

Gardner's *Art Through the Ages*, 12e

Introduction:
The Subjects and Vocabulary of *Art History*

ART & HISTORY

- **Art**, whether made in the past, is part of the PRESENT. As a *persisting event*.
 - You can see and touch art
 - Cannot see or touch “vanished human events”
 - Not necessary to know specifics of a work’s creation [*that is; it’s history*] to appreciate it.

Remember: Museums as places to view art are a modern phenomenon. [*cf. Kristeller The Modern System of the Arts*]

Most art before the modern era was created for a specific patron and/or place to fill a particular purpose or function.

- The role of ART HISTORY is, in part to discover the historical context of a work of art.

Art History in the 21st Century

- The range of objects art historians studies includes:
 - Objects from the past not made to be viewed as “art”
 - Modern creations that use computer generation and/or conceptual elements as well as “performance elements”. [*“performance” being defined as non-object, ephemeral*]
- Art Historians ask the same questions whether their definition of art is narrow or inclusive.
 - How OLD is it?
 - What is its STYLE?
 - What is its SUBJECT?
 - Who MADE it?
 - Who PAID for it?

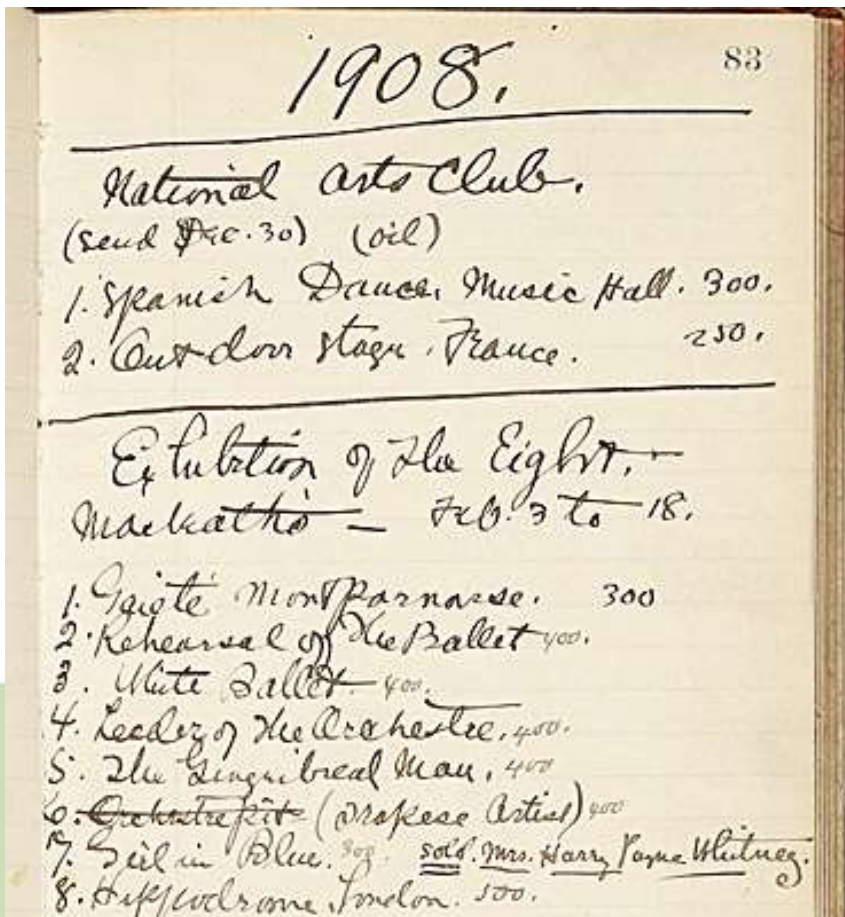
HOW OLD IS IT?

- Establish a Chronology through:
 - *Physical evidence*: Materials – when used.
 - Oil paint vs. tempera
 - Methods of casting
 - Bronze vs. Resin
 - *Documentary evidence*, such as official records
 - *Visual evidence*: the style of dress, furniture, hairstyle from a specific period.
 - *Stylistic evidence*: the art historian's domain, but more subjective.

HOW OLD IS IT?

- Establish a Chronology through:
 - *Documentary evidence*, such as official records.

examples of an artist's records: George Caitlin, American (1796–1872)



HOW OLD IS IT?

- Establish a Chronology through:
Visual evidence: the style of dress, furniture, hairstyle from a specific period.



Dame à la mode de 1605.
(Recueil de Gaignieres, t. X.)



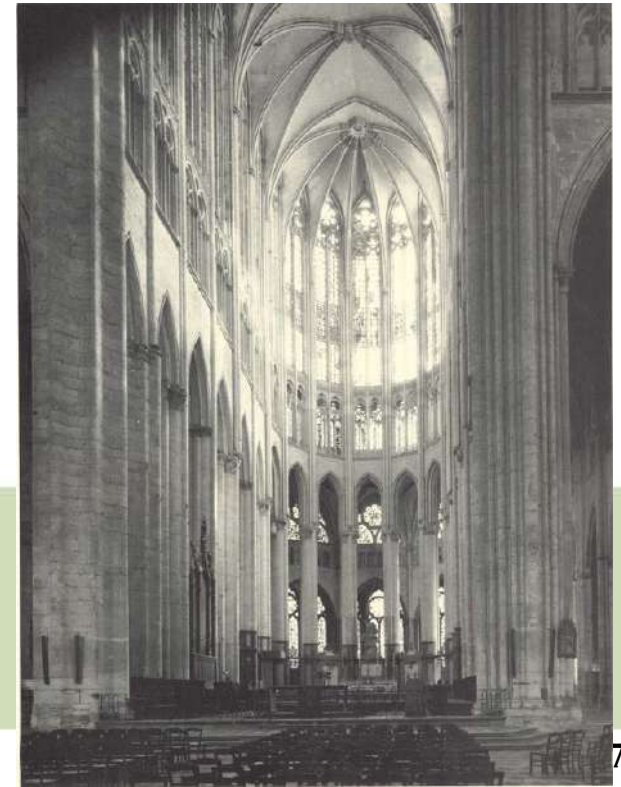
Dame veuve de la fin du règne d'Henri IV.
(Recueil de Gaignieres, t. X.)



David f. 1787 ANNO SEPTEM...

STYLE

- PERIOD Style
 - Distinct time period, usually within a specific culture, but not all display uniformity.
- REGIONAL Style
 - Variations in Style tied to geography: *Ex.* Italian vs. French Gothic.



STYLE

- PERSONAL STYLE
 - Variations in Style tied to individual artists in the same time and place.



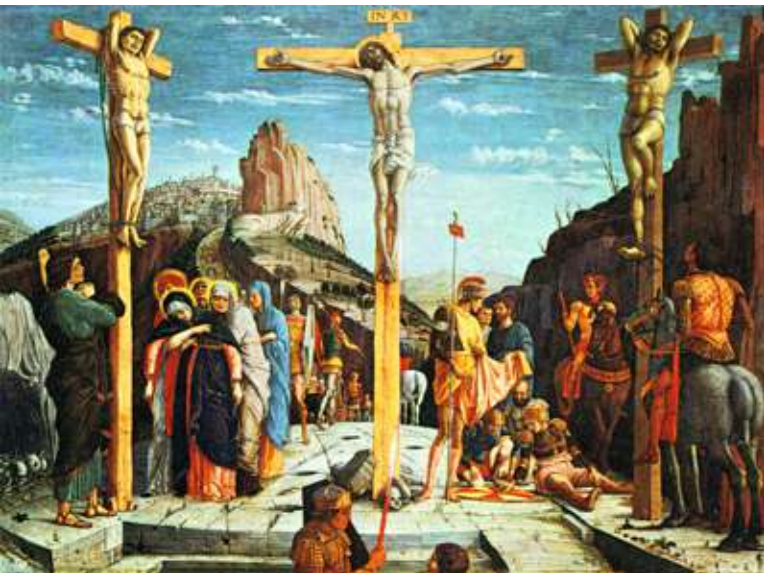
O'Keefe



Shahn

WHAT IS ITS SUBJECT?

- **The narrative:** people, time, place & story
 - Religious, Historical, Mythological, Genre, Portraiture, Landscape, Still Life.



WHAT IS ITS SUBJECT?

- **Subject** *continued* -- **Iconography**: Study of SYMBOLS:
 - Images that stand for other images or represent ideas. *Ex:* the Christian cross. Or scale of justice



t a person may ha

angelists
gle

Luke-**ox**
Mark-**lion**
Matthew-
winged



WHAT IS ITS SUBJECT?

- Another example of the 4 evangelists from Arles, France. *John-eagle*Luke-ox*Mark-lion*Matthew-winged man*



Can draw conclusions from iconography & subject in the Shahn -

WHO MADE IT?

- Signing and Dating
- Personal Style
- By Grouping Works: [*may not even have a name.*]
 - Can reconstruct careers this way
- By “Schools” – chronological, geographical and stylistic similarity. *Ex.* School of Utrecht



Van_Honthorst



Baburen

ter_Brugghen



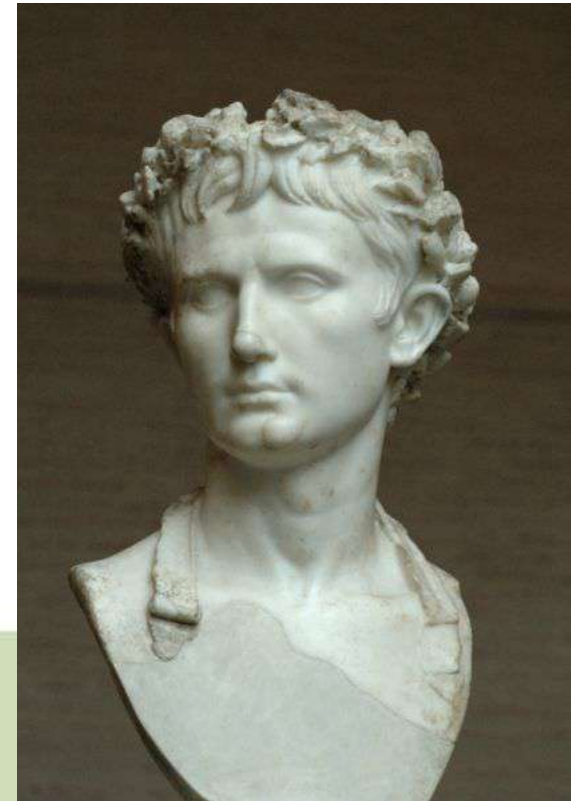
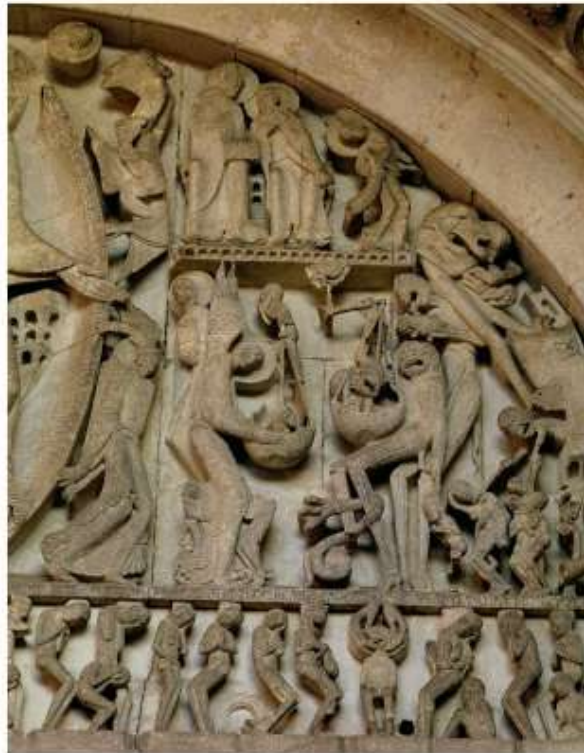
WHO PAID FOR IT?

- **The Role of the PATRON**

- Portraiture: Augustus was always young ☺

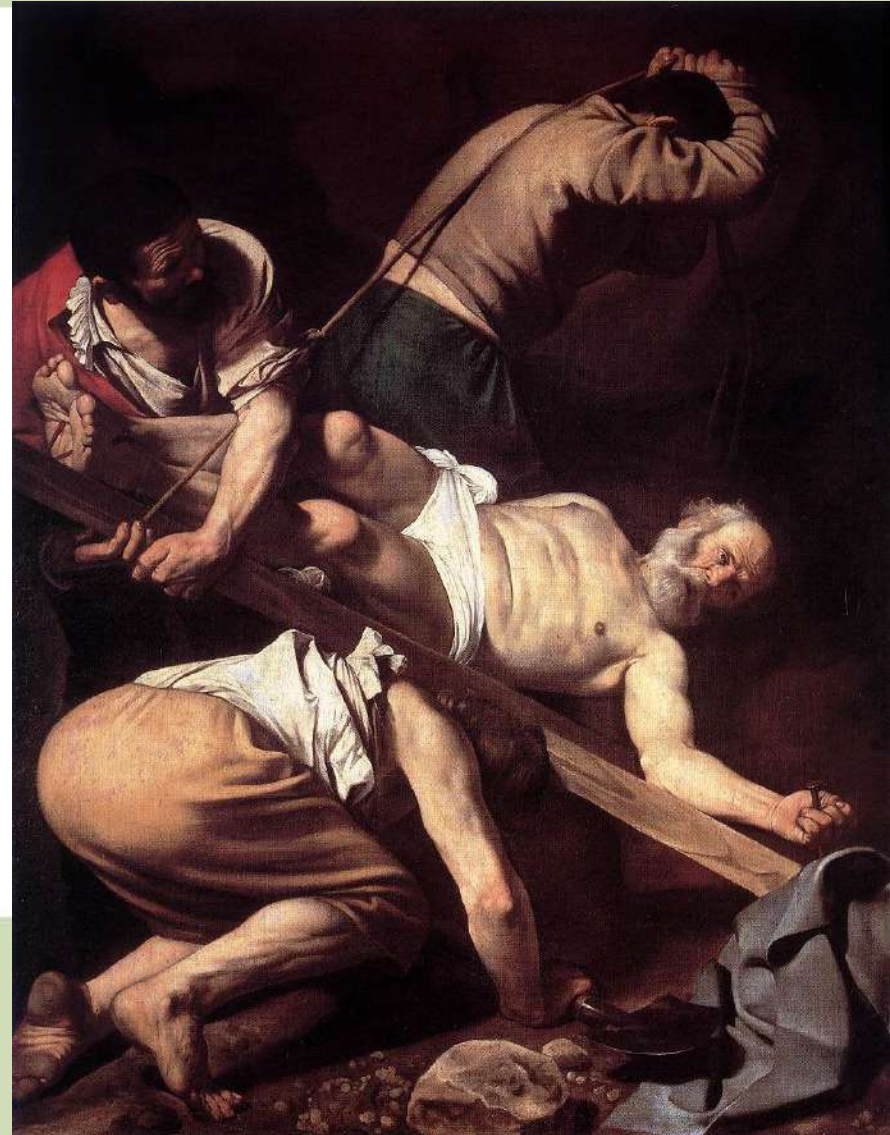
- Church art: Produced by monks

- The presence of a patron reduces the role played by the artist's personal style.



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Form** [*object's shape & structure*] & **Composition** [*how forms are organized*]
- **Material & Technique:** medium, instrument & process
- Form, Material & Technique are central to Art History analyses.



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Line:** “path of a point moving in space” – can have many qualities, cf. Durer →
 - “*contour line*” is a continuous line defining object’s outer shape.



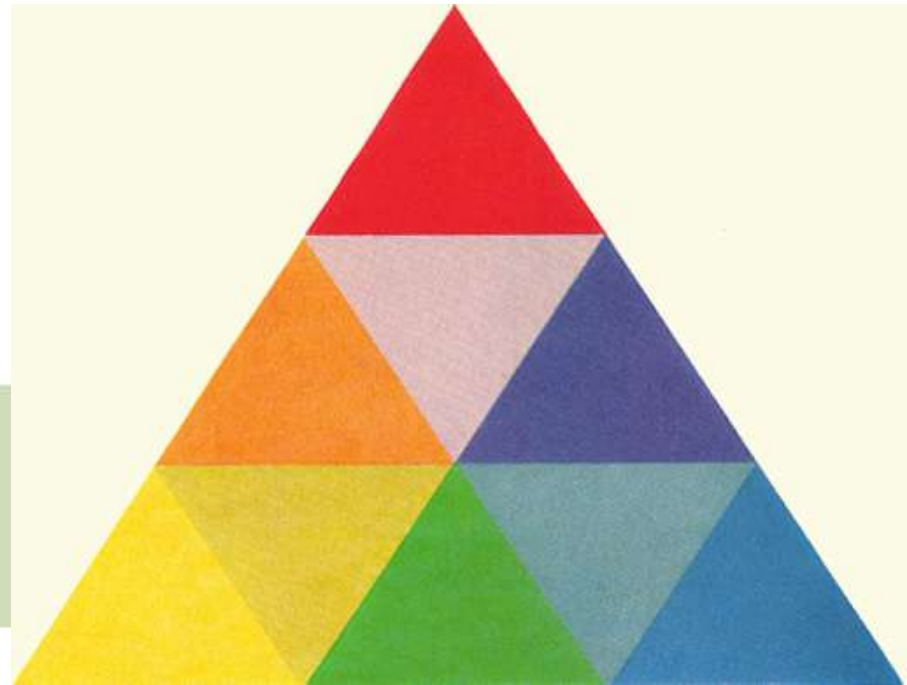
The Words Art Historians Use

- Ex. of a “*contour line*” drawing.



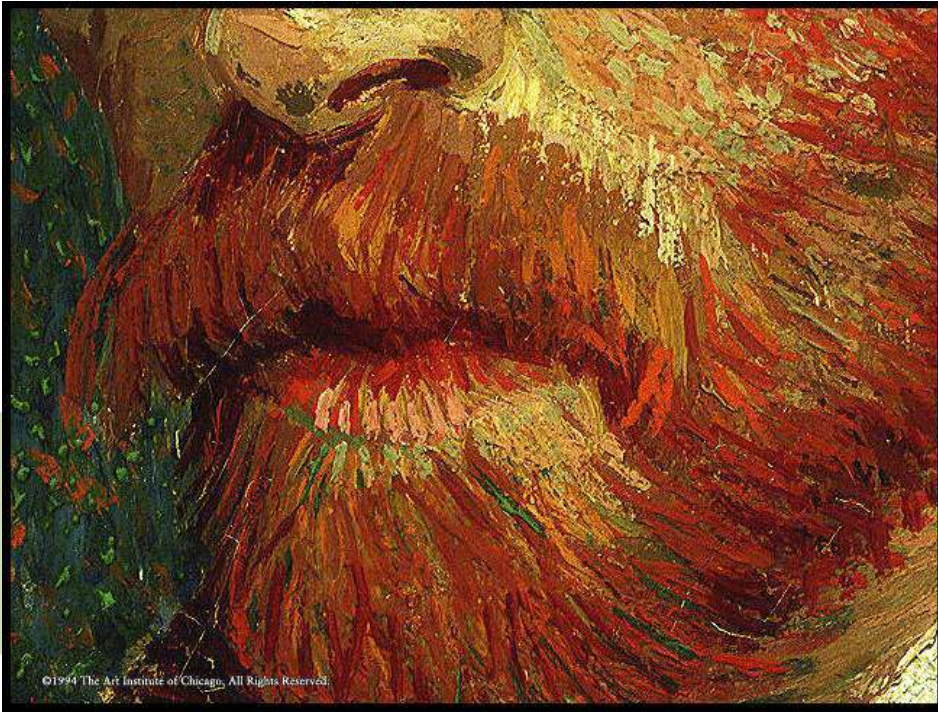
The Words Art Historians Use

- **COLOR: Hue** – gives a color its name
 - 2 basic variables- *amount of light reflected & purity.*
A change in one must produce a change in the other.
 - **Terms**: Value/Tonality [*lightness/ darkness*];
Intensity/Saturation [*brightness/ dullness*]
 - Artist’s light is “*subtractive*”
-- *the pigments reflect a segment of the spectrum, while absorbing the rest.*
 - **Color Triangle**:
Primary, Secondary & Complementary Colors.



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Texture:** the quality of a surface that the light reveals.
 - **Actual:** The texture of the artwork itself
 - **Represented:** The textures of the objects being represented
- **ACTUAL:** Van Gogh/Rembrandt [*brush strokes-“impasto”*]



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Texture: REPRESENTED:**
Van Dyck/Claesz/Tocqué



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Texture: REPRESENTED:**
Louis Tocqué
- Portrait of *Marie Leczinska*,
wife of Louis XV.



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Space/Mass/Volume.**
 - Two kinds of **SPACE**:
 - **ACTUAL**: the space the object occupies
 - **ILLUSIONISTIC**: gives the "illusion" of the 3 dimensional spatial world on a 2 dimensional surface

The Words Art Historians Use

- **SPACE-- Mass & Volume.**
 - **MASS/VOLUME:** these terms describe 3 dimensional space – the exterior and interior forms of a work of art.
 - **MASS:** is the **bulk, density and/or weight**
 - not necessarily solid
 - would include pots, hollow sculptures, architectural shells.
 - **VOLUME** is the space that **MASS** organizes, divides & encloses.
 - *Ex. next slide* – Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey

The Words Art Historians Use

- **SPACE:** The interaction of **Mass/Volume.**
 - Hagia Sofia, Istanbul, Turkey



The Words Art Historians Use



- **Perspective and Foreshortening**
- **Perspective** is an important pictorial device for organizing forms in space
- Lorrain uses 3 kinds:
- Size difference
 1. Lines that converge beyond the structure
 2. Blurring of distant objects
 3. **NOTE:** All kinds of "perspective" are pictorial conventions -- linked to a specific culture.

The Words Art Historians Use

- **Perspective and Foreshortening** *continued.*
- **Ogata Korin** used none of the Western conventions.
 - He used different points of view for different objects.
 - He was more concerned with the painting's composition than any Western conception of perspective.
- **Remember:** One set of conventions is not "better" than the other; they just approach the problem of picture-making differently.



The Words Art Historians Use

Foreshortening:

Rubens used foreshortening by representing bodies at an angle to the picture plane.



- In real life a body "contracts" when viewed at an angle.
 - The use of **foreshortening** captures this illusion on the pictorial plane. [*Note especially the gray horse on the left*]

The Words Art Historians Use



The Words Art Historians Use



- **Foreshortening:**
 - **Hesire:** No foreshortening used.
 - Intent was to present body parts as clearly as possible.
 - So different points of view present in the same work.

The Words Art Historians Use

Proportion & Scale

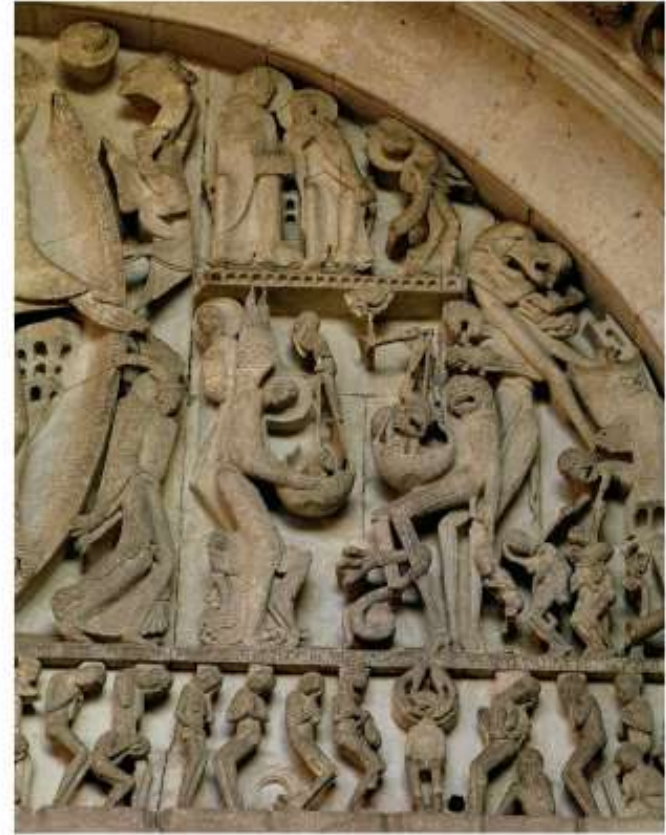
- **Proportion:** Relationships in terms of size of part of persons, building or objects.
 - Can be intuitive or mathematical.
[*Fibonacci/Corbusier*]
 - In certain periods, “ideal” proportions for representing humans are “canonized”
 - Many “canons” are based on the Greek ideal of human beauty.
 - *Ex. Michelangelo Unfinished Captive*



The Words Art Historians Use

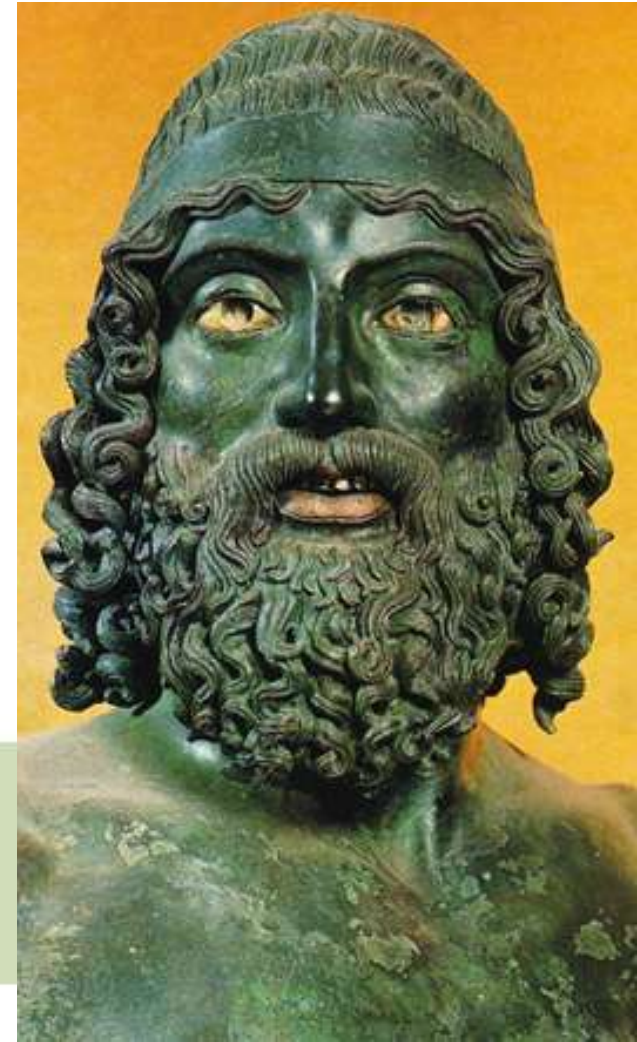
Proportion & Scale

- **Disproportion** and **Distortion** can be used for expressive purposes. →
- **Disproportion** can be used to focus attention on one part of the body or to single out the leader in a group.



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Carving** is **SUBTRACTIVE**
- **Casting from a hollow mold** or **building up clay** on an armature is **ADDITIVE**.



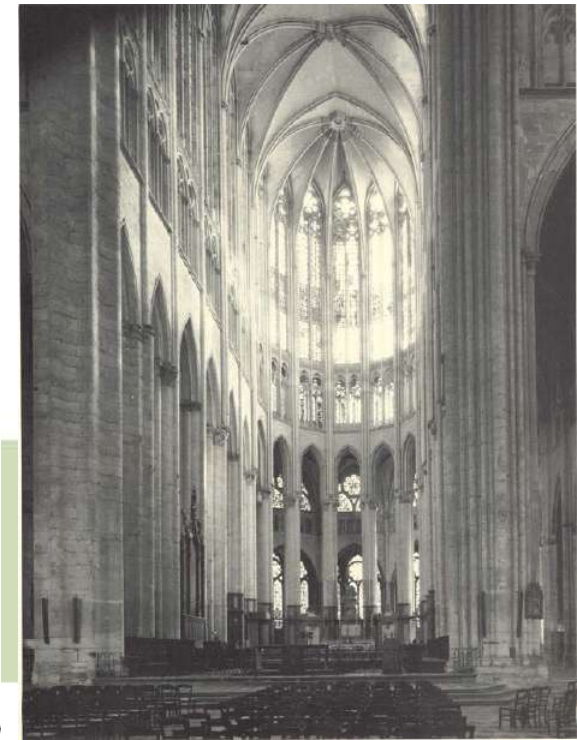
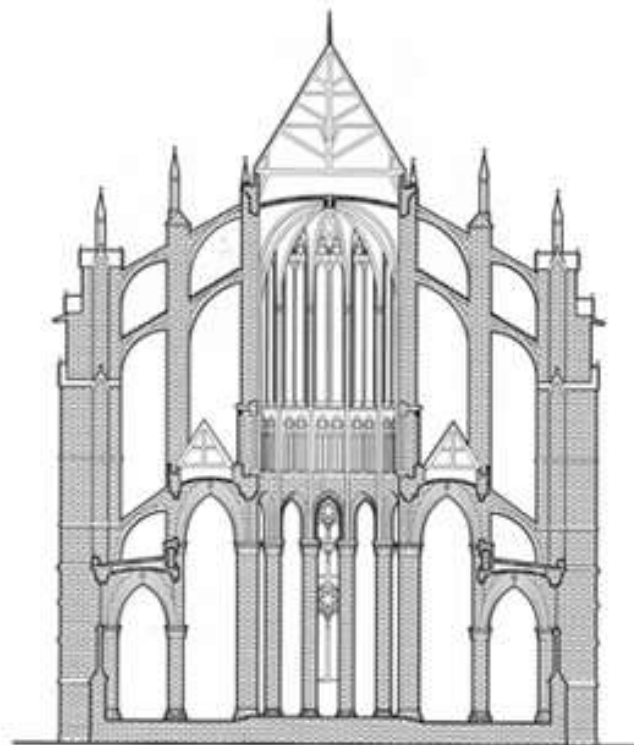
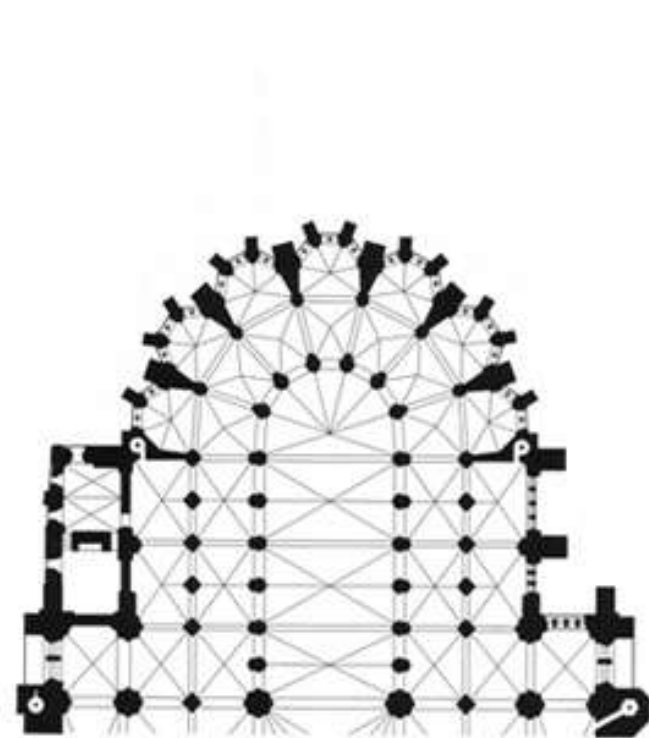
The Words Art Historians Use

Examples of Relief Sculptures:



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Architectural drawings:** Beauvais Cathedral, France
 - **Plan:** a map of a floor
 - **Lateral section** – across a structure's width
 - **Longitudinal** – the length of a structure



The Words Art Historians Use

- **Art History & Other Disciplines:**
 - Art History is **INTERDISCIPLINARY**
 - **Archival research** is supplemented by methodologies from literary criticism, philosophy, sociology and gender studies, among others.
 - Art History is **MULTIDISCIPLINARY**
 - **The Art Historian** works with people from other disciplines such as chemistry, geology, x-ray technology.
 - **The Art Historian** also offers their expertise to historians, for example.

Different Ways of Seeing

- What reasons can you give for these different images of the same man's face?



Different Ways of Seeing

The 2 images of the Maori chief remind us that:

- Art Historians belong to a particular culture and cannot be completely objective.
- Different cultural thought patterns will result in different ways of representation.
 - Different elements/aspects of a subject will be important in different cultures.
 - **Gombrich** – defines representation as “giving no false information to a member of that culture” [*cf. Ogata Korin landscape*]
- Art Historians do their best, but can never truly inhabit the other culture’s “mind.” [*They share this limit with other fields such as anthropology*]