

## *What is Modern Art?*

The definition of "modern" is "of the present or recent times." To apply the term modern to art work now is confusing. Did not artists of the Renaissance apply modern to their work as well? To label the current period of art as Modern Art we can look to the attitudes and characteristics of our modern world and what art means to artist and its viewers today. Modern Art can be viewed as a rapid and radical art style with many variations. Technology brought change to society along with a differing attitude towards art. In older times artists were commissioned by churches or wealthy families, but our times brought about a change that had artists doing "art for art's sake." With the ongoing wars and political upheaval artists found an escape with art. Artists wanted to provide a longer lasting escape from all the world's problems. American artists of this time period were finally recognized as competitive artists and brought the art world looking at art from America.

Art now became a movement into a world of color and expression, a world where an apple is only a blotch of red pigment or a toilet is a work of art, leaving more than a few people wondering what can be considered art.

### Styles

- Expressionism: Any art that stresses the artist's emotional and psychological expression, often with bold colors and distortions of form. Specifically and art style of the early 20th century followed principally by certain German artists. **(Matisse)**
- Impressionism: An art movement which took its name from one particular painting by Claude Monet, *Impression: Sunrise of 1872*. Arising out of the naturalism of the Realists, as well as an interest in the transitory experience of light and color on objects, Impressionism did two distinct things to painting: it elevated color to the status of subject matter, liberating the artist's marks from previous craft constraints, and it inadvertently asserted painting's relationship to the flat surface. **(O'Keeffe)**
- Formalism: The aesthetic arrangement of shapes, colors, and forms. (The formal elements of art)
- Cubism: The first art movement of the 20th century systematically to reconsider the conventions of painting since the Renaissance. Such work is epitomized by the severe flattening of the space across the picture plane, a consistently inconsistent light source, and an imploding of the traditional fore-, middle and background areas in painting composition. **(Picasso)**
- Surrealism: A literary and visual art movement interested in unleashing and exploring the potential of the human psyche. Loosely based on both Freud's and Jung's investigations into the mind, it is also direct heir of earlier Dada strategies of unlocking of the unconscious by the use of chance. **(Dali)**
- Pop Art: (Popular Culture)- The elements of society that are recognized by the general public. Popular Culture has the associations of something cheap, fleeting and accessible to all.
- Abstract Expressionism: A common appellation for the first generation American abstract painting after the Second World War, due to the primary of gesture and color while keeping consistent with the aims of formalism (the all-over application of paint and the dispersal of depth across the surface of the picture plane). (Bearden)

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## What is the Renaissance?

By the term Renaissance (new Birth), means new enthusiasm; learning which came forth from Italy by the close of the Middle Ages. This movement employed a narrower sense of things, depicting the most important phase of many-sided development. It was considered the intellectual movement which gives it a place in universal history.

### Styles

- **Early Renaissance Sculpture:** Early Italian Renaissance art began to emerge in Florence during the first decade of the 15th century. Building upon Proto-Renaissance art, including the work of Proto-Renaissance artists like Cimabue and Giotto (see the latter's Scrovegni Chapel frescoes) - as well as the Pre-Renaissance painting of Duccio di Buoninsegna), Florentine and other Tuscan artists such as Filippo Brunelleschi, Donatello, Masaccio and Andrea Mantegna, instigated a series of discoveries and improvements in all the visual arts (architecture, sculpture, painting), which effectively revolutionized the face of public and private art in Italy and beyond. It even influenced the conservative Sienese School of painting in Siena. Although it eventually spread throughout Italy, the Early Renaissance was centred on Florence and patronized by the Florentine Medici family. Towards the end of the century, the movement reached its high point during the period known as the High Renaissance (c.1490-1530): notably in the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo and Titian. (Note: the term "Renaissance", used to describe the upsurge of Italian art and culture, during the period 1400-1530, was first coined by the 19th century French historian Jules Michelet 1798-1874.) **(Michelangelo)**
- **The Second Generation:** The revolution begun by Brunelleschi, Masaccio, and Donatello was continued in the second half of the 15th century. The Florentine architect Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) followed Brunelleschi's example of imitating the forms used in classical architecture. But Alberti's buildings are much heavier and actually closer in form to ancient Roman buildings than Brunelleschi's. St. Andrea, a church in Mantua begun in 1470, shows how Alberti took over the motif of the Roman triumphal arch and made it the main theme of the facade. A triumphal arch has three sections, with a large central opening. St. Andrea's facade is divided into three similar parts, with an enormous central archway forming a dramatic entrance to the church. **(Leonardo Da'Vinci)**
- **High Renaissance:** The artists of the High Renaissance, which is loosely defined as the period from 1450 to 1550, built upon the foundation laid by their predecessors. The best-known artists of the Italian Renaissance grew famous during the High Renaissance. Wealthy patrons continued to enthusiastically support these artists as they traveled around Italy in search of commissions to create their masterpieces. **(Raphael)**
- **Mannerism:** The term mannerism describes the style of the paintings and bronze sculpture on this tour. Derived from the Italian *maniera*, meaning simply "style," mannerism is sometimes defined as the "stylish style" for its emphasis on self-conscious artifice over realistic depiction. The sixteenth-century artist and critic Vasari—himself a mannerist—believed that excellence in painting demanded refinement, richness of invention, and virtuoso technique, criteria that emphasized the artist's intellect. More important than his carefully recreated observation of nature was the artist's mental conception and its elaboration. This intellectual bias was, in part, a natural consequence of the artist's new status in society. No longer regarded as craftsmen, painters and

sculptors took their place with scholars, poets, and humanists in a climate that fostered an appreciation for elegance, complexity, and even precocity. (**Domenico di Pace Beccafumi**)

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