

Complete Art History

Miko-pedia AI

May 4, 2026

Contents

1	The Art of Looking: Form, Color, Composition, Materials, and Scale	1
1.1	Core ideas	1
2	Methods of Art History: Formal Analysis, Iconography, Society, and Institutions	2
2.1	Core ideas	2
3	Prehistoric and Ancient Art: Ritual, Power, the Afterlife, and the City	2
3.1	Core ideas	2
4	Classical and Religious Art: Greece, Rome, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam	3
4.1	Core ideas	3
5	The Middle Ages and Cross-Cultural Encounters: Manuscripts, Cathedrals, Trade, and Pilgrimage	4
5.1	Core ideas	4
6	Renaissance and Early Modern Art: Perspective, the Body, Markets, and Courts	5
6.1	Core ideas	5
7	Global Early Modernity: Colonies, Crafts, Collecting, and Cartography	6
7.1	Core ideas	6
8	Modern Art: Academies, Photography, Impressionism, and the City	7
8.1	Core ideas	7
9	Twentieth-Century Art: Modernism, Abstraction, Design, and Media	8
9.1	Core ideas	8
10	Contemporary Art: Institutional Critique, Gender, Postcolonialism, and the Digital	9
10.1	Core ideas	9
11	Practice: Artwork Analysis, Comparison, Exhibitions, Conservation, and Provenance	10
11.1	Core ideas	10

Overview. This complete note provides an undergraduate survey of art history from prehistoric imagery to contemporary digital and global practices. It covers formal analysis, methodological

frameworks, and the major stylistic periods of world art: ancient, classical, medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, modern, and contemporary. Each section defines essential terms, identifies representative artists and works with dates and media, and situates objects within their cultural, political, and technical contexts. The final section offers practical guidance on analysis, comparison, exhibition critique, conservation, and provenance. Use this note as a comprehensive review for exams, seminars, and museum visits.

1 The Art of Looking: Form, Color, Composition, Materials, and Scale

1.1 Core ideas

The visual analysis of any artwork begins with its formal properties. **Form** refers to the overall shape and structure of the work; in sculpture this means the three-dimensional volume, while in painting it concerns the arrangement of shapes and masses. **Line** guides the eye: contour lines define edges, while expressive lines convey emotion (as in the writhing forms of El Greco). **Color** has three dimensions: hue (the name of the color), value (lightness or darkness), and saturation (intensity). Color relationships follow color theory: complementary colors (opposite on the color wheel, e.g. red and green) create vibration when juxtaposed; analogous colors (adjacent on the wheel, e.g. blue and violet) produce harmony. **Texture** can be actual (impasto, where paint is thickly applied, as in Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, MoMA) or implied (the convincing rendering of fur or silk). **Composition** is the arrangement of elements within the frame. Symmetrical compositions suggest stability and formality (e.g. Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, 1495–1498, fresco, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan); asymmetrical or diagonal compositions create dynamism (e.g. Rubens' *The Descent from the Cross*, 1612–1614, oil on panel, Antwerp Cathedral). The **golden ratio** $\phi = (1 + \sqrt{5})/2 \approx 1.618$, long believed to be aesthetically pleasing, appears in the Parthenon and in Renaissance painting.

Materials carry meaning. Fresco (pigment on wet plaster) demands quick execution but yields durability, as in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling (1508–1512). Oil paint, developed in Northern Europe in the 15th century, allows blending, glazing, and rich color depth. Tempera (egg-yolk binder) produces matte, luminous surfaces typical of early Italian panel paintings. **Scale** affects the viewer's experience: life-size figures invite identification; colossal scale (the 14.5 m tall *David* by Michelangelo, 1501–1504, marble, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence) inspires awe.

For review, be able to identify the formal elements of any given artwork: describe its line quality, color palette, compositional structure, texture, medium, and scale. Practice writing a 250-word formal analysis of a work of your choice.

Section summary Art historical looking requires systematic attention to form, line, color, texture, composition, materials, and scale. The golden ratio and color theory provide mathematical frameworks for analyzing visual harmony. Mastering formal analysis is the foundation for all higher-level art historical inquiry.

2 Methods of Art History: Formal Analysis, Iconography, Society, and Institutions

2.1 Core ideas

Art history employs multiple interpretive methods. **Formal analysis** (pioneered by Heinrich Wölfflin in *Principles of Art History*, 1915) compares works through paired concepts: linear vs.

painterly, planar vs. recessional, closed vs. open form. Wölfflin argued that each period has a distinctive visual mode of seeing.

Iconography (developed by Erwin Panofsky) deciphers subject matter at three levels: pre-iconographic (identifying primary forms: a woman holding a child), iconographic (recognizing cultural conventions: the Virgin and Christ Child), and iconological (interpreting deeper cultural meaning: the theology of the Incarnation). Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology* (1939) remains the classic text.

Social history of art (associated with T.J. Clark and the Marxist tradition) examines art as a product of class structures, economic conditions, and ideological struggle. Clark's *The Painting of Modern Life* (1984) analyzes Manet and the Impressionists as reflections of Parisian capitalism.

Feminist art history (Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 1971) exposed institutional barriers excluding women from training and exhibition. Griselda Pollock's *Vision and Difference* (1988) examines how gender structures looking itself.

Institutional critique examines how museums, galleries, and the art market determine what counts as art. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital* explains how taste functions as a marker of social class. **Postcolonial theory** (Edward Said's *Orientalism*, 1978) examines how Western representation of non-Western cultures served colonial power.

For review, be able to explain the difference between formal analysis and iconography, summarize the contribution of at least one major art historian (Wölfflin, Panofsky, Clark, Nochlin, or Said), and apply two different methods to a single artwork.

Section summary Art historians draw on formal analysis, iconography, social history, feminism, institutional critique, and postcolonial theory. Each method illuminates different dimensions of meaning. A skilled art historian selects and combines methods suited to the question being asked.

3 Prehistoric and Ancient Art: Ritual, Power, the Afterlife, and the City

3.1 Core ideas

Palaeolithic art (c. 40,000–10,000 BCE) appears in cave sites across Europe. The **Lascaux** cave paintings (c. 15,000 BCE, Dordogne, France) depict large animals (aurochs, horses, deer) using natural pigments (ochre, charcoal) applied by blowing through hollow bones. The **Venus of Willendorf** (c. 25,000 BCE, limestone, Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna), an 11 cm female figurine with exaggerated breasts and hips, likely functioned as a fertility symbol. These works are associated with shamanic ritual and hunting magic.

Mesopotamian art (c. 3500–539 BCE) emerged in the Fertile Crescent alongside the first cities. The **Standard of Ur** (c. 2600 BCE, mosaic of shell and lapis lazuli on wood, British Museum) depicts war and peace in register format. The **Stele of Hammurabi** (c. 1792 BCE, basalt, Louvre) shows the king receiving laws from the god Shamash, establishing the convention of ruler as divine intermediary.

Ancient Egyptian art (c. 3000–30 BCE) is defined by its consistency: the canon of proportions using an 18-unit grid, composite view (head and legs in profile, eye and torso frontal), and hierarchical scale (rulers larger than subjects). The **Great Pyramids of Giza** (c. 2560–2540 BCE, limestone and granite) manifest absolute royal power and sophisticated engineering. **Tutankhamun's death mask** (c. 1323 BCE, gold and semiprecious stones, Egyptian Museum, Cairo) exemplifies funerary art designed to ensure the afterlife. Egyptian art served religious and political functions: preserving the soul (*ka*) and legitimizing pharaonic rule.

Aegean art: Minoan civilization (Crete, c. 2700–1450 BCE) produced the **Palace of Knossos**, with vivid frescoes like the *Bull-Leaping Fresco* (c. 1450 BCE) showing ritual acrobatics. Mycenaean civilization (mainland Greece, c. 1600–1100 BCE) built citadels with massive cyclopean masonry (Lion Gate at Mycenae, c. 1250 BCE).

For review, be able to identify the conventions of Egyptian figure representation, explain the function of Palaeolithic cave painting, and compare Mesopotamian and Egyptian approaches to representing rulers.

Section summary Prehistoric and ancient art served religious, political, and funerary functions. Egyptian art established a formal canon lasting 3000 years, while Mesopotamian art pioneered narrative relief. Cave painting reveals the earliest human impulse to represent the world symbolically.

4 Classical and Religious Art: Greece, Rome, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam

4.1 Core ideas

Ancient Greek art evolved through the Geometric (c. 900–700 BCE), Archaic (c. 700–480 BCE), Classical (c. 480–323 BCE), and Hellenistic (c. 323–31 BCE) periods. The **Kritios Boy** (c. 480 BCE, marble, Acropolis Museum) introduces **contrapposto** – the weight shift where one leg bears weight while the other relaxes, creating a subtle S-curve in the body. The **Parthenon** (447–432 BCE, architects Ictinus and Callicrates, sculptor Phidias) embodies classical ideals of harmony, proportion, and rational order. The **Doryphoros** (Spear Bearer) by Polykleitos (c. 450–440 BCE, Roman marble copy of bronze original, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples) demonstrates Polykleitos' canon of ideal proportions, where the head is 1/7 of the total body height. Hellenistic art, exemplified by the **Laocoön Group** (c. 200 BCE, marble, Vatican Museums), introduced dramatic emotion, torsion, and naturalistic anatomy.

Roman art (c. 509 BCE–476 CE) was deeply indebted to Greek prototypes but innovated in portraiture (veristic Republican portraits with wrinkled realism), architecture (the arch, vault, and dome using concrete), and public spectacle (the Colosseum, 70–80 CE, concrete and stone). Roman wall painting (Pompeii, four styles) ranges from the architectural illusionism of the Second Style (e.g. Villa of the Mysteries, c. 60 BCE) to the fantastical decorative schemes of the Fourth Style. The **Arch of Constantine** (315 CE, Rome) combines spolia from earlier monuments, demonstrating how imperial messages were assembled.

Buddhist art began aniconically (symbols: the wheel, the bodhi tree) before anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha emerged in Gandhara (modern Pakistan/Afghanistan, 1st–5th centuries CE) under Greco-Roman influence, producing the first Buddha images with wavy hair and draped robes. At Mathura (India), indigenous traditions produced a heavier, yogic Buddha. The spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road carried these forms to China, Korea, and Japan. The **Great Stupa at Sanchi** (3rd century BCE–1st century CE, stone, Madhya Pradesh) with its torana gateways narrates the Buddha's life through *jataka* tales.

Early Christian and Byzantine art emerged from Roman catacomb painting (c. 3rd century CE). After Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 CE), Christian basilicas were built. Byzantine art, centered in Constantinople, developed a stylized, hieratic aesthetic: flattened space, gold backgrounds, and frontal figures. The **Hagia Sophia** (537 CE, architects Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, Istanbul) combines a massive dome (31 m diameter) on pendentives, a technical marvel. The iconoclasm controversy (726–843 CE) temporarily banned religious images; its resolution affirmed icons as windows to the divine.

Islamic art (7th century CE onward) is characterized by **aniconism** (avoidance of figural representation in religious contexts), leading to sophisticated development of **arabesque** (veg-

etal scrollwork), **geometric patterns** (star polygons derived from complex symmetry groups), and **calligraphy** (Qur'anic verses as the highest art form). The **Dome of the Rock** (691 CE, Jerusalem) combines Byzantine mosaics with Islamic epigraphy. The **Alhambra** (Granada, 13th–14th centuries) displays intricate muqarnas vaulting and geometric tilework.

For review, be able to explain contrapposto and the Greek canon of proportion, compare Greek and Roman approaches to portraiture, describe how Buddhist art traveled the Silk Road, and contrast the role of figural representation in Christian and Islamic art.

Section summary Classical Greco-Roman art established naturalistic representation based on proportion and observation. Buddhist art synthesized indigenous Indian and Hellenistic forms as it spread across Asia. Christian and Islamic art developed distinct visual theologies: one centered on incarnation and icon, the other on aniconic abstraction and calligraphy.

5 The Middle Ages and Cross-Cultural Encounters: Manuscripts, Cathedrals, Trade, and Pilgrimage

5.1 Core ideas

Early Medieval art (c. 500–1000 CE) encompasses Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Viking, and Merovingian traditions. The **Book of Kells** (c. 800 CE, illuminated manuscript on vellum, Trinity College Dublin) combines intricate Celtic interlace patterns with Christian iconography. The **Hiberno-Saxon** style features **chi-rho** monograms (Greek initials of Christ) transformed into elaborate decorative pages.

Carolingian art (c. 780–900 CE) under Charlemagne consciously revived Roman classicism. The **Palatine Chapel at Aachen** (792–805 CE) imitates San Vitale in Ravenna. The **Utrecht Psalter** (c. 820–830 CE, vellum, Utrecht University Library) uses lively pen drawings that influenced Anglo-Saxon art.

Romanesque art and architecture (c. 1000–1150 CE) is defined by thick walls, round arches, barrel vaults, and sculpted portals. The **Church of Sainte-Foy at Conques** (c. 1050–1120, France) preserves a tympanum of the Last Judgment. Reliquaries (containers for saints' remains) were central to pilgrimage: the **Reliquary of Saint Foy** (late 9th–10th century, gold, gems, wood core) transformed a Roman child's head into a bejeweled cult object.

Gothic art and architecture (c. 1140–1500 CE) originated at the Abbey of Saint-Denis under Abbot Suger (1140–1144). Innovations include the pointed arch, rib vault, flying buttress, and enormous stained glass windows. The **Chartres Cathedral** (1194–1220, France) retains 176 original stained glass windows, including the *Notre Dame de la Belle Verrière*. Gothic sculpture on portals became increasingly naturalistic, as in the "Smiling Angel" at Reims Cathedral (c. 1240).

Cross-cultural encounters shaped medieval art dramatically. The **Silk Road** (c. 130 BCE–1450 CE) transmitted not only goods but artistic motifs (the pearl roundel, the phoenix-and-dragon) between China, Persia, and Europe. **Mudejar** art in Spain (12th–16th centuries) fused Islamic, Christian, and Jewish elements. The **Morgan Bible** (c. 1250, Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem) shows Byzantine, French, and Islamic stylistic influences. **Pilgrimage** drove the production of portable arts: ivory diptychs, reliquary pendants, and pilgrim badges.

Late medieval manuscript illumination culminated in the **Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry** (c. 1412–1416, vellum, Chantilly, Musée Condé) by the Limbourg brothers, whose calendar scenes combine courtly elegance with naturalistic landscape observation.

For review, be able to distinguish Romanesque from Gothic architecture, explain the role of pilgrimage in art production, trace a specific artistic motif across the Silk Road, and describe the function of illuminated manuscripts.

Section summary Medieval art spans from Celtic interlace manuscripts to soaring Gothic cathedrals. Cross-cultural transmission via pilgrimage, trade, and conquest enriched all traditions. The period's greatest technical achievement is the Gothic structural system, which transformed architecture into a framework for light and glass.

6 Renaissance and Early Modern Art: Perspective, the Body, Markets, and Courts

6.1 Core ideas

The **Renaissance** (c. 1400–1520 in Italy; c. 1500–1600 in Northern Europe) means "rebirth" of classical learning and naturalistic representation. **Linear perspective**, codified by Filippo Brunelleschi (c. 1413) and written down by Leon Battista Alberti in *On Painting* (1435), uses a single vanishing point on the horizon line where all parallel lines converge. Masaccio's *The Tribute Money* (c. 1427, fresco, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence) is the first painting to apply systematic perspective.

Italian Renaissance centers: Florence (early), Rome (High), Venice (late). Key artists:

- **Giotto** (c. 1267–1337): *Scrovegni Chapel* frescoes (c. 1305, Padua) revive naturalism and emotional expression before the Renaissance formally begins.
- **Sandro Botticelli**: *The Birth of Venus* (c. 1485, tempera on canvas, Uffizi) adapts classical mythology to Christian Neoplatonism.
- **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452–1519): *Mona Lisa* (c. 1503–1519, oil on poplar, Louvre) uses **sfumato** (subtle tonal blending) to create atmospheric depth; *The Last Supper* (1495–1498, fresco) demonstrates one-point perspective and psychological narrative.
- **Michelangelo Buonarroti** (1475–1564): *Pietà* (1498–1499, marble, St. Peter's Basilica) shows classical triangular composition; Sistine Chapel ceiling (1508–1512, fresco) narrates Genesis with unprecedented anatomical virtuosity; *David* (1501–1504, marble) embodies High Renaissance ideal of heroic humanity.
- **Raphael** (1483–1520): *School of Athens* (1509–1511, fresco, Stanza della Segnatura) synthesizes classical philosophy with Christian theology in a perfectly perspectival space.

Northern Renaissance (c. 1420–1550): oil painting was perfected by **Jan van Eyck** (*Ghent Altarpiece*, completed 1432, oil on panel, St. Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent; *Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak, National Gallery, London). Van Eyck's microscopic detail and glazing technique produce unprecedented luminosity. **Albrecht Dürer** (1471–1528) integrated Italian perspective with Northern precision; his *Melencolia I* (1514, engraving) is a masterpiece of symbolic complexity.

Patronage: The Medici family (Florence) funded Donatello, Botticelli, Michelangelo. The papacy (Julius II, Leo X) commissioned the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's. Northern patronage came from the Burgundian court and rising merchant class.

Mannerism (c. 1520–1580): Pontormo's *Entombment* (1525–1528, oil on panel, Capponi Chapel, Florence) uses elongated figures, acidic colors, and compressed space as a reaction to High Renaissance harmony.

For review, be able to explain linear perspective mathematically, compare Italian and Northern Renaissance approaches to detail and symbolism, and discuss the relationship between patronage and artistic production.

Section summary The Renaissance transformed European art through perspective, anatomy, oil technique, and the revival of classical forms. The period created enduring masterpieces and established the artist as an intellectual, not just a craftsman. Its innovations shaped Western art for the next 400 years.

7 Global Early Modernity: Colonies, Crafts, Collecting, and Cartography

7.1 Core ideas

The early modern period (c. 1492–1750) was shaped by colonialism, global trade, and the exchange of artistic objects. **The Baroque** (c. 1600–1750) emerged in Counter-Reformation Rome as a style of dynamic movement, theatricality, and emotional immediacy.

Italian Baroque: Caravaggio (1571–1610) pioneered **tenebrism** (extreme chiaroscuro: strong contrasts of light and dark). His *Calling of Saint Matthew* (1599–1600, oil on canvas, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome) uses a shaft of divine light entering a dark room. **Gian Lorenzo Bernini** (1598–1680) unified sculpture, architecture, and light; his *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1647–1652, marble, Cornaro Chapel, Rome) bends the rules of gravity.

Dutch Golden Age (c. 1600–1675): The Protestant Netherlands developed an art market for bourgeois homes, producing specialized genres: landscape (Jacob van Ruisdael), still life (Pieter Claesz), portraiture (Frans Hals), and genre scenes (Johannes Vermeer). **Rembrandt van Rijn** (1606–1669) mastered **impasto** and psychological depth in works like *The Night Watch* (1642, oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum) and his series of self-portraits.

Spanish Baroque: Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) painted *Las Meninas* (1656, oil on canvas, Prado), a complex meditation on representation, the mirror, and the viewer's gaze.

Global encounters: Spanish colonial art in Mexico (**santos, retablos**) fused European Catholic imagery with Indigenous traditions (**feather mosaics** of the *amantecayotl* tradition). The **Bijin-ga** prints of Japan's ukiyo-e school (Hishikawa Moronobu, 17th century) developed woodblock printing to sophisticated levels, later influencing Van Gogh and Whistler.

Wunderkammern (cabinets of curiosities) assembled natural specimens, scientific instruments, and artworks from around the world, precursors to the modern museum. **Cartography** became an art form: the **Catalan Atlas** (1375, Cresques Abraham) and the **Blaeu Atlas Maior** (1662) combine geographic information with decorative elements.

For review, be able to describe how Caravaggio's tenebrism differs from Renaissance chiaroscuro, explain the relationship between Dutch capitalism and genre painting, and analyze how colonial encounters transformed artistic traditions on both sides of the Atlantic.

Section summary The Baroque used dramatic lighting and dynamic forms to engage the viewer emotionally. The Dutch Republic developed the first bourgeois art market, producing specialized genres. Global trade created hybrid visual cultures in colonial contexts and brought non-Western art into European consciousness.

8 Modern Art: Academies, Photography, Impressionism, and the City

8.1 Core ideas

Neoclassicism (c. 1750–1815): Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784, oil on canvas, Louvre) exemplifies Enlightenment rationality, stoic virtue, and crisp linear draftsmanship.

Romanticism (c. 1790–1850): Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830, oil on canvas, Louvre) celebrates the 1830 revolution with allegorical energy, painterly brushwork, and

vivid color. In Britain, J.M.W. Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire* (1839, oil on canvas, National Gallery) uses luminous, dissolving form to evoke the passing of an era.

Realism (c. 1840–1880): Gustave Courbet's *The Stone Breakers* (1849, oil on canvas, destroyed 1945) depicted ordinary laborers with monumental scale, scandalizing the bourgeois audience. Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners* (1857, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay) ennobled peasant labor.

Photography invented c. 1839 (Louis Daguerre in France, William Henry Fox Talbot in England). Photography challenged painting's monopoly on representation, forcing painters to redefine their medium. Early photographs required long exposures, but technological improvements by the 1870s allowed instantaneous images, influencing Impressionist interest in the fleeting moment.

Impressionism (1874–1886): A group exhibition in 1874 gave the movement its name from Monet's *Impression, Sunrise* (1872, oil on canvas, Marmottan Monet Museum, Paris). Key features: **plein air** painting (outdoors), broken color applied in separate dabs rather than blended on the palette, depiction of modern urban life, and interest in atmospheric effects and the fleeting moment. Claude Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series (1892–1894) studies how light transforms the same subject at different times of day. **Pierre-Auguste Renoir** painted social leisure scenes such as *Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette* (1876, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay), using warm, flickering light. **Edgar Degas** focused on ballet dancers and racehorses, using unusual cropping inspired by Japanese prints and photography. **Berthe Morisot** and **Mary Cassatt** were central female Impressionists; Cassatt's *The Child's Bath* (1893, oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicago) combines maternal intimacy with Japanese flattened space. **Camille Pissarro**, the elder of the group, painted rural and urban landscapes and mentored younger artists. The Impressionists rejected the academic Salon's historical and mythological subjects in favor of contemporary life.

Post-Impressionism (c. 1886–1905): **Georges Seurat** developed **pointillism** (tiny dots of pure color) based on optical color theory (*A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, 1884–1886, oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicago). **Paul Cézanne** flattened space and built form from faceted color planes (*Mont Sainte-Victoire* series, 1885–1906), laying groundwork for Cubism. **Vincent van Gogh** used expressive, thick impasto and symbolic color (*The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, MoMA). **Paul Gauguin** pursued "primitive" authenticity in Tahiti (*Where Do We Come From?*, 1897, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

For review, be able to explain how photography changed painting, identify the key characteristics of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, and compare Realism's social project with Romantic emotional expression.

Section summary Modern art emerged from the Enlightenment and industrialization. The mid-19th century saw Realism's social engagement, photography's technological challenge, and Impressionism's radical shift toward perception and modernity. Post-Impressionist artists expanded these innovations in divergent directions.

9 Twentieth-Century Art: Modernism, Abstraction, Design, and Media

9.1 Core ideas

Fauvism (1905–1907): Henri Matisse's *Woman with a Hat* (1905, oil on canvas, SFMOMA) uses arbitrary, intense color and simplified drawing, rejecting naturalism.

Cubism (1907–1917): Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1907, oil on canvas, MoMA) fractures space and merges multiple viewpoints. With Georges Braque, Picasso developed **Analytic Cubism** (breaking objects into faceted planes; *Bottles and Knife*, 1911) and

Synthetic Cubism (introducing collage and constructed paper; *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912).

Futurism (1909–1914, Italy): Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s manifesto glorified speed, technology, and violence. Umberto Boccioni’s *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913, bronze, Tate) depicts a striding figure as dynamic intersecting planes.

Abstract art: Wassily Kandinsky’s *Composition VII* (1913, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery) is entirely non-representational, claiming color and form could express spiritual truth. Piet Mondrian’s *Neoplasticism* reduced painting to black grid lines and primary colors (*Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow*, 1930, oil on canvas, Kunsthaus Zürich). Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square* (1915, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery) pushed abstraction to its zero point.

Dada (1916–1924): Born in Zurich (Cabaret Voltaire) as a reaction to World War I. Marcel Duchamp’s **readymade** – an ordinary manufactured object designated as art (*Fountain*, 1917, porcelain urinal) – fundamentally questioned the definition of art.

Surrealism (1924–1945): André Breton’s manifesto sought to unite conscious and unconscious experience. Salvador Dalí’s *The Persistence of Memory* (1931, oil on canvas, MoMA) uses precise realism for irrational, dreamlike scenes. René Magritte’s *The Treachery of Images* (1929, oil on canvas, LACMA) painted “Ceci n’est pas une pipe,” questioning representation itself.

Abstract Expressionism (c. 1945–1960, New York): The first major American avant-garde, centered in Greenwich Village and supported by critics such as Clement Greenberg. **Action painting** (Jackson Pollock’s drip paintings, e.g. *Number 1A*, 1948, oil and enamel on canvas, MoMA) emphasizes the physical process of painting, the gesture, and the unconscious. **Willem de Kooning** retained figuration in works such as *Woman I* (1950–1952, oil on canvas, MoMA), merging abstraction with aggressive brushwork. **Color Field painting** (Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Helen Frankenthaler) aims at transcendent contemplation through large, luminous areas of color; Rothko’s *No. 61 [Rust and Blue]* (1953, oil on canvas, MoMA) invites immersive meditation. **Helen Frankenthaler** pioneered the soak-stain technique in *Mountains and Sea* (1952, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art), thinning paint so it soaked directly into unprimed canvas.

Pop Art (1950s–1960s): Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans* (1962, synthetic polymer on canvas, MoMA) and Roy Lichtenstein’s comic-strip paintings (*Whaam!*, 1963, acrylic on canvas, Tate) celebrated and critiqued mass consumer culture.

Minimalism (1960s): Donald Judd’s “specific objects” (*Untitled*, 1969, brass and plexiglass) reject illusion and composition in favor of industrial materials and simple geometric forms.

The Bauhaus (1919–1933, Germany) integrated art, craft, and technology. Walter Gropius’ school united fine arts with functional design, influencing architecture, furniture, and typography.

For review, be able to define the readymade and its implications, trace the development from Cubism to abstraction, explain the difference between Action Painting and Color Field painting, and discuss how Pop Art engaged with consumer society.

Section summary Twentieth-century art shattered the mimetic tradition. From Cubism’s multiple perspectives to Dada’s anti-art, from Pollock’s physical gesture to Warhol’s mechanical reproduction, each movement redefined what art could be. The century established New York as the global art capital and diversified media beyond painting and sculpture.

10 Contemporary Art: Institutional Critique, Gender, Post-colonialism, and the Digital

10.1 Core ideas

Conceptual art (1960s onward) prioritizes idea over execution. Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawing* series (1968 onward) consists of instructions executed by others. Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965, MoMA) presents a chair, a photograph of it, and its dictionary definition.

Institutional critique: Hans Haacke's *MoMA Poll* (1970) asked visitors about Nelson Rockefeller's politics, revealing the museum's corporate ties. Daniel Buren's striped canvases questioned the gallery's framing of art. Andrea Fraser's *Museum Highlights* (1989) performed as a docent spouting absurd institutional rhetoric.

Performance art: Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* (1974) placed 72 objects on a table and invited the audience to use them on her passive body – testing the limits of artist-audience relationship. Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964) invited audience members to cut away her clothing.

Feminist art: Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974–1979, mixed media, Brooklyn Museum) sets a triangular banquet table with 39 place settings commemorating historical women. Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–1980, photographs) deconstruct female stereotypes in visual culture. The **Guerrilla Girls** (founded 1985) use anonymous gorilla masks and statistical posters to expose gender and racial inequality in museums.

Postcolonial and global contemporary art: The **Third Havana Biennial** (1989) marked a shift toward global contemporary art. Yinka Shonibare's *The Swing (After Fragonard)* (2001, mannequin, Dutch wax fabric, Tate) re-stages Rococo painting through colonial textiles, interrogating empire. El Anatsui's *Dusasa II* (2007, aluminum bottle caps and copper wire) transforms recycled materials into vast shimmering tapestries evoking both African traditions and global consumer waste.

Digital and new media art: Nam June Paik's video sculptures (*TV Buddha*, 1974, closed-circuit video) explored mediated reality. The internet age brought net.art (Olia Lialina, 1996) and participatory platforms. AI-generated art raises new questions about authorship and creativity.

Land art and eco-art: Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970, earthwork, Great Salt Lake, Utah) extends Minimalism into the landscape, subject to natural erosion.

For review, be able to define conceptual art and institutional critique, analyze how feminist artists challenged the canon, discuss postcolonial strategies in contemporary global art, and evaluate how digital media transforms artistic production.

Section summary Contemporary art expanded the definition of art to include ideas, actions, digital media, and institutional critique. Feminist and postcolonial perspectives challenged the Western canon. The global turn connected artists across continents, while digital technologies opened unprecedented possibilities for creation and distribution.

11 Practice: Artwork Analysis, Comparison, Exhibitions, Conservation, and Provenance

11.1 Core ideas

Formal analysis protocol: (1) Identify the artwork: artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, location. (2) Describe formal elements: line, shape, color, texture, space, composition. (3) Analyze how these elements interact to create meaning. (4) Consider the viewer's embodied experience: scale, viewing conditions, installation context.

Comparison methodology: When comparing two artworks, establish a clear basis for comparison (same period, same subject, different approach). Use Wölfflin’s principles or a similar structured framework. For example, compare Masaccio’s *Holy Trinity* (c. 1427, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, Florence) with Jan van Eyck’s *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* (c. 1435, oil on panel, Louvre): both use religious subject matter and contemporary patrons, but Masaccio uses Italian linear perspective while van Eyck constructs space through layered atmospheric detail and symbolic objects.

Exhibition analysis: Critically examine how museums frame artworks. The **white cube** gallery (1930s onward) presents art as autonomous and timeless, but this is itself a historical construction. Analyze label text, wall color, lighting, sequence of rooms. The 2019 exhibition *Artistic License: The Censorship of Art at Tate Modern* or *The Renaissance Nude* (Royal Academy, 2018–2019) demonstrate how curatorial framing shapes interpretation.

Conservation science: Conservators use **X-radiography**, **infrared reflectography**, and **pigment analysis** to understand material composition and artist technique. The conservation of the Sistine Chapel ceiling (1980–1994) revealed Michelangelo’s brilliant original colors beneath centuries of grime and earlier restoration. Digital restoration and 3D scanning enable virtual reconstructions of damaged works.

Provenance research: The ownership history of an artwork is legally and ethically essential. Provenance traces from the artist’s studio through sales, bequests, and collections. **Nazi-era provenance** research identifies artworks looted from Jewish collectors. The 1998 Washington Principles committed signatory nations to identify and return looted art. The **Monuments Men** (1943–1946) recovered millions of stolen works.

Writing an art history paper: (1) Develop a focused thesis. (2) Support claims with visual evidence (describe what you see) and contextual evidence (historical documents, contemporary criticism). (3) Engage with existing scholarship (Wölfflin, Panofsky, Nochlin, etc.). (4) Structure: introduction with thesis, body paragraphs each making one point supported by evidence, conclusion. (5) Cite sources using **Chicago Manual of Style** (footnotes in history of art).

For review, be able to write a formal analysis of any assigned artwork, structure a comparative essay between two works, critique a museum exhibition, explain basic conservation techniques, and trace the provenance of a well-known disputed artwork.

Section summary Practical art history requires skills in formal analysis, comparison, exhibition criticism, conservation awareness, and provenance research. These competencies enable the art historian to produce rigorous scholarship, curate ethically, and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.

Image reference URLs for key artworks

- *Starry Night* (van Gogh, 1889): <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79802>
- *Mona Lisa* (Leonardo, 1503–1519): <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/c1010062370>
- *The Last Supper* (Leonardo, 1495–1498): <https://www.santamarleadellegrazie.it/en/>
- Sistine Chapel ceiling (Michelangelo, 1508–1512): <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/cappella-sistina.html>
- *David* (Michelangelo, 1501–1504): <https://www.galleriaaccademiafirenze.it/en/artworks/david-by-michelangelo/>
- *The Birth of Venus* (Botticelli, c.1485): <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/birth-of-venus>

- *School of Athens* (Raphael, 1509–1511): <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/stanze-di-raffaello/stanze-di-raffaello.html>
- *Arnolfini Portrait* (van Eyck, 1434): <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-the-arnolfini-portrait>
- *Las Meninas* (Velázquez, 1656): <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/las-meninas/9fdc7800-9ade-48b0-ab8b-edee94ea877f>
- *The Night Watch* (Rembrandt, 1642): <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-C-5>
- *Impression, Sunrise* (Monet, 1872): <https://www.marmottan.fr/en/collections/oeuvres/>
- *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. M.)* (Picasso, 1907): <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79766>
- *The Persistence of Memory* (Dalí, 1931): <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79018>
- *Campbell's Soup Cans* (Warhol, 1962): <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79809>
- *The Dinner Party* (Chicago, 1974–1979): https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/dinner_party
- *Spiral Jetty* (Smithson, 1970): <https://umfa.utah.edu/spiral-jetty>