CATHOLIC COUNTER-REFORMATION		
	ITALY	1480s–1520s HIGH RENAISSANCE	• 1498–99 Michelangelo, <i>Pietà</i> [145] • c. 1499 Leonardo, <i>Study for a Virgin and Child</i> [143] • c. 1508 Leonardo, <i>Virgin and Child with St Anne</i> [144] • 1508–11 Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel [146] • c. 1510 Giorgione, <i>The Tempest</i> [142] • 1511 Raphael, <i>School of Athens</i> [147] • c. 1516 Raphael, <i>Madonna della Sedia</i> [148]	• 1550–60 Palladio and Veronese, Villa Barbaro [161] • 1550 VASARI'S FIRST EDITION OF <i>LIVES OF THE ARTISTS</i>		• c. 1575 Titian, <i>The Flaying of Marsyas</i> [159] • c. 1582 CARRACCI FOUND ACADEMY IN BOLOGNA • 1582 Giambologna, <i>Rape of a Sabine</i> [160] • c. 1584 Annibale Carracci, sketch of youth [167]	
			1520s–90s LATE RENAISSANCE OR MANNERIST ERA	• 1524–34 Michelangelo, Medici Chapel [149] • 1528 Pontormo, <i>Deposition</i> [150] • 1538 Titian, <i>Venus of Urbino</i> [151]			
	RUSSIA				• 1555–61 Moscow, St Basil's Cathedral		
ASIA	TURKEY				1520–66 SULEYMAN RULES OTTOMAN EMPIRE	• 1574 Mausoleum of Selim II [162]	
	IRAN			1506–1736 SAFAVID DYNASTY RULES PERSIA			
	INDIA			1526–1707 (–1859) MUGHAL DYNASTY RULE N. INDIA	1556–1605 RULE OF AKBAR	• Miskin, <i>Krishna Govardhandhara</i> [158], c. 1590–95 • • Madurai, Meenakshi Temple, gatehouse, [165], 1599 •	
	CHINA		1368–1644 MING DYNASTY	• 1532 Wen Zhengming, <i>Seven Junipers</i> [164]			
AMERICAS	MEXICO	• c. 1500 Aztec carving of Tlazolteotl [134] • c. 1500 Totonac stone head [135] • 1519 SPANISH OVERTHROW AZTECS					
	PERU		• 1532 SPANISH OVERTHROW INCAS				

	1600	1620	1640	1660	1680	1700	1720
GLOBAL	from late 1500s EVER-INCREASING SLAVE TRADE FROM AFRICA TO EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS						
AFRICA	• c. 1600 Benin, ‘Leopard Hunt’ panel [154]						
EUROPE	1618–48 THIRTY YEARS’ WAR DOMINATES EUROPEAN POLITICS • 1648 PEACE OF WESTPHALIA, EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT						
	SPAIN	1600–1690s SPANISH ‘GOLDEN AGE’ • 1635 Zurbarán, <i>Agnus Dei (Bound Lamb)</i> [183] • 1656 Velázquez, <i>Las Meninas</i> [186, 187]					
		FRANCE	• 1639 Claude, <i>Seaport</i> [191] • 1648 ACADEMIE ROYALE FOUNDED IN PARIS • c. 1649 Poussin, <i>Bacchanal</i> sketch [192] • 1658 Poussin, <i>Baptism</i> [193] • 1660s–90s Versailles • c. 1688 Patel, <i>Versailles</i> [195] • 1698 Le Brun, <i>Traité des passions</i> [196, 197]				
	NETHERLANDS		1610s–70s DUTCH ‘GOLDEN AGE’ • 1631 Brouwer, <i>The Bitter Draught</i> [182] • 1635 Van Dyck, <i>George and Francis Villiers</i> [174] • 1638 Rubens, <i>Allegory of the Effects of War</i> [173] • 1650s De Heem, <i>Grand Still Life</i> [189] • 1653 Rembrandt, <i>The Three Crosses</i> [185] • c. 1660 Vermeer, <i>The Milkmaid</i> [188] • c. 1660 Ruisdael, <i>Jewish Cemetery</i> [194] • 1665 Rembrandt, <i>Jewish Bride</i> [184]				
			GERMANY	• 1609 Elsheimer, <i>Flight into Egypt</i> [170–72] • c. 1620 Wals, <i>Country Road</i> [190]			
		ITALY		• 1601 Caravaggio, <i>Crucifixion of St Peter</i> [168] • 1610 Artemisia Gentileschi, <i>Susanna and the Elders</i> [169] • 1647–52 Bernini, <i>Ecstasy of St Teresa</i> [180] 1610s–1720s BAROQUE (IN ROME AND THEN ELSEWHERE) • 1630s Guercino, sketch of clowns [181] • 1632–39 Cortona, Barberini ceiling [179] • 1638 Borromini, dome, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane [178] • c. 1700 Brustolon, vase stand [198]			
	ASIA		IRAN	1588–1629 RULE OF SHAH ABBAS • c. 1630 Riza Abbasi, <i>Lovers</i> [176] c. 1611–30 Isfahan Great Mosque [177]			
INDIA		1605–27 RULE OF JAHANGIR • c. 1620 Govardhan, <i>Young Prince and his Wife</i> [175] 1628–58 RULE OF SHAH JAHAN • 1631–54 Taj Mahal 1658–1707 RULE OF AURANGZEB					
CHINA		• 1644 MING DYNASTY COLLAPSES 1644–1910 QING DYNASTY • 1700 Shitao (Daoji), <i>Man in a House on a Mountain</i> [202]					
KOREA		Yun Du-so, <i>Self-Portrait</i> [203], c. 1710 •					
JAPAN		• 1600s SOTATSU DEVELOPS RINPA SCREEN PAINTING IN KYOTO • c. 1680 Moronobu begins <i>ukiyo-e</i> 1615–1868 TOKUGAWA (EDO) ERA Ogata Korin, <i>Red and White Plum Trees</i> [200, 201], 1712 •					
		AMERICAS	• 1620 MAYFLOWER ARRIVES IN N. AMERICA • 1635 Lázaro Pardo de Lagos, <i>Franciscan Martyrs in Japan</i> [166]				

	1720	1740	1760	1780	1800	1820
GLOBAL	1700s–90s ‘THE ENLIGHTENMENT’ IN EUROPEAN CULTURES from mid-18th century INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, STARTING IN BRITAIN			• 1797 DEVELOPMENT OF LITHOGRAPHY — 1789–1815 FRENCH REVOLUTION — AND NAPOLEONIC WARS		
AFRICA	• between 1500 and 1900 Mali Dogon carving [199] 1700s–90s SLAVE TRADE OPERATES ON WEST AFRICAN COAST			1791–1850s ABOLITION OF SLAVE TRADE		
EUROPE	c. 1710–60s ROCOCO STYLE IN EUROPE			1755–68 WRITINGS OF WINCKELMANN PROMOTE NEOCLASSICAL IDEAS		
	SPAIN			• 1792 Goya, <i>Straw Manikin</i> [227] Goya, <i>Disasters of War</i> [230], c. 1810–14 • Goya, <i>The Idiot</i> [231], 1824–28 •		
	• c. 1716–18 Watteau, <i>Gilles</i> [204] • 1734 Chardin, <i>Copper Fountain</i> [205] • 1741 Boucher, <i>Psyche</i> tapestry [208]			from 1760s NEOCLASSICISM IN FRANCE	1810s–40s FRENCH ROMANTICISM	
	FRANCE		• 1761 Chardin, <i>Wild Strawberries</i> [206] • 1765 Mignot, <i>Naiad</i> [221]	• 1793 David, <i>Death of Marat</i> [229] • 1806 Ingres, <i>Madame Rivière</i> [237] • 1812 Géricault, <i>Chasseur</i> [239]	Delacroix, <i>Sardanapalus</i> [240], 1828 •	
	• 1735 Hogarth, <i>A Rake’s Progress</i> [213, 214] • 1738 Roubiliac, <i>George Frideric Handel</i> [215]			• 1784 Boullée, <i>Cenotaph to Newton</i> [223] • 1784 David, <i>Oath of the Horatii</i> [228]		
	BRITAIN		• 1768 Wright, <i>Experiment with the Air Pump</i> [216, 217] • 1768 ROYAL ACADEMY OPENS IN LONDON • 1776 Hodges, <i>Otaheite Peha</i> [218, 219]	• 1794 Blake, <i>Ancient of Days</i> [232]	• 1812 Turner, <i>Snow Storm</i> [235] • 1821 Constable, <i>Trunk of an Elm Tree</i> [234]	
	• 1747–51 Spiegler, frescoes at Zwiefalten [210]			from 1760s SPREAD OF NEOCLASSICISM	• 1800 TERM ‘ROMANTICISM’ COINED BY SCHLEGEL 1815–48 BIEDERMEIER	
	GERMANY			Friedrich, <i>Chalk Cliffs at Rügen</i> [233], 1818 •		
ITALY	• 1720s Ceruti, <i>Women Working</i> [207] • 1725–26 Tiepolo, <i>Abraham and the Angels</i> [209]			• 1761 Piranesi, <i>Carceri</i> [211]	• 1797 Canova, <i>Cupid and Psyche</i> [226]	
	from 1703 DEVELOPMENT OF ST PETERSBURG AS NEW CAPITAL					
	RUSSIA		• 1766–78 Falconet, <i>Peter the Great</i> [222]			
ASIA	1700s–1794 POLITICAL BREAKDOWN IN PERSIA			1794–1925 QAJAR DYNASTY Ahmad, <i>Female Acrobat</i> [236], c. 1815 •		
	IRAN					
	1650s–1850s PAHARI PAINTING IN NORTHERN INDIA from 1700s DECLINE OF MUGHAL POWER			• c. 1780 Khushala, <i>Radha Pining in the Wilderness</i> [220]		
	from 1760s ADVANCING BRITISH POWER IN INDIA					
	CHINA	1662–1796 QING POLITICAL STABILITY				
JAPAN	1615–1868 TOKUGAWA (EDO) ERA					
	• 1730s Torii Kiyotada, <i>Daimojiya Geisha House</i> [212]			• c. 1795 Utamaro, <i>Beauty at her Toilette</i> [225]		
AMERICAS	NORTH AMERICA			from 1760 BRITAIN DOMINANT POWER IN N. AMERICA • 1776 AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE		
	1600s–c. 1800 LATIN AMERICAN BAROQUE			1808–25 WARS OF INDEPENDENCE		
SOUTH AMERICA			• 1796–99 Lisboa (‘O Aleijadinho’), <i>Crowning with Thorns</i> [224]			
OCEANIA				1768–79 CAPTAIN COOK EXPLORES THE PACIFIC • 1788 BRITISH SETTLEMENT OF AUSTRALIA BEGINS		

	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
GLOBAL	1815–1914 GLOBAL INDUSTRIALIZATION AND COLONIZATION LED BY EUROPEAN POWERS AND THE UNITED STATES							
	• 1826 Niépce, first photograph [245]	• 1839 DAGUERRE PUBLICIZES INVENTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY	• 1848 REVOLUTIONS IN EUROPE				• 1888 INTRODUCTION OF ‘KODAK’ CAMERA AND MASS-MARKET PHOTOGRAPHY	
AFRICA				• c. 1859 Akati, <i>Agoje!</i> [252]		c. 1870–1914 GROWTH OF NATIONALIST SENTIMENT IN EUROPE	1880–1900s ‘SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA’ BY EUROPEAN POWERS	
EUROPE	FRANCE	1810s–40s FRENCH ROMANTICISM					1886–1900s SYMBOLISM	
		• 1838 Daumier, <i>Rue Transnonain</i> [241]	• 1847 Grandville, <i>Last Dream</i> [242]	from c. 1848 REALISM			• c. 1887–88 Seurat, <i>Parade</i> [263]	
			• 1855 Courbet, <i>Grain Sifters</i> [248]	1845–59 Art criticism of Baudelaire			• 1888 Gauguin, <i>Vision after the Sermon</i> [264]	
				• 1863 Manet, <i>Déjeuner sur l’herbe</i> [254]			1890–1900 NABIS	
	NETHERLANDS					1873–1890s IMPRESSIONISM	• c. 1897 Cézanne, <i>Mont Sainte-Victoire</i> [268]	
						• 1873 Monet, <i>Impression: Sunrise</i> [255]		1890s–1900s ART NOUVEAU
	BRITAIN		1843–78 Art criticism of Ruskin			• 1874 Renoir, <i>Claude Monet Painting</i> [256]	• 1900 Vuillard, <i>Annette’s Soup</i> [270]	
			1848–70s PRE-RAPHAELITES			• 1875 Degas, <i>Place de la Concorde</i> [257]		
	DENMARK	• 1837 Eckersberg, <i>Standing Female Nude</i> [238]			Hammershøi, <i>Study of a Woman</i> [266], 1888 •			
	NORWAY						• 1893 Munch, <i>The Scream</i> [267]	
ASIA	INDIA		• 1851 Tara, <i>Maharana Sarup Singh Playing Holi on Horseback</i> [250]					
			• 1857 BRITISH TAKE OVERALL CONTROL OF INDIA					
	CHINA	1834–60 OPIUM WARS WITH BRITAIN		1851–64 TAIPING REBELLION				
			• c. 1856 Ren Xiong, <i>Self-Portrait</i> [253]					
AMERICAS	JAPAN	• 1840 Hokusai, <i>Mount Fuji</i> [243]			1868–1912 MEIJI ERA; INDUSTRIALIZATION OF JAPAN			
			• 1854 USA OPENS UP TRADE ACCESS TO JAPAN					
			• 1857 Hiroshige, <i>Cuckoo Flying over the River</i> [244]					
OCEANIA	USA			1860–65 AMERICAN CIVIL WAR		• 1884–86 Bartholdi, <i>Statue of Liberty</i> [260]		
				1865–90s ‘GILDED AGE’ INDUSTRIAL BOOM		• 1867 Church, <i>Niagara Falls</i> [249]	• 1884–1900 Saint-Gaudens, <i>Shaw Memorial</i> [261]	
	MEXICO				1864–67 RULE OF EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN; FAILED FRENCH INCURSION		• 1887 Muybridge, <i>Animal Locomotion</i> [262]	
							Posada, <i>Calavera</i> [271], 1903 •	
OCEANIA	NEW ZEALAND	• 1842 Raharuhi, <i>Self-Portrait</i> [251]						
	NEW IRELAND			• 19th century, bush spirit mask [14]				
	AUSTRALIA					Spencer and Gillen, Warramunga photograph [9], 1904 •		

	1910	1920	1930	1940
GLOBAL		from 1913 RISE OF HOLLYWOOD AND INTERNATIONAL MASS CULTURE ————— 1914–18 FIRST WORLD WAR • 1917 COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA	• 1929 WALL STREET CRASH; GLOBAL DEPRESSION	————— 1939–45 ————— SECOND WORLD WAR ATOMIC BOMB AT HIROSHIMA, 1945 •
AFRICA	CONGO W. AFRICA • 1900–25 Uopie <i>bu</i> gbe mask [272]	• c. 1914 Zande carver, <i>Mother and Child</i> [278]		
EUROPE	• 1907 Picasso, <i>Les Femmes d'Alger</i> [277] SPAIN • 1912 Picasso, <i>Glass and Bottle of Suze</i> [283] • 1912 Picasso, <i>Guitar</i> [284]	————— 1924–40s SURREALISM ————— • 1925 Miró, <i>Birth of the World</i> [296] • 1929 Buñuel and Dalí, <i>Un Chien andalou</i> [297] • 1937 Picasso, <i>Guernica</i> [304]		
	————— 1905–c. 1907 FAUVISM • 1905 Matisse, <i>Woman with a Hat</i> [275] FRANCE • 1911 Matisse, <i>Red Studio</i> [279] • 1912 Lartigue, <i>Delage at the Grand Prix</i> [281] • 1912 Duchamp, <i>Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2</i> [285] • 1914 Duchamp, first 'ready-made'	• 1916 Brancusi, <i>Sculpture for the Blind</i> [287] ————— c. 1916–20s 'RETURN TO ORDER' ————— ————— 1909–c. 1914 CUBISM ————— • 1925 Soutine, <i>Carcass of Beef</i> [293] • c. 1930 Chiparus, <i>Les Girls</i> [301] • 1936 Bonnard, <i>Nude in the Bath</i> [303]	————— 1925–30s ART DECO —————	
	BRITAIN		• 1933 Hepworth, <i>Two Forms</i> [300]	
	BELGIUM		Magritte, <i>Not To Be Reproduced</i> [295], 1937 •	
	NETHERLANDS	————— 1917–31 DE STIJL ————— • 1921 Mondrian, <i>Tableau I: with Red, Black, Blue and Yellow</i> [291]		
	C. EUROPE	————— 1892–1910s SECESSIONS IN MUNICH, BERLIN AND VIENNA		
	• 1907 Modersohn-Becker, <i>Mother and Child</i> [273] • 1909 Kirchner, <i>Bathers</i> [276] ————— 1911–14 BLAUE REITER • 1913 Kandinsky, <i>Composition VII</i> [280]	• 1920 Dix, <i>Skat Players</i> [288] • 1922 Klee, <i>Twittering Machine</i> [292] Nussbaum, <i>In the Camp</i> [306], 1940 •	————— 1921–33 BAUHAUS ————— ————— 1921–33 NEUE SACHLICHKEIT —————	————— 1933–45 NAZIS RULE GERMANY ————— • 1937 'DEGENERATE ART' SHOW
	SWITZERLAND	• 1916 DADA LAUNCHED IN ZURICH		
	AUSTRIA • 1909 Klimt, <i>Judith II</i> [274]			
	ITALY ————— 1909–16 FUTURISM ————— • 1913 Balla, <i>Speeding Car</i> [282]	————— 1922–43 FASCISM IN ITALY —————		
	RUSSIA ————— 1915–18 SUPREMATISM (Malevich) • 1917 RUSSIAN REVOLUTION • 1919 Tatlin, <i>Monument to the Third International</i> [289] ————— 1920–30s CONSTRUCTIVISM —————	• 1929/30 Gabo, <i>Torsion</i> [299] ————— 1932–60s SOCIALIST REALISM PART OF STATE POLICY —————		
ASIA	TURKEY ————— 1908–23 COLLAPSE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE —————			
	IRAN ————— 1905–25 COLLAPSE OF THE QAJAR DYNASTY —————			
	CHINA • 1911 REVOLUTION; END OF QING DYNASTY			
	JAPAN ————— 1912–26 TAISHO ERA; LIBERALISM ————— • c. 1923 Murayama, <i>Work Employing Flower and Shoe</i> [290]			
AMERICAS	USA • 1915 Strand, <i>Wall Street</i> [286] ————— 1916–21 NEW YORK DADA ————— • 1928 Hopper, <i>Night Windows</i> [294] ————— 1935–43 FEDERAL ARTS PROJECT —————			
	MEXICO ————— 1910–19 MEXICAN REVOLUTION ————— ————— 1921–40s MEXICAN MURALISM ————— • 1930 Rivera, <i>Crossing the Ravine</i> [298]			
	CUBA			Lam, <i>Jungle</i> [305], 1943 •

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
GLOBAL	1947–89 ‘COLD WAR’ (SUSPENDED NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION) BETWEEN USA AND RUSSIA from c. 1950 RISE OF TELEVISION, FIRST IN WESTERNIZED SOCIETIES				• 1989–90 COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM from 1990s GLOBAL INTERNET DEVELOPS	
AFRICA	SOUTH AFRICA				Alexander, <i>Vissershok</i> [346], 2000 •	• 2002 Mahlangu, <i>Untitled</i> [345]
	CONGO	• 20th century, Mbuti barkcloth [13]				
	TANZANIA		• 1965–70 Luhuma, ‘Ujamaa’ <i>Carving of Makonde History</i> [319]			
EUROPE	SPAIN				Muñoz, <i>Three Men</i> [347], 2001 •	
	FRANCE	• 1950 Dubuffet, <i>Lady’s Body</i> [313]				
		• 1947 Sutherland, <i>Palm Leaves</i> [309]			• 1987 Wilson, <i>20:50</i> [342]	
		• 1953 Bacon, <i>Study after Pope Innocent X</i> [311]			— 1990–2000 YBAS —	
	BRITAIN		— 1956–66 POP ART (UK) • 1965 Riley, <i>Arrest 2</i> [323]		• 1990 Hirst, <i>A Thousand Years</i> [343] • 1994 Hatoum, <i>Corps étranger</i> [340, 341] Pacheco, <i>Land of No Return</i> [348], 2003 •	
	BELGIUM				• 1990–99 Delvoye, <i>Cement Truck</i> [344] • 1992 Tuymans, <i>Diagnostic View V</i> [350]	
	GERMANY		— 1960–80 Beuys, <i>Aktionen</i> — • 1965 Polke, <i>Potatoheads</i> [322] • 1965 Richter, <i>Woman Descending A Staircase</i> [332]	• 1981 Kiefer, <i>Icarus</i> [333] • 1988 Ruff, <i>Portrait</i> [351]		
	ITALY		— 1967–70s ARTE POVERA • 1960 Fontana, <i>Spatial Concept</i> [317]	• 1980–82 Penone, <i>Tree of 12 Metres</i> [329]		
	SWITZERLAND	• 1950 Giacometti, <i>Composition</i> [312]				
ASIA	INDIA			• 1982 Khakhar, <i>Two Men in Banaras</i> [337]		
	CHINA		• 1965 Wu Hufan, <i>Atomic Bomb Explosion</i> [320]			
	KOREA				• 1990 Lee U-fan, <i>With Winds</i> [352]	
AMERICAS	CANADA				• 1985 Wall, <i>Diatribes</i> [336]	
		— 1945–60 ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM — • 1950 Pollock, <i>Number 32, 1950</i> [307] • 1950 Rothko, <i>White Center</i> [308] • 1952–53 De Kooning, <i>Woman and Bicycle</i> [314] • 1955 Rauschenberg, <i>Bed</i> [315]		• 1973 Oppenheim, <i>Whirlpool</i> [327] • 1978 Sherman, <i>Untitled Film Still</i> [335]	— 1979–86 NEO-EXPRESSIONISM • 1981 Mendieta, <i>Isla</i> [328] • 1981 Serra, <i>Tilted Arc</i> [339] • 1982 Basquiat, <i>Warrior</i> [334]	
			— 1962–66 POP ART (USA) • 1964 Smith, <i>Cubi XXIII</i> [318] • 1964 Warhol, <i>Brillo Boxes</i> [321] — 1965–69 MINIMALISM • 1965 Morris, <i>Untitled</i> [324]		— 1986–90s SIMULATIONISM TERRORIST ATTACKS ON NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON, DC 2001 •	
	USA		— 1967–78 CONCEPTUAL ART — 1967–80s LAND ART AND FEMINIST ART (IN USA THEN ELSEWHERE) • 1968 Kienholz, <i>The Portable War Memorial</i> [331] • 1969 Guston, <i>The Studio</i> [330] • 1970 Hesse, <i>Untitled</i> [325] • 1970 Smithsonian, <i>Spiral Jetty</i> [326]			• 2002 Mehretu, <i>Dispersion</i> [349]
	ARGENTINA	• 1962 Berni, <i>The Great Temptation</i> [316]				
OCEANIA	• 1948 Drysdale, <i>The Cricketers</i> [310] AUSTRALIA			• 1980 Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri, <i>Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming</i> [338]		

SOURCES AND RESOURCES

First, books of general relevance to global art history; next, books and authors offering English-language historical surveys of art in specific regions; lastly, some books that expand on the topics treated in each chapter, together with texts on which I have drawn. Inevitably, this small selection omits countless excellent period surveys, artist biographies and exhibition catalogues that can be found in libraries and bookshops. Browsers in those places can readily decide which volume has the best-quality illustrations for themselves, so the main criterion I have used here is whether the text is well written and offers rewarding insights. If I give no reference for a particular phenomenon or artist, that is because I have not yet read any text I truly wish to recommend. As a rule, the dates are those of original publication.

GENERAL

This book sits in the shadow of two great monuments of English-language art history. Ernst Gombrich first brought out *The Story of Art* in 1950. So much has changed in art history and culture in general since then that I believe there is a case for approaching the same basic task in a different way; yet Gombrich's lucidity, wisdom and scholarly good manners remain unique and inspiring. *A World History of Art* by Hugh Honour and John Fleming was published in 1982; it is a vast and marvellous book, as deep in its appreciation of art as it is broad. Wishing to spare the reader the daunting physical bulk that Honour and Fleming's volume presents, I have also tried to interweave the various regional histories that they keep distinct, but for more extensive information I heartily recommend it.

The Atlas of World Art (2004), edited by John Onians, handsomely delivers what its title promises. *The Dictionary of Art* (1996) is the most authoritative encyclopaedia in the field (also available online at www.groveart.com). A far-ranging and reliable art history website is also provided by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art: 'The Timeline of Art History', at www.metmuseum.org.

Of the many books on global history in general that I have consulted, three in particular stand out. *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History* (2003) by William McNeill and J. McNeill is a staggeringly assured feat of compression. Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years* (1997) is a provocative and engaging survey of the reasons why societies have developed along divergent lines. And in

The Birth of the Modern World: 1780–1914 (2004), C. A. Bayly masterfully sets the idea of modernity on a global scale.

The most erudite contemporary reflection on the nature of art history across the globe, and on the subject's philosophical dimensions, is *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*, published in 2003 by David Summers. If you would like a succinct explanation of why books such as my own cannot (and probably should not) be written, turn to James Elkins's *Stories of Art* (2002).

REGIONAL

There are three series that are generally worth consulting if you seek information on a region's art. For compact subject introductions addressed to the general reader, Thames & Hudson's World of Art paperbacks are hard to beat. The Yale University Press, another publisher with a list of more or less dependable excellence, puts out the magisterial and scholarly Pelican History of Art – surveys organized by region and period. Since 1997 the Oxford University Press has also been developing its own Oxford History of Art series. This includes some stimulating texts that reflect more recent approaches to history writing. The following lists include a few titles from these three series that I have found particularly useful.

Africa

Involving a prodigious array of small- to medium-scale societies south of the Sahara, and a relative dearth of written records, 'African art history' is not a subject easy to grasp. Older introductions, such as Frank Willett's excellent *African Art* (3rd edn, 2002), tend to concentrate on certain small areas and extrapolate from those (as indeed the present book does, with its focus on West Africa). Here are some bolder continent-spanning surveys: Tom Phillips (ed.), *Africa: The Art of a Continent* (exhibition catalogue, 1999) M. B. Visona, R. Poynor, H. M. Cole, M. D. Harris, R. Abiodun and S. P. Blier, *A History of Art in Africa* (2000) Ezio Bassani, *Arts of Africa: 7000 Years of African Art* (2005)

Europe

The writings of Ernst Gombrich (1909–2001) offer a commanding grasp of European art history before the 19th century. Even when Gombrich is addressing fellow scholars rather than the general readers of his *Story of Art* (cited above), his clarity of thought and the breadth of his reference are astounding.

Gombrich was one of a generation of mainly Jewish art historians who settled in Britain and the States during the 1930s, fleeing Nazi persecution in Austria and Germany; another was Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), likewise a lastingly illuminating writer on medieval and Renaissance art. Behind them lies a great German-language intellectual tradition stretching back through Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) to the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), and ultimately to Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68). Other authors with powerful personal insights into so-called 'Western traditions' include Henri Focillon (1881–1943) in France, and in the United States Meyer Schapiro (1904–96).

'The Web Gallery of Art' is a good general resource for Western European painting and sculpture between 1100 and 1850: www.wga.hu. Ian Chilvers in *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Art and Artists* (1990) is both reliable and pithily amusing.

South-west Asia

Oleg Grabar is one of the most authoritative writers on the transitions from antique to Islamic art in this region. Beside his *Art and Architecture of Islam, 650–1250* (with Richard Ettinghausen, 2001), there are Grabar's very interesting lectures, collected as *The Mediation of Ornament* (1992). Robert Hillenbrand's *Islamic Art* (1999) is both lively and learned. *Art of Islam* by Titus Burckhardt (1976) presents a religiously orthodox interpretation.

Eleanor Sims's *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and its Sources* (2002) is a gorgeously illustrated theme-based survey. The many writings of Stuart Cary Welch since the 1950s are a source of authority in this field, and also for the subsequent Mughal tradition in India.

South Asia

The writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) remain as a thought-provoking, if controversial, landmark in their interpretations of Buddhist and Hindu art traditions. B. N. Goswamy, in *Essence of Indian Art* (1986), presents a persuasive theme-based approach. The broadly chronological introductions to *Indian Art* by Vidya Dehejia (1997) and by Partha Mitter (2001) are also extremely useful. Philip Rawson, an author worth seeking out, wrote about *The Art of South-east Asia: Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Burma, Java, Bali* in 1967.

East Asia

The Arts of China (1984, latest edn 2000) by Michael Sullivan leads the field as an introduction for the English-language reader: Sullivan is wonderfully persuasive and sensitive in his delineation of regional and period characteristics. By contrast, Craig Clunas in *Art in China* (1997) adroitly deconstructs, or at least downplays, any notion of a 'Chinese art' possessing a consistent regional character. Sherman E. Lee's *A History of Far Eastern Art* (1973) takes on the interrelations between China, India, Indochina, Korea and Japan in a reader-friendly manner. *The Art of East Asia* (1999), edited by Gabriele Fahr-Becker, covers similar ground with better illustrations.

Yuheng Bao has written a number of books exploring aspects of Chinese art, from *Ancient and Classic Art of China* (2004) to *Renaissance in China: The Culture and Art of the Song Dynasty* (2006). James Cahill has written extensively on Chinese painting since the 1960s, and his volumes offer a deeply informed and aesthetically engaged interpretation of that tradition. *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (2002), edited by Richard Barnhart, provides recent scholarship and a good selection of images.

There are relatively few texts introducing the breadth of Japanese traditions, but Penelope Mason's *History of Japanese Art* (1993, 2nd edn 2004) is good.

North America

American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America (1997) by Robert Hughes is a highly readable rumbustious tussle with the big names of art in the United States, while *Framing America: A Social History of American Art* (2002) by Frances K. Pohl creates a refreshing dialogue between 'canonical' great art and the great wealth of 'popular' American art forms.

Central and Southern America

George Kubler (1912–96) was the scholar who did most to bring the ancient (or 'Pre-Columbian') Americas into art-historical focus: see his *Art and Architecture of Ancient America* (1962). The poet Octavio Paz wrote eloquently about his nation's visual traditions in his *Essays on Mexican Art* (1993). *The Arts in Latin America, 1490–1820* (2006) is a handsome catalogue of an exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art organized by Joseph J. Rishel with Susanne Stratton-Pruitt.

Oceania

Two World of Art volumes are useful:

Nicholas Thomas's *Oceanic Art* (1995) and Christopher Allen's *Art in Australia* (1997), a lively, combative survey of settler art.

CHRONOLOGICAL

Chapter 1 HORIZON

The prehistoric past is the part of the human record most subject to revision. *The Human Past: World Prehistory and the Development of Human Societies* (2005), edited by Chris Scarre, is a recent compendium on the state of archaeological knowledge. The best general survey of prehistoric art remains Paul Bahn's *Cambridge Illustrated History of Prehistoric Art* (1997).

On hand-axes, *As We Know It: Coming to Terms with an Evolved Mind* (1999) is a stimulating review of recent thinking by the science journalist Marek Kohn. Fashions in speculating how art began to change decade by decade: *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art*, by the archaeologist David Lewis-Williams, gained much attention when it came out in 2002 and is certainly thought-provoking, although personally I found Chris Knight's *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* (1991) more poetically appealing. At least Knight explicitly states that he is weaving an ideological fable. *The Prehistory of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science* (1996) is actually rather vague when it comes to the question at hand, but its author, Steven Mithen, is an eminent archaeologist and has also written *After the Ice: A Global Human History, 20,000–5000 BC* (2003).

There are many visually thrilling books on cave art, such as *Return to Chauvet Cave: Excavating the Birthplace of Art* (2003) by the French archaeologist Jean Clottes. On rock art across the world, the resources are plentiful: go to websites like that of David Sucec, concerning the Barrier Canyon paintings in Utah (www.bcsproject.org), or that belonging to the Trust for African Rock Art (www.africanrockart.org).

Art in Small-Scale Societies (1988) by R. L. Anderson is a sensible introduction to traditional anthropological fieldwork on art. The textual example I have focused on is *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904) by Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen. For barkcloths, see R. F. Thompson, *Mbuti Design* (1995). A fascinating book on a major art form that is barely glanced at in these pages is *Ceramics* (1984) by Philip Rawson. In megalith studies, *Stonehenge Complete* (3rd edn, 2004) by Christopher Chippindale is a beacon of wisdom, and the work of Richard Bradley (e.g. *Altering the Earth*, 1993) is also interesting. When it comes to the

history of Easter Island's *moai*, differing possibilities are presented by Jared Diamond in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2004) and by John Flenley and Paul Bahn in *The Enigmas of Easter Island* (2003).

Chapter 2 SHAPING CIVILIZATION

There is no end of gorgeous picture books on ancient civilizations – particularly on pharaonic Egypt, of course, but now also, with the spectacular archaeological advances of recent decades, increasingly on ancient China. Jessica Rawson is an authority on the art of the latter (e.g. *Mysteries of Ancient China*, 1996), while *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (1997) by Gay Robins is a particularly handsome and helpful resource for the former.

Too often, however, authors are so busy exploring the sheer glamorous strangeness of these distant cultures, and explaining their schemes of mythology, that they fail to focus on questions that might bring the making of the art to life. What kind of arguments would the artists have had in the studios that served the pharaohs? What were their aesthetic problems? One still-stimulating speculation of this kind – *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* – was published by Henriette Groenewegen-Frankfort back in 1951. *The Canonical Tradition in Ancient Egyptian Art* (1990), by Whitney Davis, also comes at its seemingly dry subject with a welcome quotient of critical attitude.

An important exhibition on the beginnings of civilization in south-west Asia and the eastern Mediterranean was mounted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 2003: *Art of the First Cities*. Its catalogue also presents information about the recently rediscovered 'BMAC' culture of Central Asia. A good recent book on ancient Mexico is *The Olmecs: America's First Civilization* (2006) by Richard A. Diehl. In *The Indus Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective* (2003), Gregory L. Possehl reviews the puzzle of a culture that seems almost consciously to have avoided high art.

Chapter 3 CLASSICAL NORMS

For 'animal-style' art, see *The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes*, an exhibition catalogue from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art published in 2000. For Assyria, see Groenewegen-Frankfort's already cited *Arrest and Movement*, and also *Assyrian Sculpture* (1999) by Julian Reade. The website

www.livius.org, run by Jona Lendering, is one of the best sources of information about the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean and of western Asia.

Greek Sculpture: An Exploration (1990) by Andrew Stewart is this author's personal ideal of an art history publication: endlessly informative, intellectually impassioned, intelligently organized, copiously illustrated, full of fine discriminations. But the subject has been served by many excellent authors, among whom Martin Robertson is also notable for his *History of Greek Art* (1975). The various books on ancient Greek art by J. J. Pollitt and by John Onians are likewise of much interest, and so is *Understanding Greek Sculpture* (1997) by Nigel Spivey. Sir John Boardman has produced numerous dependable books in the field, such as *The Oxford History of Classical Art* (1997). On Greek vases, Sir John Beazley (1885–1970) was long the pre-eminent English-language authority. A close recent study of a much-dispersed Greek masterwork is Jenifer Neils, *The Parthenon Frieze* (2004).

On Indian art at Sanchi, turn to the regional studies mentioned above; likewise when it comes to Chinese art of the Han dynasty. No surprise that there is little recent literature on Central Asian art of Classical times: the region has been in the grip of constant war since 1980.

Prolegomena to the Study of Roman Art (1979) by Otto Brendel is an important essay in helping to define a slightly elusive topic. *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine* (4th edn, 2004) by Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage is a lucidly written guide to its chronological development.

Chapter 4 **MEDIEVAL WORLDS**

On ancient Africa, Gert Chesi and Gerhard Merzeder published *The Nok Culture: Art in Nigeria 2500 Years Ago* in 2006. On Peruvian portraiture, see *Moche Art and Archaeology in Ancient Peru* (2001), edited by Joanne Pillsbury.

The adoption of the period label 'Late Antique' for the period following 'Classical Antiquity' stems from the art-historical work of Alois Riegl (1858–1905), writing in Vienna. In English, it has caught on chiefly through the illuminating writings of the historian Peter Brown: his *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (1971) is a good place to start. Anyone seeking a historical introduction to Christian art in the whole 'medieval' period covered by this chapter could hardly do better than turn to the various writings of Ernst Kitzinger (1912–2003) – for instance *Byzantine Art in the Making* (1977). More recently, the art

historian Jas Elsner has explored conceptual transitions in the early centuries of this era in books such as *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (1998).

When it comes to Byzantine iconoclasm – and to much else that puts the 'mainstream' figurative tradition into question – the book to consult is David Freedberg's fascinating if demanding *The Power of Images* (1986). The 'Insular' tradition is put in context in *Art of the Celts* (1992) by Lloyd Laing and Jennifer Laing.

The Maya (1966; 6th edn 1999) by Michael D. Coe is one of the most reliable texts on a subject that has spawned glamorous picture books beyond number.

Much of the Asian material in this chapter, from Islam to Japan, is best approached through the surveys cited in the 'Regional' section of this bibliography. Joanna Williams is an expert on Indian art of the period: see *The Art of Gupta India* (1982). Fascinating insights into medieval Islamic art were offered by Gülru Necipoglu in *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (1995), although her conclusions were vigorously contested by Terry Allen in *Islamic Art and the Argument from Academic Geometry* (2004).

I have found very little writing that illuminates the shift in Christian art that I believe the Gero Crucifix represents, but Henry Meyr-Harting's *Ottoman Book Illumination* (1991) remains a superb period study. On subsequent developments in Western Europe, Meyer Schapiro remains the most eloquent spokesman: his lectures have recently been reissued as *Romanesque Architectural Sculpture* (2006). Another lucid and learned writer is Peter Kidson: see *The Medieval World* (1967). Earlier, Erwin Panofsky had created an influential image of the work of Abbot Suger in *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1951). For developments to the east, see Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (2000).

For the 'Kei' sculptors, see Victor Harris and Ken Matsushima, *Kamakura: The Renaissance of Japanese Sculpture* (1991). On Ife, see the books on Africa cited above; William Fagg's *Nigerian Images* (1963) also remains an illuminating text.

Chapter 5 **DOORWAYS AND WINDOWS**

Wu Hung's *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (1997) is a sophisticated exploration of the Chinese tradition's conceptual complexities. John Hay writes interestingly about 14th-century painting in *Boundaries in*

China (1994). Chinese art texts are collected by Susan Bush in *The Chinese Literary on Painting* (1971).

Michael Ayrton's *Giovanni Pisano, Sculptor* (1969) is a bold attempt to study a major personality of 13th-century art. The most commanding recent investigation into Italian art during this period is *Painting in the Time of Giotto* (1997) by Hayden Maginnis. The most eloquent exploration of a civic tradition is *Sienese Painting* (2003) by Timothy Hyman. Behind these lie earlier descriptions of Italian developments in terms of 'artistic progress', suggested for instance by the title of John White's renowned book of 1957, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*.

Michael Camille (1958–2002) was an innovator who did much to refresh preconceptions of the 13th and 14th centuries with books such as *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (1992). *The Alhambra* (2005) by Robert Irwin also shifts perceptions of a much-described masterpiece.

James Snyder's *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture and the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* (1985) is an extremely good survey addressed to the general reader. With van Eyck, we enter the maze of technological issues raised by the artist David Hockney in his wickedly original, maddeningly presented and (I believe) fundamentally valid thesis *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters* (2001).

The 15th century in Italy is art history's central piazza: since Giorgio Vasari described its personalities in his *Lives of the Artists* (1550, revised 1568; still pretty readable), no period has been more exhaustively overtrodden. Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) remains a classic text; Frederick Hartt's *History of Italian Renaissance Art* (1969, 6th edn 2006) is a warm and engaging presentation of the accumulated scholarly wisdom on the topic. With many eminent voices behind him (too many to itemize here), Michael Baxandall dazzlingly revitalized the discussion in his *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (1972). Too much recent writing in the field, however, has become aesthetically bland, coming from academics who seem uneasy with the idea that art can vary in quality and that greatness is worth more attention than mediocrity.

But with regard to the Bellini brothers, *Venetian Colour* (1999) by Paul Hills is thoroughly on the aesthetic alert in delineating Venice's visual traditions. Michael Barry's *Figurative Art and Medieval*

Islam: The Riddle of Bihzad of Herat (2005) is a far-ranging exploration of the intellectual complexities of Persian painting. Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* (1998) is a rather long novel on the same subject.

Chapter 6 **RESHAPING THE WORLD**

Circa 1492 was a remarkable exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., on Columbus's quinqucentenary (1992): its catalogue is worth browsing. So is that of the exhibition *Aztecs*, put on at London's Royal Academy in 2003. The quoted verse translation originates from Miguel Leon-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind* (1963).

Erwin Panofsky's *Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (1943) remains the landmark monograph on the artist. The most exciting recent book on Dürer's era is Joseph Leo Koerner's *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (1997). See also Snyder (cited above) and Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *The Northern Renaissance* (2004).

Leonardo: *The Marvellous Works of Nature and of Man* (1981, rev. edn 2006) by Martin Kemp is an outstanding introduction to the artist's breadth of mind. For Michelangelo, turn to Howard Hibbard's eponymous biography (1985). *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450–1600* (1940) by Anthony Blunt remains useful in sketching the outlooks of both these geniuses. Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny put out *Raphael*, a fine introduction, in 1983. The already cited writings of Hartt and Gombrich serve the Italian High Renaissance well – also the Mannerist era that followed. John Shearman's *Mannerism* (1967) is a persuasive account of the latter.

On Sapi saltcellars, see *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory* (1998) by Ezio Bassani and William Fagg. (Again, the latter's *Nigerian Images* is good on Benin.) On Mughal painting, see the work of Stuart Carry Welch (cited above) and the more recent *Painting for the Mughal Emperor* (2002) by Susan Stronge.

Fierce in my love for both Bruegel and Titian, I feel no passionate urge to recommend anything written about either of them, although there are many perfectly sensible texts. But Michael Frayn's novel about the former, *Headlong* (2000), is enjoyable. Charles Avery's able account of *Giambologna* (1994) is complemented by David Finn's glamorous photos. I found Paul Holberton's *Palladio's Villas: Life in the Renaissance Countryside* (1991) illuminating. On Istanbul, see Michael Levey's *The World of Ottoman Art* (1975) and the exhibition catalogue *Turks* (2005), from the Royal Academy in London.

Chapter 7 **THEATRICAL REALITIES**

Painting at Suzhou is discussed in James Cahill's *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty* (1978).

Rudolf Wittkower – author, incidentally, of an excellent book on *Sculpture* in general (1979) – wrote one of the finest of all period surveys in his *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600–1750* (1958), which covers much of this chapter's material. It is true that Wittkower gets slightly obsessed with defining what constitutes 'baroque'. That retrospective label now tends to smother all description of the era, and yet it can be made incisive, as in John Rupert Martin's essay *Baroque* (1977).

Books on individual artists: for my tastes, the sharpest take on Caravaggio is Peter Robb's 1998 biographical experiment *M*, although many were irked by its rasping vulgarity. A comparable venture in factual fiction is Alexandra LaPierre's *Artemisia* (2000). For Adam Elsheimer, see Keith Andrews's monograph (1977). For Rubens, try Kerry Downes's brief introduction (1978), and the earlier parts of Simon Schama's *Rembrandt's Eyes* (2000). Charles Avery and David Finn (the team responsible for *Giambologna*, above) produced the enjoyable *Bernini: Genius of the Baroque* in 1997. On Guercino, read Denis Mahon, for example his *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory* (1971).

Jonathan Brown has written a number of helpful books on 17th-century Spanish art, specializing (like the scholar Enriqueta Harris before him) on Velázquez. Yet the most searching thinking I have read on this artist is a hard-to-find-in-English *Introduction to Velázquez*, published in 1943 by José Ortega y Gasset.

When it comes to Holland, Seymour Slive's *Dutch Painting, 1600–1800* (1995) is a helpful, friendly survey, while Svetlana Alpers's theorization of the field, *The Art of Describing* (1983), has been one of the most stimulating and influential art history texts of recent decades. Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture* (1987) sprawls superbly, whereas his already mentioned biography *Rembrandt's Eyes* sprawls rather clumsily. Gary Schwartz has just given an accessible overview of recent scholarship in *Rembrandt's Universe* (2006).

The finest book-length essay on Vermeer remains *Johannes Vermeer* by Lawrence Gowing, first published in 1952. *Looking at the Overlooked* (1991) by Norman Bryson brilliantly addresses traditions of still-life painting (somewhat overlooked here, admittedly). Helen Langdon's *Claude*

Lorrain (1989) matches sympathetic scholarship to lovely images. Poussin has elicited much distinguished writing, from Anthony Blunt's critical catalogue (*The Paintings of Nicolas Poussin*, 1966) to Oskar Bätschmann's *Nicolas Poussin: Dialectics of Painting* (1997) and T. J. Clark's *The Sight of Death* (2006).

Chapter 8 **SETTLEMENT, ENLIGHTENMENT**

Anthony Blunt's *Art and Architecture of France, 1500–1700* (1953) remains a standard-setting introduction to the context in which Versailles was built. *The Eloquence of Color* (1993) by Jacqueline Lichtenstein is a lively intellectual exploration of French academic culture. Anita Brookner's short introduction to *Watteau* (1967) is incisive. Michael Levey's *Painting and Sculpture in France, 1700–1789* picks up where Blunt leaves off, and Pierre Rosenberg has published much on Boucher and Chardin; both these authorities tend to plead rather than to analyse. Michael Baxandall in *Shadows and Enlightenment* (1995) is by contrast highly technical in his consideration of 18th-century opticality. See also *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (1996) by Katie Scott, and *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (1987) by Thomas Crow.

Beyond Paris: one of the few English-language references for Giacomo Ceruti is the catalogue *Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombard Art* (2004), edited by Andrea Bayer. *Tiepolo and the Pictorial Intelligence* (1994) by Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall sees two major art historians embarking on an exciting adventure in criticism. The seminal book on the Dogon is Marcel Griaule's *Conversations with Ogotemmeli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*, first published in 1948 (and highly controversial, be it noted). For Korin, see the catalogue of *The Great Japan Exhibition: Art of the Edo Period, 1600–1868* (1981) from the Royal Academy, London. On China, see Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (2001).

Ronald Paulson is a major authority on Hogarth's art, and Jenny Uglow's eponymous biography (2002) is an excellent read. Benedict Nicolson brought one of Britain's most intelligent painters back to light with his monograph *Joseph Wright of Derby* (1968). Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses to the Royal Academy* (1768–82) remain rewarding to study, as does Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our*

Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757); but the liveliest of all 18th-century art writers is Denis Diderot, whose *Salons* (1759–81) run rings round any present-day critic with their irreverent flair.

European Vision and the South Pacific (1985), by the great Australian art historian Bernard Smith, provides the context for the work of William Hodges. W. G. Archer (1907–79) was long an eminent British scholar of Pahari painting, while the website ‘Black Peacock’ (www.goloka.com) offers a useful overview of the subject. *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (1994) by Alex Potts is a profound study of the roots of Neoclassical sentiment. On St Petersburg, see Alexander Schenker’s captivating study *The Bronze Horseman: Falconet’s Monument to Peter the Great* (2003).

Chapter 9 **A CHANGED TRUTH**

‘Modernity’ and ‘modernism’ are terms in endless contest. Plunge into the middle of the argument with *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (1999), a magnificently idiosyncratic tome by the great T. J. Clark. The translations of Boullée’s address ‘To Newton’ used here are taken from H. Rosenau, *Boullée and Visionary Architecture* (1976). This period in Europe is superbly covered by John Fleming and Hugh Honour in their *Neo-classicism* (1970) and by Robert Rosenblum in his *Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art* (1967). Matthew Craske presents a differing overview in *Art in Europe, 1700–1830* (1997); I find it a stimulating example of the sociological approach prevalent in much recent art history, though not all concur.

A sociological approach also illumines Henry D. Smith’s work on Japanese prints, such as his essay ‘The Floating World in its Edo Locale, 1750–1850’ in *The Floating World Revisited* (catalogue, Portland Art Museum, 1993). This valuably complements the connoisseurship of earlier writers such as Richard Lane in his *Images from the Floating World* (1978). There is an ever-growing swarm of websites in this field.

Goya (2003) by Robert Hughes matches a punchy prose stylist to the most powerful of painters. (Alternatively, there is the fine scholarship of Janis Tomlinson: see, for example, *Goya in the Twilight of Enlightenment*, 1992.) David and the art historian/novelist Anita Brookner seem an unlikely pairing (*Jacques-Louis David*, 1980), but they too make for a great read. On David, see also T. J. Clark’s *Farewell* (cited above), and Thomas Crow on his ‘school’:

Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France (1997).

Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape (1993) by Joseph Leo Koerner is thrillingly good. Jean Clay’s *Romanticism* (1981) is tough reading but offers an astonishing wealth of images and insights. For good writing on English artists, see David Bindman’s various studies of Blake (e.g. *Blake as an Artist*, 1977), and John Gage on J. M. W. Turner: ‘A Wonderful Range of Mind’ (1991).

As a subject, French art is a large enough to sustain meta-historical academic reveries such as Michael Fried’s *Absorption and Theatricality* (1980) or Norman Bryson’s *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* (1984). Both are intellectually intriguing and may even have some truth content. The *Journals* of Delacroix (1823–54) are a primary historical document of prime fascination. On the transitions of this era, read Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner’s excellent book of essays, *Romanticism to Realism* (1984). Read Bruce Laughton for further insights into *Honoré Daumier* (1996). I was turned on to Grandville by a passage in Kirk Varnedoe’s stimulating and original account of modernism, *A Fine Disregard* (1994), which also touches on Hiroshige.

Chapter 10 **INDUSTRY’S MOMENTUM**

Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography (1981) by Peter Galassi puts Niépce in context (as does – in a far broader sense – Hockney’s *Secret Knowledge*, mentioned above). On photography (sidelined here), try Ian Jeffrey’s fascinating *Revisions: An Alternative History of Photography* (1999).

H. W. Janson and Robert Rosenblum put boundless curiosity and imaginative generosity into *19th-Century Art* (1984), the best such survey I know of. On Menzel, the most useful book in English is probably the catalogue of an exhibition at Washington’s National Gallery of Art (1996, edited by Claude Keisch), although *Menzel’s Realism* (2002) by Michael Fried is also interesting. Many have written well about 19th-century Britain – best of all, I like to think, my father, Quentin Bell (*Victorian Artists*, 1967). On Courbet, see T. J. Clark’s two studies *The Absolute Bourgeois* and *Image of the People* (both 1973), and Linda Nochlin’s commanding *Realism* (1971).

Anyone interested in 19th-century Western art should try dipping into the criticism of Baudelaire (between 1845 and 1859) and/or of Ruskin (between 1843 and 1878). Likewise, *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856) by Owen Jones reads with an ongoing

quirky vitality. My impression of the political context in which Akati worked comes from Edna C. Bay’s *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (1998), while *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China’s Empire, 1796–1911*, a 1992 exhibition catalogue from the Art Museum at Phoenix, gives a context to Ren Xiong.

Much – far too much – has been written about Manet: six pages by the incomparable critic Peter Schjeldahl (in his collection *The Hydrogen Jukebox*, 1991) will do me. (The book also contains a brilliant essay on Munch.) *Monet: The Colour of Time* (1992) is a majestic monograph by Virginia Spate. On Impressionism in general, Meyer Schapiro’s lectures (posthumously published in 1997) superbly transcend the common clichés. Degas is most interesting in his own words, as compiled by Richard Kendall (*Degas by Himself*, 1994).

On Repin, see Elizabeth Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art: The Peredvizhniki and their Tradition* (1989). On Hammershøi, there is a fine 1992 monograph by Poul Vad, but see also Kirk Varnedoe’s *Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting, 1880–1910* (1982).

The greatest art read of the 19th century: the *Letters of Vincent van Gogh* (see the Penguin Classics translation, edited by R. de Leeuw and translated by Arnold Pomerans: 2003). Among the most interesting writers on Cézanne are the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (*Letters on Cézanne*, written in 1907) and the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (‘The Doubt of Cézanne’, 1945). Rodin is positioned in relation to subsequent 20th-century three-dimensional art (Brancusi, David Smith, Minimalism etc) in three demanding but rewarding studies: William Tucker’s *The Language of Sculpture* (1974), Rosalind Krauss’s *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1981) and Alex Potts’s *The Sculptural Imagination* (2001).

Chapter 11 **BREAKTHROUGH / BREAKDOWN**

The shrewdest one-volume narrative guide to the complexities of 20th-century art history remains Norbert Lynton’s *Story of Modern Art* (1967). With *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (2005), Lynton’s book is joined by a grand polyphonic, encyclopaedic enquiry. Thoroughly on the intellectual alert, *Art Since 1900* makes an excellent resource for study, although the visual curiosity of its authors (Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh) runs out long before the century’s end.

Another particularly neat study resource is Ian Chivers's *Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Art* (1998), while Bruce Altshuler's *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition* (1994) gives a fascinating tour of the century's most melodramatic cultural episodes.

Africa vis-à-vis Europe: see the 'Regional' section above, and also the catalogue of the exhibition '*Primitivism' and Modern Art* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, curated by William Rubin in 1985. Heavily attacked at the time, Rubin's scholarship is, I believe, exemplary in its discriminations and historical imaginativeness. Jill Lloyd's *German Expressionism* (1991) also comes at the nuts and bolts of 'primitivism' with terrific flair.

A World of Our Own: Women Artists Since the Renaissance (2000) by Frances Borzello opens up a possible counter-history to that presented here. Another Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalogue, written by Kirk Varnedoe for *Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture, and Design* (1985), sets Klimt in context.

Matisse has been well served by the critical writings of Jack Flam, Lawrence Gowing and John Elderfield, and Hilary Spurling's two-part biography (1998 and 2005) has also been valuable to me. The third part of John Richardson's four-volume *Life of Picasso* (1991; 1996; 2007) is about to be published: it will surely be the greatest of all artistic biographies (superlatives fail me). Besides John Golding's authoritative *Cubism* (1959, 3rd edn 1988), David Cottingham's *Cubism in the Shadow of War: The Avant-Garde and Politics in Paris, 1905–1914* (1998) casts fresh light on this much-described episode.

In the 'Machines' section, I have drawn details from a short account of *Constantin Brancusi* by Eric Shanes (1989), and still more from Gennifer Weisenfeld's *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905–1931* (2001). On Dada, see Altshuler's *The Avant-Garde*, above; on Tatlin, see Norbert Lynton's forthcoming monograph, which promises to be definitive.

Painting as Model (1993) by Yve-Alain Bois includes intellectually stimulating takes on De Stijl and Mondrian. With Klee (and with his friend Kandinsky, too) the most important reading is the artist's own writings, available in various catalogues and anthologies. On Soutine, see David Sylvester's introduction to the 1963 exhibition catalogue (Tate, London), collected in *About Modern Art* (1997). The same great critic wrote *Magritte: The Silence of the World* (1992). The most interesting writing on Surrealism has

come from the critics Dawn Adès (in *Desire Unbound*, ed. Jennifer Mundy, 2001, for example) and Rosalind Krauss (*The Optical Unconscious*, 1994).

Dawn Adès also edited the exhibition catalogue *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930–1945* (1995). Hepworth's early work is discussed in Potts's *Sculptural Imagination* (see above). The classic essay on the artistic predicament of the era is Clement Greenberg's 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' (1939).

Chapter 12 FOREGROUND

On Pollock, I recommend a 1998 catalogue written by Kirk Varnedoe and the great modern art scholar Pepe Karmel (Museum of Modern Art, New York). On Rothko, see Anna Chave, *Mark Rothko: Subjects in Abstraction* (1989). The critical writings of Clement Greenberg (such as *Art and Culture*, 1962) are also enormously worth reading. The anthology *Abstract Expressionism* (2005), edited by David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro, collects memorable statements from this era, and *Pollock and After* (rev. edn 2000), edited by Francis Francina, adds critics' retrospective thoughts. Dore Ashton provides an overview in *American Art Since 1945* (1982).

David Sylvester's *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (1962–74) form one of the most compelling texts of 20th-century art; his *Looking at Giacometti* (1997) is likewise the book on the artist. Leo Steinberg writes interestingly about Rauschenberg (and a great deal else) in *Other Criteria* (1975). For Berni, see David Elliott, *Art from Argentina, 1920–1994* (1994). On David Smith, see the trio of sculpture books mentioned in relation to Rodin. For Makonde carving, see *Contemporary African Art* (2000) by Sidney Littlefield Kasfir.

I am indebted to Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1979* (1994), for information on Wu Hufan. Marco Livingstone is the writer to consult on Pop (*Pop Art*, rev. edn 2000), while on Warhol I recommend the commemorative album *Songs for Drella* (1990), written and performed by his sometime acolytes Lou Reed and John Cale.

James Meyer's *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (2004) is good – as the title suggests, the movement generated no end of lively writing, not least by Judd and Morris themselves. On this, and on developments through to the 1980s in America, Lucy Lippard is an engaged chronicler (*Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*, 1973) and Peter Schjeldahl, a sublime critic (*The Hydrogen Jukebox*,

1991). Rosalind Krauss's essay 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde', in her book of that name (1989), is the most influential definition of 'postmodernism' as it applies to the art world. Another way of following international developments during this period is through Andrew Causey's excellent *Sculpture Since 1945* (1998).

On Indian painting, see Timothy Hyman, *Bhupen Khakhar* (1998). On Aboriginal painting, see Vivien Johnson's *Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri* (2003).

Richard Serra commemorated the battle of Federal Plaza by editing *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* (1990), from which I quote. I also quote from an artist interview in *Julie Mehretu: Drawing into Painting*, the catalogue of a show at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, in 2003. Matthew Collings's commentaries (e.g. *Blimey!*, 1997) provide the liveliest presentation of the 1990s British art scene, while Brandon Taylor's *Art Today* (2005) is the most incisive survey I have read of the state of art across the globe at the beginning of the 21st century.

On Tehching Hsieh, see the article 'Performing Life' by Steven Shaviro (to be found at shaviro@shaviro.com). The artist Lee U-fan is also an eloquent writer: see *The Art of Encounter* (2005).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My friend Helen Wilks, running the Humanities programme at the City & Guilds of London Art School, suggested that I give the lectures that formed the initial basis of this project. Students there – too many to acknowledge here by name – expanded my outlook by their responses and their enthusiasms. Tony Carter, the school's Principal, generously gave me leave for research when I engaged to write this book.

Andrew Brown, the commissioning editor who took me on, has been marvellous in his wisdom, thoughtfulness, steadiness and patience. (I am afraid he had need of that last quality. I also think of Nikos Stangos, his great predecessor at Thames & Hudson, with whom I started discussing this book before his retirement and cruelly premature death.) Sam Wythe has been an ideal copy-editor. If we have produced a richly varied book of images, that is thanks to Katie Morgan, whose fantastically tenacious picture research followed the old gospel hookline: ninety-nine-and-a-half won't do.

Many helped with specific enquiries: thank you Kate Scott, Annie Rosenthal, Masha Karp, Dom Ramos, Elli Miller, Ornan Rotem, Wim Delvoye, and Judith Ryan at the National Gallery of Victoria. Dr Christopher Chippindale of the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology generously gave me an excellent critique of my first chapter. To acknowledge all those who helped my wife, Jenny, and me when we went travelling to research the text would take another book, but particular thanks are due to Liadain Sherrard and Denise Sherrard, Morteza Mehrparvar, William Dalrymple and Olivia Frazer, and Andrew and Susie Hanbury.

I thank all my friends and relations for the trust and many kindnesses they showed me while I pursued this project. I think especially of Robert and Sally Elliott, Michael Cole, Tom Jeffery, Brian Hinton, Joanna Lamb, Mary Rose Beaumont, Simon Watney, Thomas Newbolt, Jane Salvage, Oliver Scott, Francis and Christine Kyle and Amanda Hemingway. The poet Andrew McNeillie offered me some crucial insights. One of the great joys of planning the book was discussing 20th-century art with my fellow painter Tom Hammick.

Others, starting with my wife Jenny, gave superb editorial advice (even if I did not always heed it). Timothy Hyman, from whom I shall always be learning, saved me from at least a few crass misjudgments. Professor Norbert Lynton lent a formidable wisdom in reading through the later chapters, as did Mary Rose Beaumont, with her expertise in 20th-century art. Lialin Rotem, whom I asked to review my text as a reader more or less new to art writing, proved an exceptionally discriminating critic.

My mother, Anne Olivier Bell, gave me unique warmth, wisdom and support throughout the length of this project, and I cannot thank her enough. My children, Kate, Tom and Sophy, have been an encouragement to me throughout this work, in more ways than I can here express. It has been my happiness to research this book in the company of my wife Jenny, and to have my vision continually opened and reopened by the love of my life. To Jenny this book is dedicated.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Measurements are given in centimetres and inches (the latter in brackets) unless otherwise specified. Height precedes width.

p. 1 (from left to right): Kitagawa Utamaro, *Beauty at her Toilette*, c. 1795 (detail of **225**). Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533 (detail of **152**). Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait with Head Resting on Hand*, c. 1492 (detail of **136**). 'El Rey', colossal basalt head, c. 1000 bce (detail of **21**).
p. 2 (from left to right): Thutmose, bust of Nefertiti, c. 1360 bce (detail of **38**). Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1610 (detail of **169**). Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat*, 1793 (detail of **229**). Unknown life artist, bronze head, c. 1250 (detail of **95**).
p. 3 (from left to right): Anthropomorphic bottle from Tlatilco, Mexico, 1200–800 bce (detail of **39**). Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538 (detail of **151**). Caravaggio, *The Crucifixion of St Peter*, 1601 (detail of **168**). Jokei, *Ungyo* guardian figure, c. 1203 (detail of **93**).
p. 4 (from left to right): Portrait vessel, Moche culture, Peru, 200–500 ce (detail of **66**). Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna degli Alberetti*, 1487 (detail of **128**). Rahrarhi Rukupo, *Self-Portrait*, 1842 (detail of **251**). Rogier van der Weyden, *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1463–64 (detail of **123**).
p. 5 (from left to right): Seneb and Sentyotes and their son and daughter, c. 2300 bce (detail of **27**). Menkaure and Khamerernebt, c. 2490–2472 bce (detail of **26**). Yun Du-so, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1710 (detail of **203**). *Gopura* from the Meenakshi temple, Madurai, 17th century (detail of **165**).

1 Reconstruction of a cave painting in Cavalls, Spain, 5000–2000 bce. Photo Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis
2 Hand-axe found in Norfolk, between 250,000 and 100,000 bce. Flint, length 13 (5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology, Cambridge
3 Figurine found at Berekhat Ram, Israel, over 250,000 years old. Tufa, height 2.5 (1in). Photo Alexander Marshack
4 Carving of therianthrope from Hohlenstein-Stadel, Germany, c. 31,000 bce. Mammoth bone, height 29 (11in). Ulmer Museum, Ulm, Germany
5, 6 Panel from Chauvet Cave, c. 28,000 bce (detail). Rock painting, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, Ardèche, France. Regional Direction for Cultural Affairs-Rhône-Alpes, Department of Archaeology
7 Fragment of carved reindeer antler, c. 14,000 bce. Length 10.1 (4in). Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St-Germain-en-Laye
8 Rock painting from the Great Gallery, Horseshoe Canyon, between 7000 and 2000 bce. Canyonlands National Park, Utah. Photo David Muench/Corbis
9 Sand-painting ritual among the Warramunga of Central Australia. Photograph from Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, 1904
10 Rock painting of cattle and figures, Tassili N'Ajjer region, Algeria, c. 5000 bce.

11, 12 Relief carving showing a boar and five birds, Göbekli Tepe, Turkey, c. 9600 bce. Enclosure D, pillar 33. Photo DAI, Berlin
13 Mbuti barkcloth, 20th century. 96 × 52 (37 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Photo Heini Schneebeli and Brian Forest
14 New Ireland ritual mask, 19th century. Photo Museo Nazionale Preistorico ed Etnografico 'L. Pigorini', Rome. By permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Rome
15 Jomon vessel from Niigata, Japan, c. 2500 bce. Earthenware with incised and applied decoration, 61 × 55.8 (24 × 22in). Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio
16 'The Lady of Pazardik', c. 4500 bce. Ceramic. Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo Alice Schumacher
17 Cycladic figurine, c. 2000 bce. Marble. The P. Goulandhris Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens
18, 19 *Moai* (megalithic heads) on Easter Island, Pacific, 1500–900 bce. Photo Fred Picker
20 Stone ball from Towie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, c. 3200–2500 bce. Serpentine, diameter 7 (2 $\frac{7}{8}$ in). National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh
21 'El Rey', c. 1000 bce. Colossal basalt head, height c. 300 (118 $\frac{1}{8}$ in). Museo de Antropología de la Universidad Veracruzana, Jalapa, Mexico
22 'El Lanzón', carved monolith in the interior galleries of the Old Temple at Chavin de Huántar, Peru, c. 900 bce. Photo Charles and Josette Lenars/Corbis
23 Jade *cong* (or *tsung*), c. 3200–2200 bce. Height 4.5 (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). From Tomb m9 at Yaoshan, Yuhang, Zhejiang. Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Hangzhou, China
24 Male torso, c. 2200 bce. Red jasper, height 8.9 (3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). National Museum, New Delhi, India
25 Clay imprint from Sumerian seal, c. 2800 bce. British Museum, London
26 Menkaure and Khamerernebt, c. 2470 bce. Diorite, 142.2 × 57.1 × 55.2 (56 × 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
27 Seneb and Sentyotes and their son and daughter, c. 2300 bce. Limestone, 34 × 22.5 (13 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ in). Egyptian Museum, Cairo
28, 29 Stele of Naram-sin, King of Akkad, c. 2250 bce. Pink limestone, 200 × 105 (78 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 41 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Musée du Louvre, Paris
30 Axe-head, c. 2000 bce. Silver and gold foil, height 15 (5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, and James N. Spear and Schimmel Foundation Inc. Gifts, 1982 (1982.5)
31 Yu ritual vessel, c. 1050 bce. Bronze, height 14.3 (5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Sumitomo Museum, Kyoto
32–36 Frieze from Akrotiri, Thera, Greece, c. 1550 bce. Fresco, 43 × 390 (16 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 153 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Room 5, south wall. Photo H. Iossifides and G. Moutevellis
37 Bek, relief of Akhenaten and his family, c. 1375 bce. Limestone, 32.5 × 39 (12 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Egyptian Museum, Berlin
38 Thutmose, bust of Queen Nefertiti, c. 1340 bce. Painted limestone, height 50.8 (20in). Egyptian Museum, Berlin
39 Anthropomorphic bottle from Tlatilco, Mexico, 1200–800 bce. Clay, 35.5 × 17 (14 × 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City

40 Scythian bronze plaque, c. 750 bce. Kyzyl State Museum, Tuva, Russia
41 Lioness devouring a boy, c. 750 bce. Inlaid ivory panel, 10.4 × 10.2 × 2.5 (4 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 4 × 1in). British Museum, London
42 Asses in flight, c. 640 bce. Assyrian relief from Nineveh, Iraq. British Museum, London
43 Archaic kouros from Attica, c. 590 bce. Marble, height 193 (76in). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Fletcher Fund, 1932 (32.11.1)
44 'Kritios Boy', c. 480 bce. Marble, height 116.7 (46in). Acropolis Museum, Athens
45 Triptolemos Painter, kylix, c. 480 bce. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh (No.A.1887.213)
46 Staircase relief from the Council Hall at Persepolis, Iran, c. 470 bce. Oriental Institute, University of Chicago
47 Riders to the Panathenaia, section of the Parthenon frieze, 447–432 bce. North side, blocks xlii and xliii. British Museum, London
48 Grave stele of a young hunter, c. 330 bce. Marble, 168 × 110 (66 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 43 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). National Archaeological Museum, Athens
49 The 'Marathon Boy', c. 330 bce. Bronze, height 130 (51 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). National Archaeological Museum, Athens
50 The *Nike* of Samothrace, c. 190 bce. Height 240 (94 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo Hirmer Fotoarchiv, Munich
51 A *salabhanjika* from a gateway of the Great Stupa at Sanchi, c. 50 bce. Photo akg-images/Jean-Louis Nou
52 Bronze head from Delos, c. 80 bce. Height 32.4 (12 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). National Archaeological Museum, Athens
53 Wall hanging, c. 150 bce. Woven wool: centaur fragment 55 × 45 (21 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ in), warrior fragment 52 × 48 (20 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum, China
54 Incense burner, c. 120 bce. Bronze inlaid with gold, 26 × 15.5 (10 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Hebei Provincial Museum, Shijiazhuang
55 'Flying Horse', c. 120 bce. Bronze, 35.4 × 45 (13 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Gansu Provincial Museum, Lanzhou City, China
56, 57 Rubbings from an earthenware tile, Han Dynasty (206 bce – 220 ce). Height 41.9 (16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Chengdu, Sichuan, China. Richard Rudolf Collection, California
58–61 Wall painting from Agrippa's villa, Boscorease, c. 11 ce.
62 *Laocoön*, c. 40 bce (?). Marble, height 242 (95 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Vatican Museums, Rome
63, 64 Trajan's Column, Rome, 113 ce. View of spirals 10–16. White marble, height 30 m (98 ft). Photo Giovanni Lattanzi
65 Nok terracotta, c. 250 bce. 92.1 × 27.6 × 35.6 (36 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 14in). Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The John R. Van Derlip Fund
66 Portrait vessel, Moche culture, Peru, 200–500 ce. Ceramic and pigment, 35.6 × 24.1 (14 × 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in). Art Institute of Chicago
67 Bust of Emperor Probus, 276–82 ce. Museo Capitolino, Rome. Photo Gisela Fittschen-Badura
68 Roman sarcophagus from Carthage, c. 340 ce. Marble. Musée National du Bardo, Le Bardo, Tunisia/Bridgeman Art Library

- 69** Statue of the Buddha, c. 450. Chunar sandstone, height 160 (63). Archaeological Museum, Sarnath, India
- 70** Christ Cosmocrator with angels and St Vitalis, 540s. Mosaic in the apse of S. Vitale, Ravenna, Italy. Photo Scala, Florence
- 71** Mosaic in the west portico of the Great Mosque, Damascus, c. 710. Photo Henri Stierlin
- 72** Carpet page introducing St Matthew's Gospel, from the Lindisfarne Gospels, c. 700. British Library, Cotton Nero D. IV, fol. 26v
- 73** Cylindrical vessel from Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico, c. 800 ce. Ceramic, 14 × 9.5 (5¹/₂ × 3³/₄). Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City. Inv. no. 10-566398
- 74** Chaan Muan hunting for captives, 790. Fresco at Bonampak, Mexico. Photo Doug Stern/ National Geographic Image Collection
- 75** Corner 'gargoyle', Borobudur, Java, c. 830. Photo akg-images/Jean-Louis Nou
- 76** The Descent of the Ganges, c. 660 ce. Rock carving at Mamallapuram, India. Photo Michael Freeman/Corbis
- 77** *Bodhisattva* and a *luohan* (disciple), c. 700. Painted clay. Cave 328, Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, China. Photo Peng Huashi
- 78** Gu Kaizhi (attributed), *Nymph of the Luo River*. Scroll, copy from the Song era (960–1279) of a late 6th-century original. Palace Museum, Beijing
- 79** Ibn al-Bawwab. Carpet page from a Qur'an, 1000. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
- 80** The Gero Crucifix, c. 975 (detail). Painted oak, height 188 (74). Cologne Cathedral. Photo Dombauarchiv Köln, Matz und Schenk
- 81** Carving at Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho, India, c. 950. Sandstone. Photo Darshan Lal
- 82** *Shiva Nataraja*, c. 1050. Bronze statuette, height 154 (60³/₈). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- 83** Christ and Apostles, c. 1120. Limestone relief from the central apse tympanum. La Madeleine, Vézelay. Photo John Roubier
- 84** Battle of Hastings, scene from the Bayeux Tapestry, c. 1080 (detail). Height c. 50 (19¹/₂). Tapestry Museum, Bayeux
- 85** Christ pulls Peter from the Sea of Galilee, c. 1180. Mosaic, Monreale Cathedral. Photo Leonard de Selva/Corbis
- 86** The Virgin of Vladimir, 1131. Tempera on wood, 78 × 55 (30³/₈ × 21¹/₂). Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
- 87** Five Hebrew patriarchs, 1205–10. Statues by the centre doorway of the north transept, Chartres Cathedral. Photo Max Hirmer
- 88** The Visitation, c. 1245. Statues on the west façade of Rheims Cathedral. Photo Bildarchiv Foto Marburg
- 89** The Annunciation and Visitation, 1243–48. Detail of stained-glass window in the Sainte-Chapelle, Paris
- 90** Mausoleum of Zumurrud Khatun, Baghdad, 1220. View of ceiling. Photo Yasser Tabbaa
- 91** Guo Xi, *Early Spring*, 1072. Hanging scroll, ink and light colours on silk, 158.1 × 108 (62¹/₂ × 42¹/₂). National Palace Museum, Taiwan
- 92** *Frogs and a Rabbit Playing*, c. 1130 (detail). Paper handscroll. Photo Burstein Collection/ Corbis
- 93** Jokei, *Ungyo* guardian figure, c. 1203. Painted wood, height 161.5 (63³/₈). Kofukuji, Nara, Japan
- 94** Head of Jayavarman VII, c. 1200. Sandstone, 42 × 25 (16¹/₂ × 9³/₈). Musée Guimet, Paris/Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library
- 95** Unknown Ife artist, bronze head, c. 1200. Height 31 (12¹/₂). National Museum, Ife, Nigeria
- 96** Gu Hongzhong, *Night Revels of Han Xizai*, c. 1070 (detail). Handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 28.7 × 335.5 (11¹/₂ × 132¹/₂). Palace Museum, Beijing
- 97** Mu Qi, *Six Persimmons*, c. 1250. Ink on paper, 36.2 × 38.1 (14¹/₂ × 15). Ryoko-in, Daitoku-ji, Kyoto
- 98** Ni Zan, *The Rongxi Studio*, 1372. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 74.7 × 35.5 (29¹/₂ × 14). National Palace Museum, Taipei
- 99** *Last Supper*, c. 1250. Painted limestone, choir screen, Naumburg Cathedral, Germany
- 100** Giovanni Pisano, *Haggai*, 1285–97. Marble, 63.8 × 47.9 × 41.3 (25¹/₂ × 18³/₈ × 16¹/₂). Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- 101** Giotto, *Joachim Expelled from the Temple*, 1303–6. Fresco, 200 × 185 (78³/₈ × 72³/₈). Scrovegni Chapel, Padua
- 102** Giotto, *Joachim Among the Shepherds*, 1303–6. Fresco, 200 × 185 (78³/₈ × 72³/₈). Scrovegni Chapel, Padua
- 103–6** Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Effects of Good Government*, 1339. Fresco, height 140 (55³/₈). Palazzo Pubblico, Siena
- 107** *Iskander's Iron Cavalry*, 1330–40. Page from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*. Howard University Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
- 108, 109** Simone Martini, *Annunciation*, 1333. Tempera and gold-leaf on wood, 265 × 305 (104¹/₂ × 120³/₈). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
- 110** *The Park in Spring*, 1350. From Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Dit du Lion*, fol. 103. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
- 111, 112** *The Second Trump*, 1375–81. Tapestry number 21 from the Angers *Apocalypse* series. Musée des Tapisseries, Angers, France. Photo Lauros/Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library
- 113** Stucco ornamentation, Sala de los Reyes, 1360–90. Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain. Photo © AISA
- 114** Andrei Rublev, *The Trinity*, c. 1410. Tempera on wood, 142 × 114 (55³/₈ × 44³/₈). Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
- 115** Claus Sluter, *Two Pleurants*, from the tomb of Philip the Bold, c. 1405. Alabaster, height 243 (95³/₈). Musée Archéologique, Dijon. Photo David Finn
- 116** Jan van Eyck, *The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*, c. 1434. Oil on wood, 66 × 62 (26 × 24¹/₂). Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 117** Lorenzo Ghiberti, *The Flagellation*, c. 1416. Gilded bronze, 52 × 45 (20¹/₂ × 17³/₈). North doors of the Baptistery, Florence. Photo Bridgeman Art Library
- 118** Donatello, *The Feast of Herod*, c. 1425. Gilded bronze, 60 × 60 (23³/₈ × 23³/₈). Panel from the font of the Baptistery, Siena
- 119** Masaccio, *Expulsion from Eden*, 1427. Fresco, 208 × 88 (81³/₈ × 34³/₈). Brancacci Chapel, S. Maria del Carmine, Florence
- 120** Master of the Osservanza, *The Temptation of St Anthony*, c. 1440. Tempera and gold on wood, 38.4 × 40.4 (15¹/₂ × 15⁵/₈). Yale University Art Gallery, Newhaven, CT. Photo Francis G. Mayer/ Corbis
- 121** Andrea Mantegna, *St James on his Way to Execution*, c. 1450. Fresco (now destroyed). Ovetari Chapel, church of the Eremitani, Padua
- 122** Piero della Francesca, *The Resurrection of Christ*, c. 1460. Fresco, 225 × 200 (88³/₈ × 78³/₈). Museo Civico, Sansepolcro
- 123** Rogier van der Weyden, *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1455. Oil on wood, 37 × 27 (14¹/₂ × 10³/₈). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 124, 125** Niccolò dell'Arca, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c. 1463. Painted terracotta. S. Maria della Vita, Bologna. Photo Scala
- 126** Donatello, *David*, 1440s (?). Bronze, height 158 (62³/₈). Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence
- 127** Sandro Botticelli, *Allegory of Abundance*, c. 1482. Ink and brown wash over black chalk on tinted paper, 32 × 25 (12¹/₂ × 9³/₈). British Museum, London
- 128** Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna degli Alberetti*, 1487. Oil on wood, 74 × 58 (29¹/₂ × 22³/₈). Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice. Photo akg-images/ Cameraphoto
- 129** Gentile Bellini, *Seated Scribe*, c. 1479. Pen in brown ink, with watercolour and gold, on paper, 18.2 × 14 (7¹/₂ × 5³/₈). Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston
- 130** Bihzad, *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, 1488. From the *Bustan of Sadi*, fol. 52v. National Library, Cairo
- 131** Barthélemy d'Eyck (attributed), *Amour Takes the Heart of the Lovesick King*, c. 1465. From *Le Livre du cuer d'amour espris*, fol. 2r. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna
- 132** Sultan-Muhammad, *The Court of Gayumars*, c. 1525. Page from the *Shahnama* of Tahmasp. Private collection
- 133** Bronze hanging lamp from eastern Java, 15th century. Bronze, height 33.5 (13³/₈). Society of Friends of Asiatic Art, on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- 134** Tlazolteotl giving birth to the maize god, c. 1500. Aztec granite carving, 20 × 12 × 15 (8 × 4³/₈ × 5³/₈). Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Washington, D.C.
- 135** Totonac head, c. 1500. Stone, 44.5 × 22.5 (17¹/₂ × 8³/₈). Museo de Antropología de la Universidad Veracruzana, Jalapa, Mexico
- 136** Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait with Head Resting on Hand*, c. 1492. Pen and ink. Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen, Nuremberg
- 137** Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, 1498. Woodcut, 39.3 × 28.3 (15¹/₂ × 11³/₈). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- 138** Wolf Hüber, *Landscape with a Large Tree*, 1529. Pen and black ink, 22 × 31 (8³/₈ × 12³/₈). Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig
- 139** Matthias Grünewald, *The Small Crucifixion*, c. 1510. Oil on board, 61.3 × 46 (24¹/₂ × 18³/₈). Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 140, 141** Hieronymus Bosch, *Hell*, from the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1505. Oil on

- wood, 219 × 96 (86¹/₂ × 37¹/₂). Museo del Prado, Madrid
- 142** Giorgione, *The Tempest*, c. 1510. Oil on canvas, 78 × 72 (30¹/₂ × 28¹/₂). Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice
- 143** Leonardo da Vinci, *Study for a Virgin and Child with St Anne*, c. 1499. Pen and ink and wash, heightened with white, over black chalk, 26.7 × 20.1 (10¹/₂ × 7¹/₂). British Museum, London
- 144** Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, c. 1508. Oil on wood, 168 × 130 (66¹/₂ × 51¹/₂). Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 145** Michelangelo, *Pietà*, 1498–99. Marble, 174 × 195 (68¹/₂ × 76¹/₂). St Peter's Basilica, Rome
- 146** Michelangelo, *Separation of Day from Night*, 1511. Fresco. Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome. Photo akg-images/Erich Lessing
- 147** Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1511. Fresco, 500 × 770 (196¹/₂ × 303¹/₂). Vatican, Rome. Photo akg-images
- 148** Raphael, *Madonna della Sedia*, c. 1516. Oil on wood, width 71.1 (28). Pitti Palace, Florence
- 149** Michelangelo, *Day*, 1524–34. Marble, length 185 (72¹/₂). Medici Chapel, S. Lorenzo, Florence
- 150** Jacopo da Pontormo, *Deposition*, 1525–28. Oil on wood, 313 × 192 (123¹/₂ × 75¹/₂). Capponi Chapel, S. Felicità, Florence
- 151** Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538. Oil on canvas, 119 × 165 (46¹/₂ × 65). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
- 152** Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533. Oil on wood, 207 × 209.5 (81¹/₂ × 82¹/₂). National Gallery, London
- 153** Salt-cellar, c. 1500–1530. Ivory, height 24.3 (9¹/₂). Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna
- 154** Master of the Leopard Hunt, bronze relief panel of a man shooting at a bird, c. 1600. 45.7 × 53.3 (18 × 21). Museum of Ethnology, Berlin
- 155** Pieter Aertsen, *Meat Pantry of an Inn, with the Virgin Giving Alms*, 1551. Oil on wood, 123.3 × 150 (48¹/₂ × 59). University Art Collections, Uppsala University, Sweden
- 156, 157** Pieter Bruegel, *The Tower of Babel*, 1563. Oil on wood, 114 × 155 (44¹/₂ × 61). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- 158** Miskin, *Krishna Govardhandhara*, c. 1590–95. Opaque watercolour on paper, 28.9 × 20 (11¹/₂ × 7¹/₂). Metropolitan Museum, New York, Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr. Gift (28.63.1)
- 159** Titian, *The Flaying of Marsyas*, c. 1575. Oil on canvas, 212 × 207 (83¹/₂ × 81¹/₂). Archbishop's Palace, Krom/Ěřib/Ěř, Czech Republic
- 160** Giambologna, *Rape of a Sabine*, 1582. Marble, height 410 (55¹/₂). Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence
- 161** Paolo Veronese, alcove frescoed with figures and a landscape, c. 1560. Stanza di Bacco, Villa Barbaro, Maser. Photo Araldo de Luca
- 162** Panel of ceramic tiles from the Mausoleum of Selim II, 1574. Istanbul. Photo akg-images/G  rard Degeorge
- 163** El Greco, *Agony in the Garden*, 1590–95. Oil on canvas, 102.2 × 113.6 (40¹/₂ × 44¹/₂). Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio
- 164** Wen Zhengming, *Seven Junipers*, 1532 (detail). Scroll, ink on paper, 22.8 × 362 (9 × 142¹/₂). Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii
- 165** Summit of a *gopura* (gatehouse) at the Meenakshi Temple, Madurai, India, 1599. Painted ceramic. Photo Henri Stierlin
- 166** L  zaro Pardo de Lagos, *The Franciscan Martyrs in Japan*, 1630. Oil on canvas. La Recoleta, Cuzco, Peru
- 167** Annibale Carracci, *Sketch of a Youth Holding a Bar*, c. 1584. Red chalk heightened with white chalk on ivory paper, 25.2 × 22.9 (9¹/₂ × 9). Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice
- 168** Caravaggio, *Crucifixion of St Peter*, 1601. Oil on canvas, 232 × 201 (91¹/₂ × 79¹/₂). Cerasi Chapel, S. Maria del Popolo, Rome
- 169** Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1610. Oil on canvas, 170 × 121 (66¹/₂ × 57¹/₂). Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden, Germany
- 170–72** Adam Elsheimer, *Flight into Egypt*, 1609. Oil on copper, 31 × 41 (12¹/₂ × 16¹/₂). Alte Pinakothek, Munich
- 173** Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of the Effects of War*, 1638. Oil on canvas, 206 × 345 (81¹/₂ × 135¹/₂). Pitti Palace, Florence
- 174** Anthony van Dyck, *George and Francis Villiers*, 1635. Oil on canvas, 137.2 × 127.7 (54 × 50¹/₂). The Royal Collection, Windsor. Photo Th Royal Collection 2007, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
- 175** Govardhan, *Young Prince and his Wife on a Terrace*, c. 1620. Photo The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin/Bridgeman Art Library
- 176** Riza Abbasi, *Lovers*, c. 1630. Tempera and gold on paper, 18.1 × 11.9 (7¹/₂ × 4¹/₂). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- 177** Ceiling of the central dome at the Masjid-e-Shah mosque, Isfahan, Iran, c. 1611–30. Photo Henri Stierlin
- 178** Francesco Borromini, interior dome at S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome, 1638. Photo Alinari
- 179** Pietro da Cortona, *Triumph of the Barberini*, 1633–39. Fresco. Palazzo Barberini, Rome. Photo Canali Photobank, Capriolo
- 180** Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of St Teresa*, 1647–52. Marble, height c. 350 (137¹/₂). Cornaro Chapel, S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome
- 181** Guercino, sketch of *commedia dell'arte* clowns, 1630s. Pen and watercolour, 18.3 × 27 (7¹/₂ × 10¹/₂). Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth
- 182** Adriaen Brouwer, *The Bitter Draught*, 1631. Oil on wood, 47.5 × 35.5 (18¹/₂ × 14). St  delsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main. Photo BPK, Berlin, 2007/Kurt Haase
- 183** Francisco de Zurbar  n, *Agnus Dei (Bound Lamb)*, 1635. Oil on canvas, 38 × 62 (15 × 24¹/₂). Museo del Prado, Madrid
- 184** Rembrandt, *The Jewish Bride*, c. 1665. Oil on canvas, 121.5 × 166.5 (47¹/₂ × 65¹/₂). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- 185** Rembrandt, *The Three Crosses*, 1653. Fourth state, drypoint and burin, 38.5 × 45 (15¹/₂ × 17¹/₂). British Museum, London
- 186, 187** Diego Vel  zquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 318 × 276 (125¹/₂ × 108¹/₂). Museo del Prado, Madrid
- 188** Johannes Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*, c. 1660. Oil on canvas, 45.5 × 41 (17¹/₂ × 16¹/₂). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- 189** Jan Davidsz. de Heem, *Grand Still Life*, 1650s. Oil on canvas, 75 × 105 (29¹/₂ × 41¹/₂). Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam
- 190** Gottfried Wals, *Country Road by a House*, c. 1620. Oil on copper, diameter 23.5 (9¹/₂). Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas
- 191** Claude Lorrain, *Seaport at Sunset*, 1639. Oil on canvas, 103 × 137 (40¹/₂ × 54). Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 192** Nicolas Poussin, *Bacchanal in front of a Temple*, c. 1649. Pen and brown ink, dark brown wash. Mus  e Cond  , Chantilly
- 193** Nicolas Poussin, *Baptism*, 1658. Oil on canvas, 96.2 × 135.6 (37¹/₂ × 53¹/₂). Philadelphia Museum of Art. Photo Philadelphia Museum of Art/Corbis
- 194** Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Jewish Cemetery*, c. 1660. Oil on canvas, 84 × 95 (33¹/₂ × 37¹/₂). Gem  ldegalerie, Dresden
- 195** Pierre Patel, *View of the Ch  teau of Versailles in 1668*, c. 1688. Oil on canvas, 115 × 161 (45¹/₂ × 63¹/₂). Mus  e du Ch  teau, Versailles
- 196** Charles Le Brun, study of eye movements, from the *Traite des passions*, 1698. Mus  e du Louvre, Paris
- 197** Charles Le Brun, *Extreme Despair*, engraving from *A Method to Learn to Design the Passions*, 1734 (English translation of the *Traite des passions*).
- 198** Andrea Brustolon, vase stand with Hercules, moors and river-gods, c. 1700. Boxwood and ebony. Ca' Rezzonico, Venice. Photo Andrea Jemolo
- 199** Dogon carver, *Seated Couple*, 16th–19th centuries. Wood and metal, height 73 (28¹/₂). Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Lester Wunderman, 1977 (1977.394.15). Photo 1987 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- 200, 201** Ogata Korin, *Red and White Plum Trees*, c. 1712. Pair of screens. Colours on gold foil and silver foil over paper; dimensions of each screen 106 × 172 (41¹/₂ × 67¹/₂). Atami Art Museum, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan
- 202** Shitao (Daoji), *Man in a House on a Mountain*, c. 1700. Ink and colours on paper, 23.8 × 27.5 (9¹/₂ × 10¹/₂). C. C. Wang Collection, New York
- 203** Yun Du-so, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1710. Light colour on silk, 38.5 × 20.5 (15¹/₂ × 8¹/₂). Yun Yong-son Collection, Haenam, South Cholla Province, South Korea
- 204** Antoine Watteau, *Gilles*, c. 1716–18. Oil on canvas, 185 × 150 (73 × 59). Mus  e du Louvre, Paris
- 205** Jean-Sim  on Chardin, *The Copper Fountain*, 1734. Oil on canvas, 28 × 23 (11 × 9). Mus  e du Louvre, Paris
- 206** Jean-Sim  on Chardin, *Basket of Wild Strawberries*, 1761. Oil on canvas, 38 × 46 (15 × 18¹/₂). Private collection
- 207** Giacomo Ceruti, *Women Working on Pillow Lace*, 1720s. Oil on canvas, 150 × 200 (59 × 78¹/₂). Private collection, Brescia. Photo akg-images/Electa

- 208** Francois Boucher, *The Arrival of Psyche in the Palace of Love*, 1741. Tapestry, 351 × 581 (138'G₁ × 228'G₁). Royal Collections, Stockholm. Photo Håkan Lind
- 209** Giambattista Tiepolo, *Abraham and the Angels*, 1725–26. Fresco, 400 × 200 (157'G₁ × 78'G₁). Palazzo Arcivescovile, Udine. Photo ak-images/ Electa
- 210** Franz Joseph Spiegler, *The Vision of St Benedict*, 1747–51. Ceiling fresco. Abbey Church, Zwiefalten. Photo Werner Neumeister
- 211** Giovanni Battista Piranesi, plate xiv from the *Carceri*, second state, 1761. Engraving
- 212** Torii Kiyotada, *The Daimonjiya Geisha House*, 1730s. Woodcut. British Museum, London
- 213, 214** William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress*, 1735. Plate i, etching and engraving on paper, 31.8 × 38.7 (12'G₁ × 15'G₁)
- 215** Louis-François Roubiliac, *George Frideric Handel*, 1738. White marble. Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- 216, 217** Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Experiment with the Air Pump*, 1768. Oil on canvas, 182.9 × 243.9 (72 × 96). National Gallery, London
- 218, 219** William Hodges, *A View Taken in the Bay of Otaheite Peba*, 1776. Oil on canvas, 92.7 × 138.4 (36'G₁ × 54'G₁). National Maritime Museum, London
- 220** Khushala (attributed), *Radha Pining in the Wilderness*, c. 1780. Ink and opaque watercolour on paper, 16.5 × 26.6 (6'G₁ × 10'G₁). Collection Anita Spertus
- 221** Pierre-Philippe Mignot, *Naiad*, 1765. Stone relief from the Fontaine des Haudriettes, Paris
- 222** Etienne-Maurice Falconet, *Peter the Great*, 1766–78. Bronze on a base of red granite. Height of bronze c. 5 m (16'G₁ ft). St Petersburg
- 223** Etienne-Louis Boullée, *Cenotaph to Newton*, 1784. Ink and wash drawing, 39.4 × 64.8 (15'G₁ × 25'G₁). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
- 224** Antonio Lisboa ('O Alejandinho'), *The Crowning with Thorns*, 1796–99. Painted cedar-wood. Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, Congonhas do Campo, Brazil. Photo © AISA
- 225** Kitagawa Utamaro, *Beauty at her Toilette*, c. 1795. Woodcut. National Museum, Tokyo
- 226** Antonio Canova, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1797. Marble, 155 × 168 (61 × 66'G₁). Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo Mimmo Jodice/Corbis
- 227** Francisco de Goya, *The Straw Manikin*, 1792. Oil on canvas, 267 × 92 (105'G₁ × 63'). Musco del Prado, Madrid
- 228** Jacques-Louis David, *The Oath of the Horatii*, 1784. Oil on canvas, 330.2 × 421.6 (130 × 166). Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 229** Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat*, 1793. Oil on canvas, 160 × 124.5 (63 × 49). Musée Royale des Beaux-Arts, Brussels
- 230** Francisco de Goya, *This Is What You Were Born For*, c. 1810–14. Plate xii from the *Disasters of War*. Etching. British Museum, London
- 231** Francisco de Goya, *The Idiot*, 1824–28. Black chalk, 19.1 × 15 (7'G₁ × 5'G₁). Gerstenberg Collection, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg
- 232** William Blake, *The Ancient of Days*, 1794/1824. Etching with pen and brown ink, watercolour and gold bodycolour, 23 × 17 (9 × 7). Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester
- 233** Caspar David Friedrich, *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen*, 1818. Oil on canvas, 90.5 × 71 (35'G₁ × 28'). Museum Oskar Reinhart am Stadtgarten, Winterthur
- 234** John Constable, *Study of the Trunk of an Elm Tree*, 1821. Oil on paper, 30.6 × 24.8 (12 × 9'G₁). Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- 235** Joseph William Mallord Turner, *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, 1812. Oil on canvas, 146 × 237.5 (57 × 93). Tate, London
- 236** Ahmad, *Female Acrobat*, c. 1815. Oil on calico. Photo V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- 237** Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Madame Rivière*, 1806. Oil on canvas, 116 × 90 (45'G₁ × 35'G₁). Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 238** Christoffer Eckersberg, *Standing Female Nude*, 1837. Oil on canvas, 125 × 76.5 (49'G₁ × 30'G₁). Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen
- 239** Théodore Géricault, *Charging Chasseur*, 1812. Oil on canvas, 349 × 266 (137'G₁ × 104'G₁). Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 240** Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Sardanapalus*, 1828. Oil on canvas, 395 × 495 (155'G₁ × 194'G₁). Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 241** Honoré Daumier, *Rue Transnonain, 15 April 1834*, 1834. Lithograph, 29.2 × 44.8 (11'G₁ × 17'G₁). Private collection
- 242** Jean-Jacques Grandville, *Grandville's Last Dream*, 1847. Published in *Le Magasin Pittoresque*, France
- 243** Hokusai, *Mount Fuji Seen through a Spider's Web*, 1840. Monochrome woodcut
- 244** Hiroshige, *Cuckoo Flying over the River*, 1857. Woodblock, oban, 36.3 × 24.6 (14'G₁ × 9'G₁). Art Institute of Chicago
- 245** Nicéphore Niépce, *View from a Window at Le Gras*, 1826. Tinplate, 16.5 × 20 (6'G₁ × 7'G₁). Gernsheim Collection. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin
- 246** Adolph Menzel, *The Balcony Room*, 1845. Oil on cardboard, 58 × 47 (22'G₁ × 18'G₁). Nationalgalerie, Berlin
- 247** William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 76 × 56 (30 × 20). Tate, London
- 248** Gustave Courbet, *The Grain Sifters*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 131 × 167 (51'G₁ × 66'). Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes
- 249** Frederic Edwin Church, *The Niagara Falls from the American Side*, 1867. Canvas, 260 × 231 (102'G₁ × 91'). National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
- 250** Tara, *Maharana Sarup Singh Playing Holi on Horseback at the City Palace*, 1851. Gouache on paper, 91.4 × 125.7 (36 × 49'G₁). City Palace Museum, Udaipur
- 251** Rahrarui Rukupo, *Self-Portrait*, 1842. Wood, height 108 (42'G₁). From the Te Hau ki Turanga house, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington
- 252** Akati Akpele Kendo, *Agogo! (Gu, the War-God)*, c. 1859. Iron. Musée du Louvre, Paris
- 253** Ren Xiong, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1856. Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, 177.4 × 78.5 (69'G₁ × 30'G₁). Palace Museum, Beijing
- 254** Edouard Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 210 × 260 (84 × 106). Musée d'Orsay, Paris
- 255** Claude Monet, *Impression: Sunrise*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 48 × 63 (19 × 24'G₁). Musée Marmottan, Paris
- 256** Auguste Renoir, *Claude Monet Painting in his Garden at Argenteuil*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 46 × 60 (18'G₁ × 23'G₁). Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT
- 257** Edgar Degas, *Place de la Concorde*, 1875. Oil on canvas, 78 × 117 (31 × 46). Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg
- 258** Ilya Repin, *Barge Haulers on the Volga*, 1870–73. Oil on canvas, 131 × 281 (51'G₁ × 110'G₁). Russian Museum, St Petersburg
- 259** Edward Burne-Jones, *The Golden Stairs*, 1876–80. Oil on canvas, 269.2 × 116.8 (106 × 46). Tate, London
- 260** Frédéric Bartholdi, *Statue of Liberty*, 1884–86. Copper, steel and iron, on stone base, height of statue c. 46 m (150 ft). Photo Bob Krist/Corbis
- 261** Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Shaw Memorial*, Beacon Street, Boston, MA, 1884–1900. Photo Peter Newark Military Pictures/Bridgeman Art Library
- 262** Eadweard Muybridge, *Males (Nude): Ascending Stairs*. Plate 88 from *Animal Locomotion*, 1887.
- 263** George Seurat, *Parade (Circus Sideshow)*, 1887–88. Oil on canvas, 99.7 × 149.9 (39'G₁ × 59'). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- 264** Paul Gauguin, *The Vision after the Sermon*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 73 × 92 (28'G₁ × 36'G₁). National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
- 265** Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 73.7 × 92.1 (29 × 36'G₁). Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 266** Vilhelm Hammershøi, *Study of a Woman*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 63.5 × 55.5 (25 × 21'G₁). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen
- 267** Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, 1893. Tempera and oil pastel on cardboard, 91 × 73.5 (35'G₁ × 28'G₁). Nasjonalgalleri, Oslo. © Munch Museum/ Munch-Ellingsen Group, BONO, Oslo/DACS, London, 2007
- 268** Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire from the Bibémus Quarry*, c. 1897. Oil on canvas, 64.8 × 81.3 (25'G₁ × 32'). Baltimore Museum of Art
- 269** Auguste Rodin, *Walking Man*, 1900. Bronze. Musée d'Orsay, Paris
- 270** Edouard Vuillard, *Annette's Soup*, 1900. Musée de l'Annonciade, St-Tropez, France. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 271** Jose Guadalupe Posada, *Calavera of a Soldier from Oaxaca*, 1903. Etching, 14.4 × 27.3 (5'G₁ × 10'G₁). Collection A. V. Arroyo
- 272** Uopie [?], *bu gle mask*, c. 1900–25. Wood, height 23 (9). Private collection
- 273** Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Mother and Child*, 1907. Oil on linen, 82 × 124.7 (32'G₁ × 49'G₁). Private collection, Bremen
- 274** Gustav Klimt, *Judith II*, 1909. Oil on canvas,

- 178 × 46 (70¹/₈ × 18³/₈). Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Venice
- 275** Henri Matisse, *Woman with a Hat*, 1905. Oil on canvas, 80.7 × 59.7 (31⁷/₈ × 23⁵/₈). San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, bequest of Elise S. Haas. © Succession H. Matisse, Paris/DACS 2007
- 276** Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Bathers Throwing Reeds*, 1909. Woodcut, 20 × 28.9 (7⁷/₈ × 11³/₈). Brücke Museum, Berlin. Photo bpk, Berlin
- 277** Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 243.9 × 233.7 (96 × 92). Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. © Succession Pablo Picasso/DACS 2007
- 278** Zande carver, *Mother and Child*, c. 1914. Wood, height 60.2 (23⁵/₈). American Museum of Natural History, New York
- 279** Henri Matisse, *The Red Studio*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 181 × 219.1 (71¹/₈ × 86). Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs Simon Guggenheim Fund. © Succession H. Matisse, Paris/DACS 2007
- 280** Vasily Kandinsky, *Composition VII*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 200 × 300 (78³/₈ × 118³/₈). Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 281** Jacques-Henri Lartigue, *Delage at the Grand Prix*, 1912. © Ministère de la Culture – France/AAJHL
- 282** Giacomo Balla, *Speeding Car*, 1913. Oil and mixed media on paper and paste-board, 73 × 104 (28³/₈ × 41). Private collection. © DACS 2007
- 283** Pablo Picasso, *Glass and Bottle of Suze*, 1912. Pasted paper, gouache and charcoal, 65.4 × 50.2 (25⁷/₈ × 19⁵/₈). Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis. © Succession Pablo Picasso/DACS 2007
- 284** Pablo Picasso, *Guitar*, 1912. Construction of cardboard, string and wire, 65.1 × 33 × 19 (25⁵/₈ × 7 × 13⁵/₈). Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist. © Succession Pablo Picasso/DACS 2007
- 285** Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 147 × 89.2 (57⁷/₈ × 35³/₈). Philadelphia Museum of Art. © Succession Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 286** Paul Strand, *Wall Street*, 1915. © 1971 Aperture Foundation Inc., Paul Strand Archive
- 287** Constantin Brancusi, *Sculpture for the Blind*, 1916. Marble, 17 × 29 × 18.1 (6⁵/₈ × 11³/₈ × 7³/₈). Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensburg Collection, 1950. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 288** Otto Dix, *Skat Players*, 1920. Oil on canvas with collage, 110 × 87 (43³/₈ × 34³/₈). Private collection, on loan to the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. © DACS 2007
- 289** Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International*, 1919. Wood, iron and glass (destroyed). Photo National Museum, Stockholm. © DACS 2007
- 290** Tomoyoshi Murayama, *Work Employing Flower and Shoe*, c. 1923. Mixed media construction (presumed lost). Photograph from the first Mavo exhibition pamphlet
- 291** Piet Mondrian, *Tableau I: with Red, Black, Blue and Yellow*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 103 × 100 (40³/₈ × 39³/₈). Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. © 2007 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International, Warrenton, VA, USA.
- 292** Paul Klee, *Twittering Machine*, 1922. Transfer drawing, oil, ink and watercolour on paper, 63.8 × 48.1 (25¹/₈ × 19). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © DACS 2007
- 293** Chaim Soutine, *Carcass of Beef*, c. 1925. Oil on canvas, 140.3 × 82.2 (55³/₈ × 32³/₈). Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 294** Edward Hopper, *Night Windows*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 73.7 × 86.4 (29 × 34). Whitney Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of John Hay Whitney
- 295** René Magritte, *Not To Be Reproduced*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 81 × 65 (31³/₈ × 25³/₈). Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 296** Joan Miró, *The Birth of the World*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 250.8 × 200 (98³/₈ × 4³/₈). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Succession Miro/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 297** Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel, *Un Chien andalou*, 1929. Film still. © Salvador Dalí, Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, DACS, London 2007
- 298** Diego Rivera, *Crossing the Ravine*, 1930. Palacio de Cortés, Cuernavara, Mexico. © Banco de México, Diego Rivera & Frida Kahlo Museums Trust.
- 299** Naum Gabo, *Torsion*, 1929, recreated 1936. Perspex, 35.2 × 41 × 40 (13⁵/₈ × 16³/₈ × 15³/₈). Tate, London. The works of Naum Gabo © Nina Williams
- 300** Barbara Hepworth, *Two Forms*, 1933. Alabaster and limestone, 26 × 29.6 × 17.6 (10³/₈ × 11³/₈ × 6³/₈). Tate, St Ives. © Bowness. Hepworth Estate
- 301** Demètre Chiparus, *Les Girls*, c. 1930. Bronze and ivory. Private collection. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 302** Vera Mukhina, *Factory Worker and Collective-Farm Girl*, 1935. Bronze, 158.5 × 106 × 112 (62³/₈ × 41³/₈ × 44³/₈). Model of group installed at the Paris International Exhibition 1937. Russian Museum, St Petersburg. © DACS 2007
- 303** Pierre Bonnard, *Nude in the Bath*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 93 × 147 (36³/₈ × 57³/₈). Musée du Petit Palais, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 304** Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 349 × 776 (137³/₈ × 306). Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid. © Succession Picasso/DACS 2007
- 305** Wifredo Lam, *The Jungle*, 1943. Gouache on paper mounted on canvas, 239.4 × 229.9 (94³/₈ × 90³/₈). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 306** Felix Nussbaum, *In the Camp (Crouching Prisoner in Saint-Cyprien)*, 1940. Oil on canvas, 47 × 42.5 (18³/₈ × 16³/₈). Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin. © DACS 2007
- 307** Jackson Pollock, *Number 32*, 1950, 1950. Enamel on canvas, 269 × 457.5 (106 × 180). Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. © ARS, NY and DACS, London 2007
- 308** Mark Rothko, *White Centre (Yellow, Pink and Lavender on Rose)*, 1950. Oil on canvas, 206.8 × 141 (81 × 55³/₈). Private collection. © Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko ARS, NY and DACS, London 2007
- 309** Graham Sutherland, *Palm Leaves*, 1947. Gouache and chalk on paper, 32 × 35 (12³/₈ × 13³/₈). © Estate of Graham Sutherland. Photo courtesy British Council, Egypt
- 310** Russell Drysdale, *The Cricketers*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 76 × 101.5 (29³/₈ × 40). Private collection
- 311** Francis Bacon, *Study After Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953. Oil on canvas, 153 × 118.1 (60³/₈ × 46³/₈). Des Moines Art Center, Iowa. © Estate of Francis Bacon/DACS 2007
- 312** Alberto Giacometti, *Composition with Three Figures and a Head*, 1950. Bronze, 55.3 × 56.3 × 41.9 (21³/₈ × 22³/₈ × 16³/₈). Alberto Giacometti Foundation, Zurich. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 313** Jean Dubuffet, *Lady's Body (Fancy Handful)*, 1950. Oil on canvas, 116 × 89 (45³/₈ × 35). Emilie Fischer Collection, Landau. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 314** Willem de Kooning, *Woman and Bicycle*, 1952–53. Oil on canvas, 194.3 × 124.5 (76³/₈ × 49). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. © Willem de Kooning Foundation, New York/ARS, NY and DACS, London 2007
- 315** Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955. Mixed media, 188 × 79 (74 × 31³/₈). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © DACS, London/VAGA, New York 2007
- 316** Antonio Berni, *The Great Temptation*, 1962. Watercolour, paper, metal fabric and mixed media on wood, 240 × 240 (94³/₈ × 94³/₈). Collection Eduardo F. Constantini, Buenos Aires. Courtesy José and Inés Berni
- 317** Lucio Fontana, *Spatial Concept (Waiting)*, 1960. Water-based paint on canvas, 100 × 81 (39³/₈ × 31³/₈). Private collection. Fondazione Lucio Fontana, Milan
- 318** David Smith, *Cubi XXIII*, 1964. Polished stainless steel, 193.7 × 439.1 × 67.9 (76³/₈ × 172³/₈ × 26³/₈). Photo Dan Budnik. © Estate of David Smith/VAGA, New York/DACS, London 2007
- 319** Alumi Luhuma, *'Ujamaa' Carving of Makonde History*, 1965–70. Collection Madan Sapra, Nairobi, Kenya
- 320** Wu Hufan, *Celebrate the Success of Our Glorious Atomic Bomb Explosion!*, 1965. Hanging scroll, ink and colour on absorbent paper, 135 × 67 (53¹/₈ × 26³/₈). Shanghai Chinese Painting Academy
- 321** Andy Warhol, *Brillo Boxes*, 1964/69. Silkscreen ink on plywood: 45 boxes, each 50.8 × 50.8 × 43.2 (20 × 20 × 17). Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA. © Licensed by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc/ARS, New York and DACS, London 2007
- 322** Sigmar Polke, *Potatoheads (Mao and LBJ)*, 1965. Artificial resin on canvas, 91 × 116 (35³/₈ × 45³/₈). Courtesy Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden. © the artist

- 323** Bridget Riley, *Arrest 2*, 1965. Acrylic on linen, 195 × 190 (76¹/₈ × 75). © the artist. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
- 324** Robert Morris, *Untitled*, 1965/71. Mirror plate glass on wood, 4 cubes, each 91.5 × 91.5 × 91.5 (36 × 36 × 36). Tate, London. © ARS, NY and DACS, London 2007
- 325** Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, 1970. Latex, rope, string, wire, dimensions variable. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Hauser & Wirth Zürich London
- 326** Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970. Mud, precipitated salt crystals, rocks. Great Salt Lake, Utah. Photo © Tom Smart. © Estate of Robert Smithson/VAGA, New York/DACS, London 2007
- 327** Dennis Oppenheim, *Whirlpool, Eye of the Storm*, 1973. White smoke discharged by an aircraft over El Mirage Dry Lake, Southern California. Courtesy the artist
- 328** Ana Mendieta, *Isla*, 1981. Black and white photograph. Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection
- 329** Giuseppe Penone, *Tree of 12 Metres*, 1980–82. Wood, 600 × 50 × 50 (236¹/₈ × 19¹/₈ × 19¹/₈). Tate, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 330** Philip Guston, *The Studio*, 1969. Oil on canvas, 121.9 × 106.7 (48 × 42). Private collection, New York. Courtesy McKee Gallery, New York
- 331** Ed Kienholz, *The Portable War Memorial*, 1968. Environmental construction with operating Coke machine, 289 × 243.8 × 975.4 (114 × 96 × 384). Museum Ludwig, Cologne. © Nancy Reddin Kienholz
- 332** Gerhard Richter, *Woman Descending a Staircase*, 1965. Oil on canvas, 200.7 × 129.5 (79 × 51). Art Institute of Chicago. Roy J. and Frances R. Friedman Endowment; gift of Lannan Foundation, 1997.176. © Gerhard Richter (CR 92)
- 333** Anselm Kiefer, *Icarus (March Sand)*, 1981. Oil, emulsion, shellac, sand and photograph on canvas, 290 × 360 (114¹/₈ × 141¹/₈). Courtesy the artist
- 334** Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Warrior*, 1982. Acrylic and oilstick on wood, 180 × 120 (70⁷/₈ × 47¹/₈). Collection José Muguabi. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2007
- 335** Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still No. 13*, 1978. Black and white photograph, 25.4 × 20.3 (10 × 8). Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York
- 336** Jeff Wall, *Diatribes*, 1985. Transparency in lightbox, 203 × 229 (79⁷/₈ × 90¹/₈). Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York
- 337** Bhupen Khakhar, *Two Men in Banaras*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 175 × 175 (68⁷/₈ × 68⁷/₈). Private collection
- 338** Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, *Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming*, 1980. Synthetic polymer on canvas, 213 × 701 (83³/₈ × 276). National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- 339** Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, 1981. Weatherproof steel, c. 3.7 × 37 m (c. 12 × 120 ft). Installed at the Federal Plaza, New York (destroyed 1989). Collection General Services Administration, Washington, D.C. Photo Glenn Steigelman. © ARS, NY and DACS, London 2007
- 340, 341** Mona Hatoum, *Corps étranger*, 1994. Video installation with cylindrical wooden structure, video projector, amplifier and four speakers. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Photo Philippe Migeat. © the artist
- 342** Richard Wilson, *20:50*, 1987. Used sump oil, steel and wood, dimensions variable (this installation at Matt's Gallery, London, 1987). The Saatchi Collection, London. Courtesy the artist and Matt's Gallery, London. Photo Edward Woodman
- 343** Damien Hirst, *A Thousand Years*, 1990. Glass, steel, MDF board, cow's head, fly zapper, bowls of sugar water, 213.4 × 426.7 × 213.4 (84 × 168 × 84). Courtesy Jay Joplin/White Cube, London
- 344** Wim Delvoye, *Cement Truck*, 1990–99. Handcarved teak wood, 681 × 325 × 225 (268¹/₈ × 128 × 88¹/₈). Collection the artist
- 345** Esther Mahlangu, *Untitled*, 2002. Dung and acrylic paint on canvas, 103 × 109 (40¹/₈ × 42⁷/₈). Courtesy 34 Long Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 346** Jane Alexander, *Vissershok*, 2000. Photomontage, pigment on cotton paper, 29.5 × 40 (11¹/₈ × 15¹/₈). Courtesy the artist
- 347** Juan Muñoz, *Three Men with a Yellow Ball*, 2001. Resin, oil and steel, 128 × 62 × 55 (50⁷/₈ × 24¹/₈ × 21¹/₈). Courtesy Juan Muñoz Estate and Lisson Gallery, London
- 348** Ana María Pacheco, *Land of No Return*, 2003 (detail). Polychromed wood, 193 × 540 × 660 (76 × 212¹/₈ × 259¹/₈). Private collection. Photo Colin M. Harvey. Courtesy Pratt Contemporary Art, Sevenoaks, Kent
- 349** Julie Mehretu, *Dispersion*, 2002. Ink and acrylic on canvas, 228.6 × 365.8 (90 × 144). Collection Nicolas and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, New York. Courtesy The Project, New York
- 350** Luc Tuymans, *Diagnostic View V*, 1992. Oil on canvas, 58 × 42 (22⁷/₈ × 16¹/₈). Courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp. Photo Felix Tirry
- 351** Thomas Ruff, *Portrait*, 1988. Courtesy the artist. © DACS 2007
- 352** Lee U-fan, *With Winds*, 1990. Oil on canvas, 227.5 × 182 (89¹/₈ × 71¹/₈). The Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art. Purchased 1998 with funds from Michael Simcha Baevski through and with the assistance of the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation. Photo reproduced by permission, from the Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. © the artist

INDEX

Page numbers in *italic* refer to illustrations and the content of related captions.
Page numbers + *n* refer to footnotes.

A

Abbasids 108, 125
Aborigines (Australia) 18–21, 20, 221, 449–50
abstract art 23, 215, 254, 347, 377–78, 391, 403, 418, 421, 429
Abstract Expressionism 414–16, 419–20, 425, 440
academies and academic values 126, 214–15, 225, 241, 251, 260, 262, 265, 282, 315, 326, 333, 344–45, 348, 392; Académie Royale/Académie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 261, 268–72, 274, 281, 330; *see also* Royal Academy, London
acrylic paints 433
'action painting' 421
Aegean art 49–51, 49, 62, 81
Aertsen, Pieter (1507/8–75) 208, 208
aesthetic feelings and aesthetics 10, 26, 47, 283; Aestheticism 328, 347, 350, 351, 362
Afghanistan 58, 75, 92, 97, 148, 175
Africa 9, 18, 21, 23, 41, 85–86, 90, 132, 205–7, 264–65, 335–36, 365, 426, 446; African influence on European art 372, 382, 385, 408
Agra, India 235, 236
agriculture 22, 25, 28, 30, 36, 98, 113
Ahmad, Iranian painter (active 1815–50) 311–12, 312, 316, 376
Akati Akpele Kendo (active 1858–89) 335, 336, 372, 382, 446
Akbar, Mughal emperor (1542–1605) 210–12, 235
Akhmenat 51–54, 51, 86
Akkad 44–46
Akrotiri, Greece 49, 50
Alberti, Leon Battista (1404–72) 12*n*, 166, 190, 198
Aleijadinho, O *see* Lisboa, Antonio
Alexander, Jane (1939–) 457–58, 457
Alexander of Macedon 71, 92, 148
Alhambra, Granada 154–55, 155, 277
allegories, 71, 92, 172, 178, 199, 216, 262, 282, 309, 318, 327, 346
Altamira cave, Spain 13, 17
altarpieces 150–51, 154, 165, 168, 187, 202, 203, 307
Altdorfer, Albrecht (c. 1480–1538) 186
Amarna, Egypt 51–53
Americas in ancient times 17–18, 35–36, 38, 54–55, 86–88, 100–101, 181–83
Amsterdam 245–47, 260
anamorphosis 204
anarchism 352
Angelico, Fra (c. 1395–1400) 166
angels in art 106
Angers, France 153, 154, 157, 158, 166
Angkor Thom 130
Angkor Wat 130
'animal styles' 57, 99, 108
anthropology 18–21, 23–26
Antwerp 208–9, 231, 245, 251
Apelles 79
Apocalypse (Book of Revelation) 154, 185
Apollo Belvedere 80
Appel, Karel (1921–2006) 419
Arabs 97, 109, 162, 174, 453; *see also* Islam
'archaic', as modern cultural category *see* 'primitive'
Archaic, period label in Greek art 62, 63, 71, 81

Arcimboldo, Giuseppe (c. 1527–93) 215
Argentina 422–23, 423
Aristotle 71, 144
Arizona 100
Arp, Jean (Hans) (1886–1966) 386, 395
art, possible definitions of 6–7, 9–11, 12, 44, 64, 68, 91, 170, 190, 195, 222, 229, 294, 338, 346, 351, 353, 374, 382, 386, 413, 434, 462
Art Deco 405, 406, 422
Arte Povera 440
artist, role of 16
artists' colonies 342, 367
Art Nouveau 50, 368, 395
Arts and Crafts Movement 50, 368
Asante, West African culture 264
assemblage 336, 389
Assisi, Italy 144, 146
Assyrians 58–61, 60, 334, 349
Athens 62, 64, 65, 66–68, 78
Attica 62
Auerbach, Frank (1931–) 417
Australia 11, 12, 18–21, 20, 346, 416
Austria 184, 314, 368–69
Automatists, Canadian art grouping 427
avant-gardes 140, 162, 215, 351–53, 357, 359–60, 367, 371, 376, 380, 386, 390, 395, 404, 413, 414, 419, 420–24, 437, 451–52
Avignon, France 153, 160
Aztecs 35, 181, 182, 363, 401

B

Babylon 49, 61
Bacon, Francis (1909–92) 416–17, 417, 418, 432, 455
Bactria 47, 75
Baghdad 108, 124, 125, 136, 148, 154
Balkans 28, 46, 88, 174; *see also* Serbia, Romania
Balkenhol, Stephan (1957–) 458
Ballà, Giacomo (1871–1958) 379, 379
Baltermants, Dmitri (1912–90) 410
Balthus (1908–2001) 416
Bamberg, Germany 141
Bantu 18, 86
Barbizon painters 328, 342
Barcelona 368, 371, 395, 424
Bardon, Geoffrey (1940–2003) 449–50
Baroda, India 449
Baroque 231, 237–41, 250, 274, 292
Barr, Alfred (1902–81) 401–2, 409
Barthélemy d'Eyck (active 1444–69) 177, 177
Bartholdi, Frédéric (1834–1904) 347–48, 347
Baselitz, Georg (1938–) 443
basilicas 95, 110, 113
Basle 203
Basquiat, Jean-Michel (1960–88) 444–46, 445
Bastien-Lepage, Jules (1848–84) 344*n*
Bataille, Georges (1897–1962) 422*n*
Baudelaire, Charles (1821–67) 339, 339, 343
Bauhaus, German art institute 391, 406, 413
Baule, West African culture 365
Bayeux Tapestry 114–15, 122
Beardsley, Aubrey (1872–98) 347, 363
Becher, Bernd (1931–) and Hilla (1934–) 462
Beckmann, Max (1884–1950) 407
Beijing, China 148, 221
Belgium 395, 454–55, 465; *see also* Flanders, Netherlands
Bellini, Gentile (c. 1429–1507) 174, 175
Bellini, Giovanni (c. 1431–1516) 172–74, 173, 190, 192, 198, 202

Benin City, Nigeria 206–7, 365
Benin Republic *see* Dahomey
Benton, Thomas Hart (1889–1975) 401
Berlin 325–26, 357, 371, 386, 403
Berni, Antonio (1905–81) 422, 423, 425, 430, 442, 457
Bernini, Gianlorenzo (1598–1680) 238–41, 240, 261, 262, 268, 298
Beuys, Joseph (1921–86) 431–32, 435, 437*n*, 440, 443
Bible, the 46, 58, 98–99, 109, 196
Biedermeier 315
Bierstadt, Albert (1830–1902) 332
Bihzad (c. 1450–1535/6) 175–77, 176, 235
Bill, Max (1908–94) 418*n*
Bingham, George Caleb (1811–79) 321
bird's-eye view 258, 259, 332
black-figure, in Greek vase-painting 64
Blake, William (1757–1827) 304–6, 305, 308, 312
Blaue Reiter, German art group 377, 378
Blombos cave, South Africa 11
'BMAC' culture 47
Boccioni, Umberto (1882–1916) 379, 410
bodegones, Spanish still lifes 244, 247
bodhisattva, figure in Buddhism 105–6
'bohemia' and bohemians 328, 351, 352, 357, 393
Boilly, Louis-Léopold (1761–1845) 430*n*
Bolivia 100
Bologna, Italy 169, 225, 226, 241, 393
Bonampak, Mexico 100–101
Bonnard, Pierre (1867–1947) 362, 406–7, 407
Bontecou, Lee (1931–) 426*n*
Borobudur, Indonesia 102, 103, 129, 222, 334
Borromini, Francesco (1599–1667) 237–38, 237
Bosch, Hieronymus (c. 1450–1516) 187, 188, 209
Boscotrecase, Italy 79
boshan 76, 106, 126
Boston, USA 348
Botticelli, Sandro (c. 1444–1510) 170–72, 172, 186, 346, 348
Boucher, François, (1703–70) 273–74, 273, 281, 288
Boudolf, Jean (active 1368–81) 153–54
Boullée, Etienne (1728–99) 290, 291–92, 294, 302, 304, 389
Bourgeois, Louise (1911–) 435, 440
bourgeoisie 279, 280, 312–15, 320, 338–39, 362, 363
Boyd, Arthur (1920–99) 416
Bramante (c. 1443–1514) 195
brands in modern art *see* consumerism
Brazil 292–93, 311, 423
Brancusi, Constantin (1876–1957) 384–86, 385, 405, 434
Braque, Georges (1882–1963) 380–81
Breton, André (1896–1966) 395, 399, 408, 414
Britain 98, 108, 280–85, 293, 308–10, 326–28, 346–47, 379, 404, 416–17, 422, 425; *see also* England, Scotland
bronze 48, 64, 68, 74, 98, 112, 347
Bronze Age 48–49
Bronzino, Agnolo (1503–72) 215
Brouwer, Adriaen (c. 1605–38) 242, 243
Brücke, Die 366, 370–71
Bruegel, Pieter (c. 1525–69) 209–10, 209, 212, 259, 389
Bruges, Belgium 158

Brunelleschi, Filippo (1377–1446) 162, 167, 168
Brussels 181, 395, 410
Brustolon, Andrea (1662–1732) 262, 263
Bryullov, Karl (1799–1852) 310
Buddhism 72, 74, 92–94, 92, 102, 104–6, 129–30, 137, 138
Bulgaria 28, 65
Buñuel, Luis (1900–83) 398, 399
Burgundy 113, 158–60, 168, 168, 178
Burke, Edmund (1729–97) 283, 296
Burne-Jones, Edward (1833–98) 346–47, 346, 351, 443
Burri, Alberto (1915–95) 419
Bushmen 18
Butler, Elizabeth (1850–1933) 367
Byzantium and Byzantine art 94–98, 116–19, 136, 141, 148, 150, 157, 168, 174, 218–19

C

Cairo 125
Calder, Alexander (1898–1976) 424
California 349, 442, 454
calligraphy 106–7, 108, 110, 235
'call to order', European artistic trend 387, 392, 399, 406
Cambodia 130, 137
camera obscura 250, 251, 284, 308, 323; *see also* optical devices
Campin, Robert (c. 1375–1444) 160
Canada 25, 335, 367, 427, 446
Canaletto (Antonio Canal, 1697–1768) 284
canon, as artistic principle 41, 44, 50, 62, 68, 85, 110
Canova, Antonio (1757–1822) 296, 297–98, 315
canvas, as material 189
Capa, Robert (1913–54) 410
capitalism 18, 144, 160, 168, 324, 332, 401, 426, 430, 433, 437, 438, 452, 456
Caravaggio, Michelangelo Merisi da (1571–1610) 226–28, 227, 242, 244, 255, 300
Caribbean 181, 182; *see also* Cuba
caricature 241, 281, 304, 318–19, 332
Caro, Anthony (1924–) 425
Carolingian art 110
Carpaccio, Vittore (c. 1460–c. 1526) 174
Carpeaux, Jean-Baptiste (1827–75) 338
'carpet pages' 99, 108
carpets 218
Carracci, Annibale (1560–1609) 225–26, 225, 231, 241, 251
Carrara, Italy, marble quarries of 196
Carthage 59, 61, 90, 91
Cartier-Bresson, Henri (1908–2004) 410
Cassatt, Mary (1844–1926) 367
Castiglione, Giuseppe (1688–1766) 266
cathedrals 120–22, 140, 152, 168
Catholic Church 116, 158, 195, 198, 204, 210, 225, 243, 276–77, 353
cave art 12–17, 13
ceiling paintings 167, 195–96, 200, 238, 260, 262
Celant, Germano (1940–) 440
Cellini, Benvenuto (1500–71) 215
Celtic art *see* Insular art
Central Asia 46–48, 47, 49, 57, 71, 75, 125, 148
ceramics 26–27, 26, 27, 54, 64, 86–88, 100, 125, 136, 353
Ceruti, Giacomo (1698–1767) 272–73, 272

- Cézanne, Paul (1839–1906) 357–59, 359, 360, 362, 367, 370, 379, 380, 437
- Chagall, Marc (1887–1985) 410
- Chan *see* Zen
- Chardin, Jean-Siméon (1699–1779) 270–72, 270, 271, 274, 281, 370
- Charlemagne 109–10
- Chartres, France 120, 122
- Chauvet cave, France 13
- Chavin de Huántar, Peru 35–36, 38, 86, 182
- chemistry and synthetics 222, 310, 323, 356
- chi*, concept in Chinese art *see* *qi*
- chiaroscuro 229, 240, 283
- Chicago, USA 442
- Chicago, Judy (1939–) 449
- China and the Chinese 22, 27, 36–39, 38, 48–49, 48, 57, 63, 75–78, 104–7, 126–29, 130, 135–40, 148, 169, 221, 250, 251, 265–67, 306, 336–38, 387, 429, 449, 465
- chinoiserie and Chinese export art 250, 251, 262, 267, 274
- Chiparus, Demètre (1888–1950) 404–6, 405
- Chirico, Giorgio de (1888–1978) 394
- choju giga*, Japanese ‘animal scrolls’ 128, 129
- Cholas, south Indian dynasty 112, 179, 285, 404
- Christianity 92, 97–99, 109–10, 113–25, 140, 144, 150, 157, 172, 187, 188, 222, 292–93, 306, 326, 432; *see also* Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Protestantism
- Church, Frederic Edwin (1826–1900) 331–32, 331
- churches 95, 110, 113–14, 117
- Ciurlionis, Mikalojus (1875–1911) 377
- cinema 323, 350, 380, 394, 398, 406
- civilization, possible definitions of 35–38, 39–40, 44, 54, 122, 285, 386, 410
- Clark, Lygia (1920–88) 423
- class consciousness 273, 318, 338–39, 351, 352
- Classical and classicism, as artistic concepts 58, 81, 82, 89–90, 91, 110, 122, 141, 161, 229, 238, 239, 197, 256, 261, 262, 274, 367, 387
- Classical, period label in Greek art 63, 64, 68, 71, 80
- Claude Lorrain (c. 1604–82) 252–53, 253, 254, 259, 260, 282, 285, 310
- Clemente, Francesco (1952–) 443
- Clodion 295
- cloisonnisme* 354
- CoBrA 419
- codex, format for writing 98
- Cole, Thomas (1801–48) 310, 331
- collage 381–82, 381, 386, 423
- Cologne 109, 110
- colonialism 26, 183–84, 293–94, 324, 332, 365
- Colosseum, Rome 82
- Colossus of Rhodes 71
- colour field painting 416
- commedia dell’arte* 241, 269, 269
- Communism 386, 387–89
- composition, pictorial 169, 170, 253–54
- computers and digital image processing 451, 457, 459
- conceptual art 351, 437, 440, 443
- Confucianism 76, 135, 268
- cong*, ancient Chinese artefact 38–39, 38, 76
- Congo 206, 374, 404, 449
- Constable, John (1776–1837) 308, 309–10, 323
- Constantine, Roman emperor 94, 109
- Constantinople *see* Byzantium
- Constructivism 389, 390–91, 391*n*, 398, 403, 423
- consumerism, as theme in modern art 381, 389–90, 421, 422, 425, 430–31, 447, 454, 457
- contrapposto* 170
- Cordoba, Spain 108, 125
- Corinth, Greece 62
- Cornell, Joseph (1903–72) 389–90
- Correggio, Antonio (c. 1489–1534) 200
- Cortona, Pietro da (c. 1596–1669) 238, 239, 260, 274
- Cotman, John Sell (1782–1842) 309
- Counter-Reformation 225, 226, 231, 238, 244, 274
- Courbet, Gustave (1819–77) 328–30, 329, 344, 359, 360
- Crete 49–50
- crucifix / Crucifixion 109, 110, 112, 150, 161, 187, 212, 222–25
- Csontváry, Tivadar (1853–1919) 370
- Cuba 408, 439
- Cubism 380–82, 386, 399, 405
- Cuzco, Peru 222
- Cycladic islands, Greece 28, 29, 49, 81, 418
- Czech Republic 26, 429; *see also* Prague
- D**
- Dada 386, 389, 394, 395, 421
- Daguerre, Louis 323
- Dahl, Johan Christian (1788–1857) 308
- Dahomey (now Benin Republic) 335–36, 365
- Dali, Salvador (1904–89) 398–99, 399
- Damascus 96, 109
- Dan, West African culture 365
- ‘Danube school’ 186
- Daoji *see* Shitao
- Daoism 76, 128, 266
- Dar-es-Salaam 426
- Daumier, Honoré (1808–79) 318–19, 319, 330
- David, Jacques-Louis (1748–1825) 297, 299–301, 300, 301, 312, 315, 406
- Degas, Edgar (1834–1917) 343–44, 343, 362, 367, 394, 429, 430*n*
- De Kooning, Willem (1904–97) 419–20, 420
- Delacroix, Eugène (1798–1863) 317–18, 317, 328, 351
- Delft, Netherlands 249, 250, 251
- Delhi, India 136
- Delos, Greece, bronze head from 74, 75, 88
- Delvoye, Wim (1965–) 454–56, 455
- Denmark 232, 315, 321, 342, 356
- De Stijl 390–91
- Detroit, USA 401
- Diderot, Denis (1713–84) 270, 287–88
- digital images *see* computers
- Dionysius, Greek philosopher 119–20
- dioramas 323, 331
- direct carving 371, 385
- Divisionism 352, 379
- Dix, Otto (1891–1969) 386–87, 388, 392, 423, 442
- Documenta, exhibition in Kassel 440
- documentarist art 438, 439, 446
- Dogon, West African culture 264
- Domenikos Theotokopoulos *see* Greco, El
- domes 95, 116, 124, 125, 162, 195, 236, 237, 238, 290, 291
- Donatello (c. 1386–1466) 162–63, 163, 164, 166, 170, 171, 194, 348, 404
- Dong Qichang (1555–1636) 265
- Doric, order in architecture 66
- drapery 72, 122, 158, 161
- Dresden, Germany 276, 366, 370–71
- drypoint 246, 247
- Drysdale, Russell (1912–81) 416, 416
- Dubuffet, Jean (1901–85) 419, 420, 431, 444
- Duchamp, Marcel (1887–1968) 382–86, 383, 392, 410, 421, 443, 454, 462
- Duccio (active 1278–1319) 151
- Dunhuang caves *see* Mogao
- Dürer, Albrecht (1471–1528) 181, 183–87, 202, 203, 306
- Düsseldorf 431, 462
- Dutch artists 242, 244–47, 249–51, 261, 272, 280, 354–55, 390–91
- Dyck, Anthony van (1599–28) 233, 233
- E**
- Eakins, Thomas (1844–1916) 349–50
- Easter Island 31–33, 31, 32, 35
- Eckersberg, Christoffer Wilhelm (1783–1853) 314, 315, 356, 417
- ecological issues 31, 38*n*, 101, 432, 439–40, 456
- Edo, Japan 265, 279–80, 294–95, 320–21, 389; *see also* Tokyo
- Egypt and Egyptian art 31, 38, 41–44, 42, 43, 51–54, 51, 52, 71, 75, 86, 108*n*, 154, 304, 311, 347, 352
- Eiffel, Gustave (1832–1923) 348, 351, 389
- Elgin Marbles *see* Parthenon
- Elshimer, Adam (1578–1610) 230–31, 230, 245, 252
- emblems 215
- England 9, 114–15, 116, 200, 203–5, 215, 232, 261–62; *see also* Britain
- Enlightenment 287, 289, 292, 294, 299
- Ensor, James (1860–1949) 363
- environments *see* installations
- Epstein, Jacob (1880–1959) 403*n*
- equestrian statues 82, 166, 289
- Ernst, Max (1891–1976) 395, 414
- erotic art/erotica 64, 86, 111–12, 115, 153, 202, 279, 280, 361
- Etruscans 71
- exhibitions, international 330, 335, 348, 361, 405, 407; *see also* Venice Biennale, Documenta
- existentialism 418
- Expressionism 25, 164, 371, 386, 394, 406, 416
- Eyck, Jan van (c. 1395–1441) 158–60, 159, 162, 168, 169, 186, 203*n*, 207, 312, 326
- F**
- Falconet, Etienne-Maurice (1716–91) 288–89, 289
- Fang, West African culture 365
- Fang Lijun (1963–) 465
- fantasy or fantastical art 186, 319, 353, 398
- Fascism 399, 406
- Fatehpur Sikri, India 212
- Fauves 369, 371
- Federal Arts Program 401, 413, 414–15
- Feichtmayer, Johann (1696–1772) 276
- feminism 367, 438–39, 440, 453; *see also* gender roles
- feng shui* 39
- figuration 12, 97–98, 109, 110
- figurines 27, 28, 39, 215, 404, 418, 426
- Fischer, Johann Michael 277
- Flanders 158, 160, 169, 208–10, 242, 250, 273; *see also* Netherlands, Belgium
- Florence and Florentine art 141, 144, 160–64, 168, 170–72, 186, 192–93, 199, 200, 214–15, 261, 318
- Fluxus 437*n*
- Fontana, Lucio (1899–1968) 422–24, 424, 437, 440, 465
- form and function, as principles in art 9, 26, 27, 414
- formalism, 20th-century critical doctrine 414, 416, 420, 422, 432–33
- fountains, 262, 287
- Fouquet, Jean (c. 1425–c. 1478) 178
- Fox Talbot, William Henry (1800–77) 323
- Fragonard, Jean-Honoré (1732–1806) 295
- France 13, 16, 28, 109, 113, 120–25, 152–54, 158, 192, 200, 202, 259–61, 268–72, 293, 299–301, 312, 315–20, 339–44, 357–63, 369–70, 380, 391*n*
- St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) 137, 143, 144, 157
- Franciscans 143, 144, 222, 224
- Frankenthaler, Helen (1928–) 433
- fresco, painting technique 78, 100, 144, 226, 238, 195–96, 216, 235, 274–75, 401
- Freud, Lucian (1922–) 417
- Freud, Sigmund (1856–1939) 368, 395, 398
- Friedrich, Caspar David (1774–1840) 306–7, 308, 312, 326
- frottage* 395
- Fry, Roger (1866–1934) 370*n*
- function *see* form and function
- funerary art *see* tomb art
- ‘Funk’ art 442
- Futurism 379–80, 382, 383, 423
- G**
- Gabo, Naum (1890–1977) 402, 403–4, 405, 418
- Gainsborough, Thomas (1727–88) 295
- Galileo Galilei (1564–1641) 230, 251
- Gandhara 75, 92, 102, 130
- gargoyles 102, 103, 126
- Gaudi, Antoni (1852–1926) 368, 395
- Gauguin, Paul (1848–1903) 352–55, 354, 356, 367, 370, 406
- Gautier, Théophile (1811–72) 328, 338
- gender roles in art 24, 26, 54, 86*n*, 229, 296–97, 299, 316, 367, 438–39
- Gentileschi, Artemisia (1593–1652/53) 228, 229, 254, 300
- geometry 41, 108, 126, 154, 162, 216, 216, 238, 254
- Géricault, Théodore (1791–1824) 315–17, 316, 446
- Germany 12, 90, 109–10, 116, 184–87, 203, 261, 276–77, 292, 306–8, 314, 325–26, 357, 367, 370–71, 376–77, 386–87, 406, 442–43, 462
- Gero, archbishop of Cologne 109, 110, 161
- Gesamtkunstwerk* 276, 368
- Ghana 264
- Ghent, Belgium 160
- Ghiberti, Lorenzo (1378–1455) 161–62, 161
- Ghirlandaio, Domenico (c. 1448–94) 174
- Giacometti, Alberto (1901–66) 403, 418, 418, 434
- Giambologna (1529–1608) 214, 215, 260, 404
- Gibbons, Grinling (1648–1721) 262
- Gillray, James (1756–1815) 304
- Giordano, Luca (1634–1705) 262
- Giorgione (c. 1477–1510) 188–89, 189, 192, 202, 235, 268
- Giotto (c. 1267–1337) 144–46, 145, 157, 161, 162, 164, 216, 387, 401
- Giovanni da Bologna *see*

Giambologna
 Giulio Romano (c. 1499–1546) 200
 glass 38, 122–23, 125
 globalization and related historical
 patterns 30, 100, 148, 181, 222, 265,
 293–94, 311, 324, 332, 365, 420, 426,
 456, 459
 Göbekli Tepe, site in Turkey 22, 22,
 30, 36, 41, 48
 Gobelins, tapestry workshops in Paris
 261, 273
 Goyer, Robert (1954–) 454
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von
 (1749–1832) 306
 Gogh, Vincent van (1853–90) 354–56,
 355, 357, 370
 gold and gilding 46–47, 97, 119, 183
 Golub, Leon (1922–2004) 442
 Gonzaga family 167
 González, Julio (1876–1942) 424
 González-Torres, Felix (1957–96) 459
 Gorky, Arshile (1904–48) 414
 Gothic, period in European art
 120–25, 141, 152, 154, 155, 158, 162
 ‘Gothick’ and Gothic revivals 304,
 307, 326–27, 338, 346
 Goths, Germanic tribe 94–95
 Govardhan (active c. 1596–1640) 234,
 235
 Goya, Francisco de (1746–1828) 297,
 297, 298–99, 300–304, 302, 303, 314,
 316, 398
 Graf, Urs (c. 1485–1529) 186
 Granada, Spain 154–55, 202
 Grandville (Jean Gérard) (1803–47)
 319–20, 320, 398
 graves *see* tomb art
 Greco, El (Domenikos
 Theotokopoulos, c. 1541–1614)
 218–19, 219, 244, 372
 Greece 61–72, 74–75, 80, 81, 91,
 94–97, 116–17, 141, 157, 218–19; *see*
also Byzantium
 Greek revivals 287, 288, 297–98, 304
 Greenberg, Clement (1909–94)
 414–15, 416, 429, 433–34
 Gregory, Pope 116
 Greuze, Jean-Baptiste (1725–1805)
 283
 Gropius, Walter (1883–1969) 390–91
 Gros, Antoine-Jean (1771–1835) 315
 Grosz, Georg (1893–1959) 386, 387
 ‘grotesque’ decoration 198
 Grünewald, Mathis (c. 1475–1528)
 187, 188, 203, 213
 Guatemala 100
 Guercino (Giovanni Francesco
 Barbieri, 1591–1666) 241–42, 242,
 269
 Gu Kaizhi (344–407) 107, 126
 Guo Xi (c. 1020–c. 1090) 126–29, 138
 Gupta empire in India 92, 102, 111
 Gursky, Andreas (1955–) 459
 Guston, Philip (1913–87) 440–42, 441,
 444, 447
 Gutai, Japanese art grouping 465
 Guttuso, Renato (1912–87) 416

H
 Haacke, Hans (1936–) 438
 Haarlem, Netherlands 245, 257
 Habsburgs, European dynasty 243,
 248, 261, 387
 Hagesandros 80
 Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (Byzantium)
 95, 195
 Halley, Peter (1953–) 452, 454
 Hals, Frans (c. 1581–1666) 242
 Hamilton, Richard (1922–) 423
 Hammershoi, Vilhelm (1864–1916)
 356, 356, 394
 Han, Chinese dynasty 76–78, 105, 106
 Han Xizai, *Night Revels of* 135

hand-axes 9–10, 12
 ‘Happenings’ 412
 Harappa 39, 39
 Hatoum, Mona (1952–) 452–53, 452
 Heartfield, John (1891–1968) 386
 Heem, Jan de (1606–84) 250–52, 251,
 270
 Hellenistic art 71–72, 80
 Hepworth, Barbara (1903–75) 403–5,
 403, 418
 heraldry 116
 Herat, Afghanistan 175
 Hesse, Eva (1936–70) 435–36, 435,
 439, 440
 Hindu traditions 72, 102–4, 112–13,
 130, 136, 137, 179, 210–12, 285, 286,
 333
 Hiroshige 320–21, 321, 323, 342, 343
 Hirschhorn, Thomas (1957–) 459
 Hirst, Damien (1965–) 454, 454, 455
 history paintings 270, 300, 342
 Hodges, William (1744–97) 284–85,
 284
 Hodgkin, Howard (1932–) 448
 Hogarth, William (1697–1764)
 280–82, 281, 327
 Hohlenstein-Stadel cave, Germany
 12, 12, 16, 28
 Hokusai (1760–1849) 320, 320, 325,
 342, 343
 Holbein, Hans (c. 1460–1534) 203–5,
 208
 Holman Hunt, William (1827–1910)
 325, 327–28, 339
 Holy Roman Empire 109–10, 116, 143
 Homer 62, 63, 74, 80
 homosexuality in art 63, 170, 226, 448
 Hopper, Edward (1882–1967) 394,
 396
 Horseshoe Canyon, Utah 17, 31, 182
 Houdon, Jean-Antoine (1741–1828)
 282, 288
 Houghton, Georgiana (1814–84) 377
 Hsieh Ho, Chinese art theorist
see Xie He
 Hüber, Wolf (c. 1485–1553) 186, 186,
 259, 306
 Huizong, Chinese emperor 136, 179
 human evolution 9–11
 humanism 160–62, 164, 166, 168, 170,
 174, 195, 197
 Hungary 200, 342, 368, 370, 429

I
 Ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022) 108, 125,
 154
 iconoclasm 98, 110, 114, 203, 205, 235
 ideal and idealism, as principles in art
 53–54, 66, 67, 86, 175, 225, 243, 298,
 312, 344, 347, 349, 351, 385–86, 391,
 403
 Ife, Nigeria 132, 207
 icons 117–9, 150, 155, 168, 174, 198
 illumination of manuscripts 98, 108,
 116, 128, 148, 152, 152–53, 160,
 175–79, 210
 illusionistic painting 144, 163, 216;
see also quadratura, trompe l’oeil
 imitation of nature 63, 64, 97, 144,
 376, 380, 383
 Impressionism 341–42, 344, 351, 353,
 360, 406
 Incarnation, doctrine of 110
 Incas 35, 224, 358
 ‘Incoherent Art’ 351, 382
 India 22, 63, 71, 72–74, 75, 92–94,
 102–4, 110–13, 130, 136, 210–12,
 222, 285–86, 332–34, 448–49, 456
 Indonesia 456; *see also* Java
 Indus civilization 39–40, 49, 72–74
 industrialization 282, 319, 320, 324,
 326, 346, 347, 350–51, 362, 365,
 378–80

Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique
 (1780–1867) 312, 313, 328, 344, 351,
 352
 installations and ‘environments’ 423,
 452–54
 Insular art 98–99, 99, 109n
 ‘interactive’ art 423, 432
 International Gothic 160
 ‘intimisme’ 362
 Ionic, order in architecture 66
 Iran 44, 46, 61, 109, 116, 125, 148, 154,
 235–37, 387; *see also* Persia
 Iraq 38, 40–41, 44–46, 108, 125
 Ireland 33, 98–99
 Iron Age 57
 Isfahan, Iran 235–37
 Islam 97, 108–9, 125–26, 136, 137,
 150, 154–55, 174–77, 179, 210–12,
 216, 218, 235–36, 286, 338, 374–76,
 456
 Israel 10, 58–59, 123–24; *see also* Jews
 Istanbul 216; *see also* Byzantium
 Italy 78–82, 98, 109, 141–47, 157,
 160–74, 188–203, 212–15, 216, 232,
 237–42, 262, 272, 274–76, 282, 292,
 297–98, 379, 387, 406, 422–23, 440
 ivory carving 12, 58, 72, 94
 Izik, Turkey 218

J
 jade 38, 38, 76, 267
 Jahangir, Mughal emperor 235
 Japan 26–28, 26, 129–30, 137, 138,
 222, 265, 294–95, 320–21, 367, 465;
 ‘japonisme’ 342–43, 353, 354, 362,
 363
 Japanese printmaking *see ukiyo-e*
 Java, Indonesia 102, 112, 179, 456
 Jerusalem 95, 97
 Jesuits 222, 266
 Jews 94, 97, 98, 246, 256, 393, 410,
 410, 415, 417; *see also* Israel
 John, Gwen (1876–1939) 366
 Johns, Jasper (1930–) 421, 433, 448
 Jokei 130, 143
 Jones, Owen (1809–74) 335, 338
 Jörn, Asger (1914–73) 419
 Judd, Donald (1928–94) 434, 435
 Jugendstil 368
 Julius II, Pope (1443–1513) 195, 197,
 199, 203, 225
 Jung, Carl Gustav (1875–1961) 408,
 414

K
 Kahlo, Frida (1907–54) 407
 Kapoor, Anish (1954–) 465, 465
 Kariye Camii, Istanbul 157
 Kamakura, era in Japanese history
 130
 Kandinsky, Vasily (1866–1944) 304,
 376–78, 377, 387, 391, 414
 Kauffmann, Angelica (1741–1807) 296
 Kelley, Mike (1954–) 454
 Kentridge, William (1955–) 458
 Khajuraho, India 111–12, 111, 115,
 286
 Khakhar, Bhupen (1934–2003)
 448–49, 448
 Khmers 130
 Kiefer, Anselm (1945–) 443–44, 444,
 459
 Kienholz, Ed (1927–94) 442, 442
 Kiff, Ken (1935–2001) 443
 kinetic art 423
 Kirchner, Ernst Ludwig (1880–1938)
 371, 372, 431
 kitsch 53, 405–6, 414, 433
 Kiyotada, Torii (active c. 1720–50)
 279, 280
 Klee, Paul (1879–1940) 391–92, 392,
 395, 398, 419, 424, 425

Klein, Yves (1928–62) 423–24
 Klimt, Gustav (1862–1918) 312,
 368–69, 369, 370
 Knossos, Crete 50
 Købke, Christian (1810–48) 315, 321
 Kobro, Katarzyna (1898–1951) 391n
 Kollwitz, Käthe (1867–1945) 367
 Kooning, Willem *de see* De Kooning,
 Willem
 Koons, Jeff (1955–) 454
 Korea 27, 129, 130, 267–68, 268
 Korin, Ogata (1658–1716) 265, 266
 Korzhev, Gely (1925–) 429
 kouros, Greek statue type 62, 63
 Krauss, Rosalind (1941–) 452
 Kupka, František (1871–1957) 377
 Kyoto 129

L
 Lam, Wifredo (1902–82) 408–9, 409,
 414, 439
 La Madeleine, France 16, 22
 ‘land art’ 436–37, 440
 landscape 22, 46, 79, 102, 104, 147–48,
 153, 174, 186, 207, 230, 252–53, 252,
 256, 284–85, 306–7, 328, 331–32,
 340, 341, 346, 359, 446
 Laocoön 80–81, 81, 195–96
 lapis lazuli 58
 Lartigue, Jacques-Henri (1894–1986)
 378, 380, 410
 Lascaux cave, France 13, 17
 Late Antique, historical period 91n
 Latin America 222–24, 244, 347, 422,
 432; *see also* Argentina, Brazil,
 Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela
 Lebanon 58
 Le Brun, Charles (1619–90) 260–61,
 260, 268
 Le Corbusier (1887–1965) 391n
 Léger, Fernand (1881–1955) 391n
 Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) 129,
 190–92, 193, 195, 198, 200, 231;
Mona Lisa 7, 192
 Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim (1729–81)
 306
 Lichtenstein, Roy (1923–97) 430
 Lindsafarne Gospels 99, 115
 Lippi, Filippo (c. 1406–69) 170
 Lisboa, Antonio (‘O Aleijadinho’,
 c. 1738–1814) 293–94, 293
 ‘literati’, Chinese social class 138–40,
 221, 222, 265–67, 336
 lithography 319
 London 203, 231, 261, 280–85, 294,
 304–6, 309–10, 326–28, 344, 347,
 379, 403, 416–17
 Long, Richard (1945–) 440
 Loos, Adolf (1870–1933) 369, 383
 Lorenzetti, Ambrogio (active 1317–48)
 146, 147, 147, 151, 162, 174, 401, 449
 Lorenzetti, Pietro (active c. 1306–45)
 162
 Lorrain, Claude *see* Claude Lorrain
 Los Angeles 442
 Louis, Morris (1912–62) 433
 Louvre, Musée du 281, 317
 Lysippos (active c. 370–300 bce) 71

M
 Macchiaioli, Italian painters’ group
 341
 Macke, August (1887–1914) 378
 Macedonia 71
 Machaut, Guillaume de
 (c. 1300–c. 1377) 152, 153, 157, 160
 Maciunas, George (1931–78) 437
 Madrid 231, 247–48, 276, 289, 299
 Madurai, India 222
 Magiciens de la Terre, exhibition in
 Paris 450, 456
 Magritte, René (1898–1967) 394–95,

- 396, 455
 Mahlangu, Esther (1935–) 456–57, 456
 Maillol, Aristide (1861–1944) 367
 Makonde culture, East Africa 426, 442
 Malevich, Kazimir (1878–1935) 383, 384, 388
 Mali 264
 Malta 28, 33, 226
 Mamallapuram, India 104, 222
 mana, Polynesian concept 335
 mandala, Buddhist symbol 102
 Manet, Edouard (1832–83) 339, 339–41, 343, 363, 367, 369, 371, 394, 437
 manga, Japanese graphic style 320
 Mannerism 181, 200, 203, 208, 215, 219, 231
 Mantegna, Andrea (c. 1430–1506) 166–68, 166, 190, 195, 216, 231
 Mantua, Italy 167, 200
 manuscripts *see* illumination
 Mao Zedong (1893–1976) 126, 429, 432
 Maoris 335
 marble 28–30, 62, 64, 69, 90–91, 98, 194, 196, 282, 296, 298, 347
 Marey, Etienne-Jules (1830–1904) 380
 marginalia 128, 153
 Marinetti, Filippo (1876–1944) 379
 marketing as theme in modern art *see* consumerism
 Marx, Karl (1818–83) and Marxism 324–25, 330
 Martini, Arturo (1889–1947) 406
 Martini, Simone (c. 1284–1344) 150–51, 153, 155, 160
 Masaccio (1401–28) 163–64, 166
 Mas d'Azil, France 16
 masks 24–25, 36, 182, 365
 mass media, as issue in modernity 319–20, 380, 390, 406, 429–30
 Matejko, Jan (1838–93) 346
 Matisse, Henri (1869–1954) 369–70, 369, 371, 376–77, 379, 381, 386, 406
 Matta-Clark, Gordon (1943–78) 437
 Mavo, Japanese art movement, 389–90, 390, 465
 Mayas, Mexican culture 35, 100–101, 115, 182, 334
 Mbuti 23–24
 McCarthy, Paul (1942–) 454
 medals 168
 Medici, dynasty in Florence 170, 172, 178, 192, 194, 199
 medieval, as historical label 91, 108, 111, 126, 130, 146
 megaliths 30–33
 Mehretu, Julie (1970–) 458–62, 459
 Melanesia 24–26, 30, 33, 62
 Mendieta, Ana (1948–85) 438–39, 439, 442, 446
 Mengs, Anton Raphael (1728–79) 288
 Menzel, Adolph (1815–1905) 324, 325–26, 330, 344, 362, 394
 Mesolithic era 18, 22
 metalworking 46–48
 Mexico 35, 36, 44, 54–55, 100–101, 181–83, 187, 346, 363, 387, 399–401; Mexican Muralists 401, 423
 Michelangelo (Michelangelo Buonarroti, c. 1475–1564) 81, 164, 192–97, 194, 196, 198–200, 212, 214–15, 221, 238, 306, 360–61, 440
 Mignot, Pierre-Philippe (active c. 1765) 287, 288, 292
 Milan, Italy 161, 190, 192, 379
 Millais, John Everett (1829–96) 327–28
 Miller, Lee (1907–77) 410
 Millet, Jean-François (1814–75) 330
 Ming, Chinese dynasty 140, 221, 265
 minimalism 30, 385–86, 434–35, 440
 Miró, Joan (1893–1983) 395–98, 397, 414
 misericords 152
 miniature, art of 99, 152–53, 160, 210–12, 235; *see also* illumination of manuscripts
 Minoans *see* Aegean art
 Moche culture, Peru 86–88, 87, 183
 modernity and modernism 238, 291–94, 311, 326, 336–39, 342, 344, 350–51, 360, 383, 387, 389, 398, 403, 413, 414 ('modernism' in Greenberg's formulation), 417, 433, 437, 438, 448
 Modersohn-Becker, Paula (1876–1907) 366–67, 366, 410
 Mogao caves, China 105–6, 122
 Moké, Congolese painter (1950–) 449
 Moldova 28
 MoMA *see* Museum of Modern Art, New York
 monasticism 98–99, 104, 113, 116
 Mondrian, Piet (1872–1944) 391, 392, 392, 395, 404, 413
 Monet, Claude (1840–1926) 340–42, 340, 344, 351, 360, 362, 407
 Mongols 137, 138, 140, 148, 157, 210, 266
 Monreale, Sicily 116, 118, 144, 154
 montage 386, 458
 Montreal, Canada 427
 Moore, Henry (1898–1986) 404, 418, 425
 Morandi, Giorgio (1890–1964) 392–93, 406
 Morisot, Berthe (1841–95) 367
 Morocco 97, 261, 374
 Moronobu, Hishikawa (c. 1620–94) 279
 Morris, Robert (1931–) 434, 434, 451, 453
 Morris, William (1834–96) 346–47, 353, 368, 404
 mosaic 80, 95, 96, 97, 116–17, 144, 154
 Moscow 117, 155–57, 218, 379, 403
 mosques 97, 108, 125, 218, 236
 mudras, gestures in Buddhism 92
 Mughals, South Asian dynasty 210–12, 222, 235, 285
 Mukhina, Vera (1889–1953) 406, 406
 Munch, Edvard (1863–1944) 356–57, 358, 367, 370
 Muñoz, Juan (1953–2001) 458, 458
 muqarnas, vaulting technique 125, 154
 Mu Qi 137, 169, 466
 Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901–77) 389–90, 390, 406
 Murillo, Bartolomé (1618–82) 262
 Museum of Modern Art, New York 401–2, 409, 413, 420, 432
 museums 317, 334, 365, 371
 music, in relation to visual art 255–56, 260, 286, 347, 352, 368, 391
 Muybridge, Eadweard (1830–1904) 349–50, 349, 380, 398
 Myceneans *see* Aegean art
 mythological painting 212–13
- N**
 Nabis, French artistic movement 354, 362
 Naples, Italy 161, 178, 226, 229, 252, 262
 Napoleon I, French emperor 298, 300, 307, 310, 311, 312, 316
 Naram-sin, stele of 44–46, 45, 59
 narrative art 46, 59, 144, 151, 189, 342, 380
 nationalism 125, 157, 281, 293, 302, 307, 311, 318, 335, 346, 347, 353, 401, 448
 nature and naturalism, as artistic principles 12–17, 18, 22, 36, 39, 53, 63, 86, 92, 110, 132, 135, 154, 158, 160, 225, 226, 235, 243, 289, 314, 341, 359
 Nauman, Bruce (1941–) 437, 454
 Naumburg, Germany 140–41, 144, 168
 Nazarenes, German artists' group 307
 Nazism 406, 408–10, 413, 443
 Ndebele, South African culture 456–57
 Nefertiti, portrait bust of 52, 54
 Neolithic 30, 31
 Neoclassicism 287, 292, 296–98, 299–301, 302, 307, 312, 344, 347, 406
 neo-conceptualism 454
 neo-expressionism 443
 Neo-Geo 452, 454, 458
 neo-romanticism 410
 Netherlands 158, 184, 187–88, 202, 231, 232, 242–43, 250–51, 270; *see also* Dutch, Flanders, Belgium
 Neue Sachlichkeit 387, 417
 Neumann, Balthasar (1687–1753) 276
 new age spiritualities 304, 377
 New Ireland 24–26, 371
 Newman, Barnett (1905–70) 414
 New Mexico 100
 New York 331–32, 347, 370, 383–84, 401, 409, 413–16 ('New York School'), 419–22, 417, 432–36, 438, 440–42, 446, 448, 451–52
 New Zealand 30, 335
 Niaux, France 16
 Niccolò dell'Arca (active 1462–94) 169–70, 169
 Nicholas of Verdun (1130–1205) 122
 Nicholson, Ben (1894–1982) 404, 432
 Nicholson, William (1872–1949) 394*n*
 Nicépe, Nicéphore (1765–1833) 322, 323
 Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900) 357, 361, 368, 370, 394
 Nigeria 38, 85, 132, 206–7
 Niigata, Japan 26
 Nike of Samothrace 70, 71–72
 Nimrud, site in Iraq 58, 61
 Nineveh, site in Iraq 59–61
 Nitsch, Hermann (1938–) 437
 Ni Zan (1301–74) 138, 186, 265
 Nok culture, Nigeria 85–86, 88, 132, 207
 nomads 57, 58, 75
 Normans 115–16
 North Africa 58, 82, 90, 91, 374
 Norway 308, 356–57
 Notre-Dame, Paris 122
 novels 129, 281, 315, 327
 nude, as theme in art 62–63, 72, 161–62, 164, 170, 202, 225, 246, 195, 314, 315, 349, 367
 Nussbaum, Felix (1904–44) 410, 411
- O**
 Oceania 365, 366; *see also* Melanesia, Polynesia, Tahiti, New Zealand
 oil painting 159–60, 168–69, 172, 189, 192, 202, 305, 311, 341
 O'Keeffe, Georgia (1887–1986) 384
 Oldenburg, Claes (1929–) 421
 Olmecs 34, 35–36, 38, 55, 100, 182, 183
 Oppenheim, Dennis (1938–) 436–37, 437, 446
 Oppenheim, Meret (1913–85) 406
 Op (optical) art 423, 432–33, 433
 optical devices 159*n*, 203–4, 250, 251–52, 308
 orders of architecture 66, 162, 216
 'oriental', as cultural category 67, 312, 318, 328
- Orozco, José Clemente (1883–1949) 401
 Orpen, William (1878–1931) 394*n*
 Orthodox Church 116–17, 155–57
 Otto, Holy Roman Emperor 110
 Ottoman Turks 168, 174, 216–18, 232, 311, 387
- P**
 Pacheco, Ana María (1943–) 458, 459
 Padua, Italy 144, 166
 Pahari ('hill') painting 285, 286
 Paik, Nam June (1932–2006) 437, 454
 'painterly' effects 189, 247, 339, 394
 Pakistan 39, 92
 papacy, the 109, 261
 Palaeolithic 10, 12–17, 30, 404
 Palaiologoi, Byzantine dynasty 157
 Palermo, Sicily 116
 Palladio, Andrea (1508–80) 216, 238, 260, 282
 Pallavas, dynasty in southern India 104
 Pane, Gina (1939–90) 437
 Pantheon, Rome 82
 paper 106, 129
 Papua New Guinea 24–26, 25
 Pardo de Lagos, Lázaro (active c. 1650) 224, 224, 300
 Paris 119, 120, 122–23, 143, 152–53, 231, 256, 260–61, 268–70, 273–74, 287, 292, 294, 299–301, 328–30, 339–44, 351–54, 366, 387, 393 ('school of Paris'), 408, 413, 424, 438
 Parthenon, Athens 66–67, 67, 81
 pastoral 79, 153*n*, 252, 269, 285, 298
 Patel, Pierre (c. 1648–1707) 258, 259
 Pater, Walter (1839–94) 346–47
 Pazardzik, Bulgaria, 'lady of' 27–28, 27, 438
 Penone, Giuseppe (1947–) 440, 440, 455–56
peredvizhniki, Russian artists' group 345–46
 performance art 389, 437, 438
 Pergamon 80
 Persepolis 65–67, 66, 236
 Persia 61, 65–67, 66, 71, 75, 109, 216, 311–12; *see also* Iran
 Persian painting 148–50, 174–77, 210–12, 232, 311–12
 perspective 13, 66, 128, 146, 162, 164, 166, 168, 198, 216, 279, 280, 333, 333
 Peru 35–6, 47, 86–7, 100, 183, 222–24
 Petrararch, Italian poet 160, 164, 197
 Pheidias 66
 phenomenology 434*n*
 Philadelphia, USA 349–50
 philosophy, influences on art 51, 63, 74, 215, 255, 260
 Phoenicians 58, 59, 61, 62, 75, 91, 108
 photography 20, 226, 249, 323, 323–24, 326, 332, 333, 348, 341, 349–50, 356, 378, 380, 394, 410, 420, 429–30, 446–47
 'photorealist' painting 434
 Picabia, Francis (1879–1953) 383
 Picasso, Pablo (1881–1973) 13, 219, 335, 371–74, 373, 380–82, 381, 382, 386, 387, 395, 404, 407–8, 408, 414, 424, 437, 438
 Pictorialism, photographic movement 384
 'Pictures', New York art grouping 446
 Piero della Francesca (c. 1415–92) 167–68, 167, 190, 198, 352, 416
 Piles, Roger de (1635–1709) 268
 Piper, John (1903–92) 416
 Piranesi, Giovanni Battista (1720–78) 278–79, 278, 282, 283, 304
 Pisa, Italy 143

Pisanello (c. 1395–c. 1455) 165*n*, 168
 Pisano, Nicola (c. 1220–c. 1284) and Giovanni (c. 1245–c. 1319) 142, 143, 144, 151
plein-air painting 328, 341, 358, 366–67
 Pliny 80
 poetry, in relation to painting 79, 107, 188, 189
 Pointillism 352
 Poland 141, 232, 346, 391*n*, 429
 Polke, Sigmar (1941–) 430–31, 432, 443, 444
 Pollock, Jackson (1912–56) 266, 412, 413–14, 435, 438, 446
 polychromy in sculpture 404
 Polykleitos (active c. 450–c. 415 bce) 68, 80
 Polynesia 31–33, 31, 284, 285, 335
 Pompeii, Italy 79–80, 81, 278, 287
 Pontormo, Jacopo (1494–1556) 200, 201
 Pop Art 422, 430, 432, 433, 444
 popes *see* papacy
 pornography *see* erotica
 portraits 36, 42–44, 74, 75, 85–89, 89, 141, 245, 168, 203–4, 233, 233, 280, 282, 312, 350, 380
 Portugal 188, 206, 210, 222, 235, 293, 311
 Posada, José Guadalupe (1851–1913) 363, 363, 387
 Post-Impressionism 370*n*, 406
 postmodernism 446, 452
 Poussin, Nicolas (1594–1665) 253–57, 254, 255, 260, 287, 347, 408
 Pozzo, Andrea (1642–1709) 262
 Prague 154, 215
 Praxiteles (c. 400–c. 330 bce) 68, 72, 80, 105, 122, 161
 Pre-Raphaelites 327–28, 330, 346
 'primitive' and 'archaic', as modern cultural categories 20, 25, 81, 285, 291, 294, 304, 306, 312, 318, 335, 353, 366, 367, 374, 379, 408, 410
 prints and printmaking 40, 106, 185, 235, 246–47, 247, 187, 278–81, 280, 281, 302, 302, 305, 318–21, 324
 Probus, Roman emperor (c. 232–282) 89
 Protestantism 203, 204, 205, 210, 244, 246, 256, 280, 315, 330
 Provence 353, 354–55, 357–59
 Prussia 276, 325–26, 344
pueblo cultures in North America 100
 Pugin, Augustus (1812–52) 326
 Punjab, India 286
 putti 172
 Puvis de Chavannes, Pierre (1824–98) 353
 pyramids (Egypt) 30, 42, 291

Q
 Qajars, Persian / Iranian dynasty 311, 312, 387
qi, Chinese concept 77, 107, 266
 Qing, Chinese dynasty 265–67
 Qin Shihuangdi, emperor of China 75, 76
quadratura, painted architecture 216, 238
 Qur'an, the 97, 108–9, 175, 210

R
 Rajasthan 333–34
 Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483–1520) 192, 197–98, 197, 200, 225, 226, 246, 254, 273, 312, 327
rasa, concept in Indian art 111, 286
 Rauschenberg, Robert (1925–) 420–22, 421, 427, 433, 435, 436, 437, 462

Ravenna 94–95, 95, 119
 Rayonism, Russian art movement 379
 ready-mades 382, 421, 454
 realism, as artistic principle 53, 60, 135, 140, 141, 160, 162, 166, 170, 175, 225, 241, 249, 315, 318, 324, 367, 380, 394; 'Realism' and 'Social Realism', 19th-century artistic allegiances 330, 344–45, 349–50, 351, 352, 387
 red-figure, style in Greek vase-painting 64
 Redon, Odilon (1840–1916) 353
 Regionalism, American art movement 401
 religion and art 11, 17–18, 22, 30, 41, 62–63, 89, 92, 94, 126, 146, 294, 302, 306; *see also* Buddhism, Christianity, Hindu traditions, Islam
 Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69) 242, 245–47, 245, 247, 314, 354, 394
 Renaissance, period label in European art 160, 164–65, 168, 170, 177–78, 203, 219, 225; High Renaissance 181; Late Renaissance 181, 216
 René d'Anjou (1409–80) 177–78
 Renoir, Auguste (1841–1919) 341–42, 342, 344, 370
 Ren Xiong (1820–57) 336–38, 337, 339, 446
 Repin, Ilya (1844–1930) 345–46, 345, 387
 Reverón, Armando (1889–1954) 407
 Reynolds, Joshua (1723–92) 282, 284
 Rheims, France 120–22, 141
 Rhodes, Greece 62, 71, 71
 rhythm, as artistic principle 67, 68
 Ribera, Jusepe de (1591–1652) 229, 242
 Ricci, Sebastiano (1659–1734) 262
 Richier, Germaine (1904–59) 418
 Richter, Gerhard (1932–) 430, 443, 443, 462
 Riley, Bridget (1931–) 432, 433
rinpa, Japanese painting style 266
 Rivera, Diego (1886–1957) 399–401, 400, 423
 Riza Abbasi (c. 1565–1635) 235, 242
 Roberts, Tom (1856–1931) 346
 Rococo / rocaille 273, 274–77, 278, 279, 287, 288, 292, 298, 338, 368
 Rodchenko, Alexandr (1891–1956) 389, 406
 Rodin, Auguste (1840–1917) 360–61, 361, 362, 367
 Romanesque 114–16, 120, 143
 Romania 82, 385, 405
 Rome (ancient) 72, 78–82, 88–92, 94, 97, 114, 115, 143, 144, 304; from the Renaissance onwards 195, 203, 226, 229, 237–41, 252–56, 261, 277–78, 287, 297
 Romanticism 252, 306–7, 317, 318, 324, 326, 338, 344, 346, 351, 352, 362, 371
 Rosenberg, Harold (1906–78) 421
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel (1828–82) 327*n*
 Rosso, Medardo (1858–1928) 360
 Rothko, Mark (1903–70) 415–16, 415, 433
 Roublilac, Louis-François (1702–62) 282, 283
 roundel (or *tondo*) 197, 252, 254
 Rousseau, Henri ('Le Douanier', 1844–1910) 370
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712–78) 285, 287
 Rousseau, Théodore (1812–67) 328
 Royal Academy, London 282, 285, 305, 310
 Rubens, Peter Paul (1577–1640) 231–32, 232, 238, 242, 246, 248, 250,

255, 268, 273, 316
 Rublev, Andrei (c. 1360–c. 1430) 155–57, 156, 346
 Ruff, Thomas (1958–) 462–65, 463
 Ruysdael, Jacob van (c. 1628–82) 256, 257, 283
 Rukupo, Rahruihi (c. 1800–73) 334, 335
 Ruskin, John (1819–1900) 327, 331, 346, 362
 Russia 117, 200, 218, 232, 288–9, 311, 321, 344–46, 376–77, 379, 387–89, 429
 Ryder, Albert Pinkham (1847–1917) 370
S
sacro monte, 'holy hill' 168, 292–93
 Safavids, Persian dynasty 179, 235, 311
 Saint-Gaudens, Augustus (1848–1907) 348–49, 348
 St Ives, England 432
 St Petersburg, Russia 288–9, 344–45, 382, 388
 St Peter's Basilica, Rome 195, 238
 Sainte-Chapelle, Paris 122–25, 123, 144
 Saint-Phalle, Niki de (1930–2002) 431
 'Salon', annual Paris art exhibition 281, 299, 312, 316, 319, 328, 330, 338, 340–41, 360; Salon des Refusés 340–41
 samurai, class in Japanese society 130, 138, 143
 Sanchi, India 72–74, 73, 92
 Santiago de Compostela, Spain 114, 116
 Santiniketan, India 448
 Sapi, West African culture 206
 sarcophagi 90, 91, 94, 109, 126
 Sarnath, India 92
 Scandinavia 115, 314, 356; *see also* Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Vikings
 Scotland 33, 57, 99, 368; *see also* Britain
 Schiele, Egon (1890–1918) 368, 371
 Schlegel, Friedrich (1772–1829) 306, 307
 Schnabel, Julian (1951–) 443
 Schwitters, Kurt (1887–1948) 389
 science, influences on art 71, 78, 108, 144, 162, 191–92, 251–52, 270, 283, 284, 290, 292, 351–52
 screen paintings 135, 265, 266, 294
 scrolls 91, 107, 126, 135, 146
 sculpture, conceptions of 12, 42–43, 62–64, 72, 90–91, 122, 197, 215, 241, 298, 360–61, 382, 404, 418, 424, 440
 Scythians 57, 58, 65, 71, 99, 108
 seals 40
 'Secession', Austrian / German art movement 368
 self-portraits 44, 168, 184, 184, 246, 266, 267–68, 335, 407, 441
 Seljuks 125
 semiotics *see* signs
 sentimentality, as 18th-century vogue 283, 295
 Serbia 157
 Serra, Richard (1939–) 418*n*, 451–52, 451
 Sérusier, Paul (1864–1927) 354
 Seurat, Georges (1859–91) 351–52, 352, 370, 379
 Seville, Spain 200, 244, 262
 Shah Jahan, Mughal emperor 236–37
Shahnama, poem by Ferdowsi 148, 179
 shamanism 24, 39, 374, 432; *see also* trance
 Shang, Chinese dynasty 48

Shanghai, China 336–38, 429
 Sharaku (active 1794–95) 294
 Shen Zhou (1427–1509) 221
 Sher-Gil, Amrita (1913–41) 448–49
 Sherman, Cindy (1954–) 446, 446
 Shinto 129
 Shitao 266–67, 267, 306
Shiva Nataraja 112, 112–13, 222
 shopping, as theme in modern art *see* consumerism
 Sicily 116, 226
 Sickert, Walter (1860–1942) 429–30
 Siena 141, 144, 146–47, 151, 153, 160
 Sierra Leone 206
 signatures 44, 100, 126
 signs and semiotics in modern art 381, 382, 391, 395
 Silk Road 75, 105
 silkscreen printing 412, 430
 Sinan (c. 1500–88) 218
 Siqueiros, David Alfaro (1896–1975) 401, 423
 skin decoration, 11, 25, 132, 284, 334, 335
 Skopas (active mid-4th century bce) 68, 161
 Sluter, Claus (c. 1360–1406) 158
 Smith, David (1906–65) 424–25, 426, 434, 451
 Smithson, Robert (1938–73) 436, 436
 Social Realism *see under* realism
 Socialist Realism, 20th-century art doctrine 406, 429
 Song, Chinese dynasty 126, 136, 137, 138
 sonic art 453
 Soroka, Grigory (1823–64) 321
 Sotatsu (active c. 1600–c. 1640) 265
 Soto, Jesús-Rafael (1923–2005) 423
 South Africa 11, 456–58
 South America 30, 35–36, 85
 South Asia 36–37, 404; *see also* India, Pakistan
 Soutine, Chaim (1893–1943) 393–94, 393, 417, 420
 Souza, Francis (1924–) 449
 Spain 13, 97, 108, 116, 141, 184, 188, 202, 218–19, 242–44, 247–49, 272, 292, 298–99, 395–98, 407–8
 Spencer, Stanley (1891–1959) 407
 spiritualism *see* new age spiritualities
 Sri Lanka 112
 stained glass 122–23, 144, 306, 346, 353
 Stalin, Josef (1878–1953) 117
 Stasov, Vladimir (1824–1906) 345, 346
 statues 43, 62, 94, 97, 110, 170, 214, 282, 289, 347–48, 360, 404
 stele 44
 Stella, Frank (1936–) 457
 stereoscope 332
 Still, Clyfford (1904–1980) 414
 still life 74, 207–8, 250–51, 270, 356, 380
 stoicism 74, 255
 Stone Age: 'Old Stone Age' *see* Palaeolithic; 'New Stone Age' *see* Neolithic
 Stonehenge 30
 Strand, Paul (1890–1976) 383–84, 384, 389, 394, 410
 Strasbourg 141
 Strzemieski, Władysław (1893–1952) 391*n*
 Stubbs, George (1724–1806) 284
stupa, Buddhist symbol 74, 92, 102
 style, as artistic value 41, 200, 202
 Sublime, the 257, 283, 285, 296, 307, 331, 332, 346
 Subramanyan, K. G. (1924–) 449
 Sufism 137, 154, 177, 179, 210, 235
 Sugar, abbot of Saint-Denis 120, 122, 162
 Sultan-Muhammad 178, 179

Sumer 40–41, 40, 44, 46, 49, 59
 Suprematism, Russian art movement 383, 384, 388
 Surrealism 25, 164, 395–99, 403, 404, 408, 410, 413, 414, 418, 423, 424
 Sutherland, Graham (1903–80) 416, 416
 Suzhou, China 221
 Sweden 22, 232, 292
 Switzerland 203
 symbolism, as general condition for art 10–11, 27, 252, 294, 297, 323, 356; Symbolism, 19th-century art movement 353–54, 368, 370, 394, 395, 406, 448
 synaesthesia 377, 379; *see also* music in relation to art
 synthetic pigments and compounds *see* chemistry
 Syria 58, 82, 97, 108, 108*n*, 116

T
 Tabriz, Iran 148, 216
 Tacca, Pietro (1577–1640) 289
 Tagore, Rabindranath (1861–1941) 448
 Tahiti 284–85, 353
 Taj Mahal, Agra, India 236–37
 Tang, Chinese dynasty 105–7, 126, 136
 Tantra 111
 Tanzania 426
 Taoism *see* Daoism
 tapestries 75, 75, 153–54, 273–74, 346
 Tapiés, Antoni (1923–) 419
 Tara (active 1836–68) 332–33, 333
 Tassili, Algeria 8, 21–22, 21, 41, 49
 Tatlin, Vladimir (1885–1953) 388–89, 388, 403
 tattooing *see* skin decoration
 Tehching Hsieh (1950–) 465
 Tehran 311
 tempera, paint medium 117, 151, 159, 172
 theatre, influences on art 71, 140, 241, 279–80
 theosophy *see* new age spiritualities
 Thera, Greece 49
 Thoré, Théophile (1807–69) 249, 356
 Thrace (Bulgaria) 65, 71
 Tiepolo, Giambattista (1696–1770) 274–75, 274, 278, 302
 Tintoretto, Jacopo (1696–1770) 218
 Tiravanija, Rirkrit (1961–) 459
 Titian (Tiziano Vecellio, c. 1485–1576) 202–3, 204, 212–14, 213, 231, 238
 Tjapaltjarri, Tim Leura (c. 1929–84) and Clifford Possum (1932–2002) 450, 450
 Tlatilco, site in Mexico 54, 55, 86, 182
 Tokyo 265, 389–90, 438, 465; *see also* Edo
 Toledo, Spain 218, 244
 tomb and funereal art 28, 38–39, 41, 65, 67, 69, 76–78, 125, 218, 264, 300–301, 348–49, 454
 tondo *see* roundel
 Torigiani, Pietro (1472–1528) 200
 totem poles 24, 36, 335
 Totonac, Mexican culture 182–83, 183, 197
 Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de (1864–1901) 363
 tourism 307, 308, 332, 406; tourist art 206, 426
 Trajan's Column, Rome 82, 83, 91, 102
 trance, as source of art 17, 18, 25, 36, 47, 413
 Transavanguardia, Italian art grouping 443

trompe l'oeil 216, 331; *see also* illusionistic painting
 troubadour style 319
 Turkey 22, 28, 200, 232, 374; *see also* Ottomans
 Turkmenistan 46, 75
 Turner, Joseph Mallord William (1775–1851) 309, 310, 323, 326, 344
 Tutankhamun 54, 404
 Tuva 57
 Tuymans, Luc (1958–) 462, 465
 tympanum 113–14

U
 Uccello, Paolo (c. 1397–1475) 165*n*, 166
 Udaipur, India 333
 U-fan, Lee (1936–) 464, 465–66
 ukiyo-e, Japanese style of printmaking 65, 279–80, 294–95, 320–21, 342–43, 353, 355
 Ukraine 28
 Umayyads 97
 Umbria, Italy 167, 167, 197
 United States of America 288, 310, 321, 330–32, 347–50, 394, 399–403, 419–22, 424–25, 440–42
 unity of the arts 262; *see also* *Gesamtkunstwerk*
 Uopie, West African carver (active c. 1900–25) 365, 365, 382, 413
 urban society in relation to art 65, 110, 120, 122, 141, 226, 245, 279–82, 294, 338, 342–43
 Urbino, Italy 168, 172, 197, 198
 Utamaro (1753–1806) 294, 295, 343

V
 Valadon, Suzanne (1865–1938) 366
 Vallotton, Félix (1865–1925) 363
 Vancouver, Canada 446
vanitas still life 251
 Varma, Ravi (1848–1906) 333
 Vasari, Giorgio (1511–74) 164, 192*n*, 215, 225
 'vases', Greek ceramics 64, 65, 72, 312
 Velasco, José Maria (1840–1912) 346
 Velázquez, Diego (1599–1660) 247–49, 248, 249, 270, 339, 356, 416
 Velde, Henry van de (1863–1957) 368
 Venezuela 407, 423
 Venice 136, 141, 172–74, 188–89, 202, 208, 216, 218, 261, 274–76, 284, 318
 Venice Biennale 427, 454
 Vermeer, Johannes (1632–75) 249–50, 249, 270, 356, 391
 Veronese (Paolo Caliari, 1528–88) 216, 217, 239, 276
 Versailles, France 258, 259–61
 Vézelay, France 113–14, 113, 116
 video, as medium 7, 437, 438, 451, 453, 457
 Vienna 261, 276, 368–69, 387
 Vigée-Lebrun, Elisabeth (1755–1842) 296
 vignettes 79, 82, 94, 319–20
 Vikings 109
Virgin of Vladimir 117–19, 119, 219, 289
 virtual reality 292
 Vitruvius 216
 Vorticism, British art movement 379
 Vuchetich, Yevgeny (1908–74) 347, 429
 Vuillard, Edouard (1868–1940) 362–63, 362

W
wabi sabi, Japanese aesthetic 320

Wall, Jeff (1946–) 446–47, 447
 Wals, Gottfried (c. 1590–c. 1640) 252, 252, 254, 308
 Warhol, Andy (1928–87) 7, 430, 431, 434, 448, 454
 Wari culture, Peru 86
 watercolour painting 175, 309, 310
 Watteau, Antoine (1684–1721) 268–70, 269, 276
 weaving 75, 86, 125, 183, 273
 welded sculpture 424–25
 Wen Zhengming (1470–1559) 220, 221
 West, Benjamin (1738–1820) 288
 Weyden, Rogier van der (c. 1399–1464) 168–69, 168
 Whistler, James Abbott McNeill (1834–1903) 340, 356, 362
 Wilde, Oscar (1854–1900) 346, 347
 Wilson, Richard (c. 1713–82) 453–54, 453
 Winckelmann, Johann Joachim (1717–68) 287, 295, 304
 Wols (1913–1951) 418
 women, images of 28, 72; art by *see* feminism *and* gender
 wood, as sculptural material 86, 110, 130, 132, 262, 264, 335, 353
 Wood, Grant (1891–1942) 401
 woodcuts 106, 268, 279, 319, 370, 429
 Wren, Christopher (1632–1723) 261
 Wright of Derby, Joseph (1734–97) 282–83, 284, 295, 306
 Wu Hufan (1894–1968) 428, 429
 'Wu school', Chinese painters' grouping 221
 Würzburg, Germany 276
 Wyeth, Andrew (1917–) 416

X
 Xie He, Chinese art theorist (active c. 500–535 ce) 107

Y
 yBas ('young British artists') 454, 458
yoga 39
 Yoruba culture, Nigeria 132, 336
 Yuan, Chinese dynasty 138
 Yun Du-So (1668–1710) 267, 268

Z
 Zadkine, Ossip (1890–1967) 418
 Zamosc, Poland 232
 Zande, Central African culture 374, 374, 410, 426
 Zen 137, 137–38, 421, 424, 437, 466
 Zeng Hao (1963–) 465
 Zeuxis 79
 Zhu Da (1626–1705) 267
 Ziolkowski, Korczak (1908–1982) 347
 Zumurrud Khatun, shrine of 124, 125–26, 154
 Zurbarán, Francisco de (1598–1664) 244, 262, 304
 Zurich, Switzerland 386
 Zwiefalten, Germany 276–77, 277