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The Swing (La Balançoire), (1876)  
by Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

# Impressionism

(Flourished 1870-1880)

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Ballet Class (1881) by Edgar Degas.

## Introduction

The new style of painting called "Impressionism," that appeared in Paris during the late 1860s and early 1870s, was not recognized initially as anything special. Many of the members of the Impressionist "group" - which consisted of Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Edgar Degas, Alfred Sisley, Paul Cezanne, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Jean-Frederic Bazille, and Berthe Morisot - were at odds with the official *Salon*, the organizing body for the French Academy of Fine Arts in the Salon d'Apollon, within the Louvre Palace, whose selection-jury operated with unpredictable severity. The main initial influence on the new group was the artist genius Edouard Manet, whose stunning works *Dejeuner sur L'herbe* and *Olympia* had themselves been rejected by the [Salon](#) in the early 1860s.



Bar At The Folies Bergeres (1882)  
by Edouard Manet.

Thus, although other painters were impressed by some of its early works, Impressionism was not acknowledged as an important style of painting, either by art critics, collectors or the public. As a result, most [Impressionist painters](#) suffered severe financial hardship, and all had to fight for attention and commissions from patrons and critics alike. Despite friendships with leading figures in other areas of the creative arts (like the writer Emile Zola and the poet Baudelaire) mutual support and reassurance within the group was the critical factor in its survival.

## Impressionist Painting: Plein-Air Landscapes

### INFLUENCES

Two influences on Impressionism were photography - to help fix a scene and the invention of the collapsible tin paint tube in 1841 by American painter John Rand.

French Impressionism was a spontaneous, colour-sensitive style of painting which rejected the conventions of the dominant school of academic art, in favour of a naturalistic and down-to-earth treatment of its subject matter. Its roots lay in the French Realism of [Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot](#) and the plein-air methods of the [Barbizon school](#). Impressionists specialized in

[landscapes](#) and [genre scenes](#) (eg. Degas' pictures of ballet dancers and Renoir's nude figures) although portraiture was one of the few regular sources of income, and still-lives would also be painted.

The name "Impressionism" was coined by the French art critic Louis Leroy, after visiting the first exhibition of Impressionist [painting](#) in 1874 where he saw *Impression: Soleil Levant* (1872) by Claude Monet. Ironically, Monet only decided on the title when completing the exhibition catalogue, and almost named the work *View of the Harbour at Le Havre*! In total, between 1874 and 1882, the Impressionists staged seven exhibitions, all in Paris.



Dancers Preparing for an Audition (c.1882) by Edgar Degas.

### Famous Impressionist Painters

Famous artists of the Impressionist movement included [Claude Monet](#) (1840-1926), [Camille Pissarro](#) (1830-1903), [Pierre-Auguste Renoir](#) (1841-1919), [Alfred Sisley](#) (1839-1899), [Edgar Degas](#) (1834-1917), [Edouard Manet](#) (1832-83), [Paul Cezanne](#), and [Berthe Morisot](#) (1841-95)

Each painter had a differing approach to art and to their development as an artist. Manet, noted for his modern approach to [oil painting](#) and his revolutionary reinterpretations of Neo-classical themes, was primarily interested in regaining influence via the *Salon*. Pissarro was a great teacher, Sisley something of a loner, Renoir alternated between figurative and landscape work, while Cezanne was shy and hampered by family issues. Degas, perhaps the most complex individual, initially hated plein-air painting and preferred working in his studio, where he would demonstrate amazing versatility in drawing, watercolours, pastels, and sculpture. Only Monet was completely and confidentially committed to the group's goal of mastering the depiction of light.



Boulevard Monmartre, Rainy Weather, Afternoon (1897) by Camille Pissarro.

### Impressionist Style of Painting

Pure Impressionism, as advocated by Monet, was outdoor [plein-air painting](#), supreme examples being his series of paintings of haystacks and water lilies. Impressionist artists sought to capture fleeting moments, and if, during these moments, an object appeared orange - due to the falling light or its reflection - then the artist painted the object orange. Naturalist colour schemes, being devised in theory or at least in the studio, did not allow for this. Thus Impressionism offered a whole new pictorial language - and indirectly heralded the coming 20th century style of Cubism.

### Impressionists Break Up

By the 1880s, after a series of successful exhibitions in Paris, the Impressionist movement began to fragment.

Some members, the purists like Monet, preferred to focus

almost exclusively on the study of light. Others, like Pissarro and Sisley continued painting plein-air landscapes, but without Monet's ideological fervour. Renoir travelled and focused on figurative works - in nature and in the studio. Degas settled on genre studies and other studio work, after a period of interest in painting racehorses. Cezanne left Paris, settled in Aix-en-Provence and focused on his quest to discover natural forms - a task in which he succeeded brilliantly, inspiring Picasso and Braque to develop their early Cubist style of painting.

### **Later Impressionists: Neo-Impressionism, Post-Impressionism**

The slightly younger generation of painters were less content to be dictated to by nature (or Monet), and preferred instead to experiment with colour (eg. [Henri Matisse](#) 1869-1954, [Paul Gauguin](#) 1848-1903 and the [Fauvists](#)), with colour theory (eg. the apostle of [Neo-Impressionism](#), the tragically short-lived [Georges Seurat](#) 1859-91), with everyday scenes (eg. [Toulouse-Lautrec](#) 1864-1901, Mary Cassatt, 1844-1926 and [Edouard Vuillard](#) 1868-1940), or with forms of expressionism (eg. [Vincent Van Gogh](#) 1853-90). Around these Impressionist-influenced artists, coalesced a general movement known as [Post-Impressionism](#). An important contributor to Impressionist portrait art was [John Singer Sargent](#) (1856-1925) an American friend of Claude Monet, who returned from France to settle in London in 1885.

### **The Impact of Impressionism on Western Art**

Impressionism is probably the best-loved as well as the single most identifiable style in the [history of Western art](#). Although not as *overtly* revolutionary as [modern art movements](#) such as Cubism, anti-art [Dada](#), or [Surrealism](#), its impact on [Modern Art](#) was enormous. It set entirely new standards for how artists "saw" and depicted nature - influencing generations of painters including numerous artistic communes, at Grez-Sur-Loing, Pont-Aven, and Concarneau - and paved the way for the new international style of [Expressionism](#). It continues to exert a significant influence on painting, even today.

### **Famous French Impressionist Paintings**

#### **Claude Monet**

Impression: Soleil Levant/Sunrise' (1872), Musee Marmottan.  
Haystack in the Morning, Snow Effect (1891), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Haystack, Sunset (1890-1891), [Museum of Fine Arts Boston](#).

Rouen Cathedral Facade (sunset) (1892-1894), Musée Marmottan-Monet.

Bridge over a Pool of Water Lilies (1899), [Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY](#).

Water Lilies (1907), Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo.

Water Lilies (1914-1917), Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio.

Water Lilies (1916), The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo.

Weeping Willow (1918-1919), Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth.

### **Edouard Manet**

The Bar at the Folies-Bergere (1882), Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

### **Other Celebrated Impressionist Paintings**

#### **Pierre-Auguste Renoir**

Nude in the Sunlight (1876), Musee d'Orsay.

Le Moulin de la Galette (1876), Musee d'Orsay.

The Boating Party (1881), [Phillips Collection](#), Washington DC.

#### **Edgar Degas**

The Absinthe Drinker (1876), Musee D'Orsay.

Prima Ballerina (1876-77), Musee d'Orsay.

Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen [sculpture] (c.1881), Tate Modern, London.

Nude Wiping Her Left Foot (1886), Musee D'Orsay.

#### **Alfred Sisley**

Snow at Louveciennes (1878), Musee d'Orsay.

The Bridge at Moret (1893), Musee d'Orsay.

#### **Camille Pissarro**

Foxhill: Upper Norwood (1870), National Gallery, London.

Boulevard Monmartre, Rainy Weather, Afternoon (1897)

Private collection.

### **British Impressionism**

French Impressionist art theory was introduced to Britain around 1863 by [James McNeil Whistler](#) (1834-1903) from 1863 when he settled in London. Styles of Impressionism were then developed by his pupils **Walter Sickert** (1860-1942) and others, and exhibited by the New English Art Club. Examples of Impressionist works painted in Britain include: *Girls Running, Walberswick Pier* (1888-94) by **Philip Wilson Steer**, and *The Piazzetta and the Old Campanile, Venice* (c.1901) by **Walter Richard Sickert**.



**Bathers at Asnieres (1884)** by Georges Seurat, founder of Neo-Impressionism and inventor of Pointillism.

## Post-Impressionist Art

In fine art, the term Post-Impressionist denotes the work of a group of French artists attempting to progress beyond the pure (or narrow) [Impressionism](#) of Claude Monet and his followers, during the late 19th century and early years of the 20th century. [Post-Impressionist painters](#) include: [Georges Seurat](#) (1859-1891), [Paul Cezanne](#) (1839-1906), [Vincent Van Gogh](#) (1853-90), [Toulouse-Lautrec](#) (1864-1901), [Henri Matisse](#) (1869-1954), [Paul Gauguin](#) (1848-1903), and [Edouard Vuillard](#) (1868-1940). Specific schools such as Fauvism, Pointillism and Les Nabis are also Post-Impressionist.



**The Cardplayers (1892)** by Cezanne.

**Georges Seurat**, along with his disciple **Paul Signac** (1863-1935), was the founder of [Neo-Impressionism](#), the name given to the Divisionist technique (also called pointillism) which aimed to establish a scientific basis for Impressionism through the optical mixture of colours. Divisionism adhered to the colour theories of M Chevreul, as elaborated in his 1839 book *De La Loi du Contraste Simultanée des Couleurs* (concerning the law of the simultaneous contrast of colours).

Instead of mixing colour on the palette and then applying it to the canvas, a process believed to reduce luminosity, Divisionists added tiny dabs of pure colour directly to the canvas, side by side, thus allowing them to 'mix' in the viewer's eye. Among Seurat's famous Pointillist pictures are *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grange Jatte* (1884) and *Bathers at Asnieres* (1884). Camille and Lucien Pissarro were also occasional practitioners of Divisionism.



**Les Grandes Baigneuses (1906)** by Paul Cezanne.

**Paul Cezanne**, considered by some art historians to be the father of modern art for his influence over [Picasso](#) and [Cubism](#), became determined to take a classical approach to [plein-air painting](#) as practised by the Impressionists. His carefully structured landscape compositions and still-lives were built up in different chunks or planes at a painstakingly slow speed (the fruit in his still life paintings used to rot while he painted it!), so as to optimize the effects that each plane brought to the overall composition. This subjugation of natural content to form and structure, had a huge impact on Pablo Picasso and [Georges Braque](#), who developed it further into their Cubist philosophy of art. Famous works by Cezanne include: *The Cardplayers* (1892), *Montagne Sainte-Victoire with Trees and a House* (1882), *Still Life with Basket* (1890), *The Boy in the Red Waistcoat* (1894), *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (1895), and *Les Grandes Baigneuses* (The Large Bathers) (1900-05).



Cafe Terrace at Night (1888) by Vincent Van Gogh.

**Vincent Van Gogh** only painted for the last ten years of his tragically short life, but in total contrast to the snail-like Cezanne, once he started he couldn't stop, painting nearly 900 pictures at an average of one every four days. Most are autobiographical, inadvertently charting his emotional decline and ultimate collapse. His [painting](#) demonstrates an emotional intensity of colour and brushstroke, as he attempted to convey his personal feelings of what he saw.

All his life is in his paintings, (especially his self-portraits) from the dark and enclosed coarseness of *The Potato Eaters* (1885), to the soaringly optimistic yellows of his Sunflowers series, followed by the gnarled twisted branches of *The Olive Pickers* (1889), and the threatening black birds in *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890). Not surprisingly, Van Gogh became an icon for following generations of [expressionist painters](#) whose art purposefully distorted form and colour in order to express feelings.



Wheatfield with Crows (1888) by Vincent Van Gogh.

Other famous works by Van Gogh include: *The Old Mill* (1888), *Bridge at Arles* (1888), *View of Arles with Irises* (1888), *The Bedroom at Arles* (1888), *Sunflowers* (1888), *Cypresses* (1889), *View of Arles (Flowering Orchards)* (1889), *The Olive Trees* (1889), *Starry Night* (1889), *Portrait of Dr Gachet* (1890).

For his part, **Paul Gauguin** developed a simplified non-naturalistic style of painting - known as Synthetism - characterized by decorative line and flat patches of bold colour. Sadly, his paintings failed to sell and he died a pauper in the South Pacific.

**Henri Matisse**, the leader of [Fauvism](#), succeeded in freeing colour from its traditional uses, and in the process changed how painters worked, for ever. His contribution to Post-Impressionism cannot be over-estimated.

**Edouard Vuillard** was an extremely gifted and modern painter best known for his magical 'intimist' style of patterned flickering colour. His masterpieces include the genre paintings: *In the Garden* (1894-5) and *Women Sewing Before a Garden* (1895). A pioneer of simple design and tonal sympathy. One of the most underrated artists, although his works are in prestigious collections such as the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, the National Gallery in Washington DC and the Art Institute of Chicago.

### **Les Nabis (1891-1899)**

The late nineteenth century school known as Les Nabis, was a group of Post-Impressionist artists and illustrators based in Paris, who became highly influential in the area of [graphic art](#). Their focus on design was echoed in the parallel [Art Nouveau](#) movement. Important members of Les Nabis included Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947), Ker Xavier Roussel (1867-1944), Felix

Vallotton (1865-1925), Maurice Denis (1870-1943) and Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940).

### **British Post-Impressionists: The Camden Town Group**

Founded in 1911 in London by **Walter Sickert** (1860-1942), the Camden Town Group (named after Sickert's down-at-heel home district in North London) specialized in realist scenes of city life executed in a range of Post-Impressionist styles and held three exhibitions at the Carfax Gallery in 1911 and 1912. Group members included: Robert Bevan (1865-1925), Spencer Gore (1878-1914), Harold Gilman (1876-1919), and Charles Isaac Ginner (1878-1952).

### **The Group of Seven (1920-1960s)**

Strongly influenced by Post-Impressionism, the Group of Seven were Canadian landscape artists who created bold, highly-coloured paintings, often infusing their compositions with symbolic meanings. The members of the group included **Tom Thomson**, as well as Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945), AJ Casson (1898-1992), Lionel Fitzgerald (1890-1956), Arthur Lismer (1885-1969), Lawren Harris (1885-1970), Edwin Holgate (1892-1977), AY Jackson (1882-1974), JEH MacDonald (1873-1932), and FH Varley (1881-1969).

## **Fauvism**

History of Colourist Fauvist Style of Painting by 'Les Fauves'. Originated Paris. Art Movement Championed by Henri Matisse.

[Encyclopedia of Irish and World Art - HOMEPAGE](#)

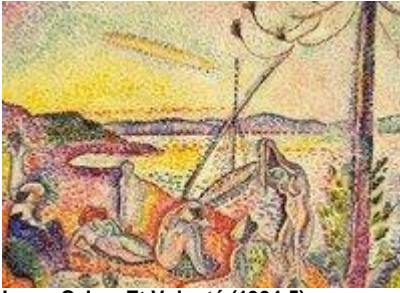


Harmony in Red (The Dinner Table) (1908) by Henri Matisse.

### **Fauvist Art (c.1900-1908)**

In fine art, the term Fauvist denotes a short-lived colourist movement which formed around friendships between French artists around the turn of the century. The name '**Fauves**' was coined at the 1905 [Salon d'Automne](#) exhibition in Paris, by the art critic Louis Vauxcelles who insultingly described the vividly coloured paintings as being the work of wild beasts (fauves), and the name stuck. An outgrowth of the French [Post-Impressionism](#) movement, Fauvism can be considered a mix of Seurat's Divisionism and Van Gogh's [expressionism](#). It was also influenced by the work of other [Post-Impressionist painters](#), notably [Paul Gauguin](#).





Luxe, Calme Et Volupté (1904-5)  
which echoes the Pointillism of

The leading members of the Parisian Fauvist school were [Henri Matisse](#) (1869-1954) and [Andre Derain](#) (1880-1954), who had studied together in 1897, as well as [Maurice de Vlaminck](#) (1876-1958) a friend of Derain.

Other members included the later Cubist [Georges Braque](#) (1882-1963), [Raoul Dufy](#) (1877-1953), [Albert Marquet](#) (1875-1947) and [Georges Rouault](#) (1871-1958). A favourite place of congregation was Collioure in the South of France.

At the root of Fauvist philosophy was Derain's notion of '**colour for colour's sake**'. The style can be traced back to Pointillism and Post-Impressionism, but it moved away from the harmony of the latter towards a bolder, more primitive form of expression. Thus the dotted motif was replaced with freely applied wide chunky brushstrokes of pure colour, and compositions were relatively simply, sometimes abstract.



Landscape with Red Trees (1906)  
by Maurice de Vlaminck.

The prominence in France of Cezanne, combined with the advent of Cubism in the late 1900s, denied Fauvism its position as the most radical trend in [fine art painting](#) in Paris. Despite this the Fauvist style influenced a number of visiting artists from Poland and Russia, and was a significant influence on many of the [expressionist painters](#). By 1907, many Fauvists had moved on to explore other styles, although Henri Matisse remained fascinated by [colour in painting](#) for the remainder of his life, producing his immortal series of Blue Nudes shortly before he died. As the foremost modern colourist in modern art, he continues to be the leading icon in the world of colour for many twentieth century artists.



The Harbour of Collioure (1905)  
by Andre Derain.

### Famous Fauvist-style Paintings

By Henri Matisse: Harmony in Red (The Dinner Table) (1908), Hermitage Gallery, St Petersburg; Portrait of Mme Matisse (1912-13), Hermitage Gallery, St Petersburg; Luxe, Calme et Volupte (1904), Musee d'Orsay; and Blue Nude IV (1952), Musee matisse, Nice-Cimiez. By Andre Derain: The Harbour of Collioure (1905), Private Collection; and Charing Cross Bridge (1906), National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. By Maurice de Vlaminck: Tugboat at Chatou (1906) Private Collection.

### The Scottish Colourists

The vivid palette of French Fauvist style art was introduced to Britain by a group of four Scottish artists, JD Fergusson, Cadell, Hunter, and Samuel John Peploe. Fergusson himself visited Paris regularly from the 1890s on, living there from 1907-14. Examples of Scottish fauvism include: Café-Concert des Ambassadeurs (1907) by JD Fergusson, and Tulips (1923) by Samuel John Peploe.

# Expressionist Art

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- [What is the History of Expressionism?](#)
- [How Did Expressionism Develop?](#)
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## What is Expressionist Art?

Expressionism is intensely personal. The expressionist artist strives to convey his personal feelings about the object painted, rather than merely record his observation of it. Thus, in order to achieve maximum impact on the viewer, representational accuracy is sacrificed (distorted) in favour of (eg) strong outlines and bold colours. Compositions tend to be simpler and more direct, and are often characterized by thick

### Irish Colourists

[Roderic O'Connor](#) exemplified the colourist trend in Irish art of the early 20th century, while artists of the contemporary era include [Denise Cassidy](#).

- For other art movements and periods, see: [History of Art](#).

impasto paint, loose, freely applied brushstrokes, and occasional [symbolism](#). The message is all-important.



The Scream (1893) by Edvard Munch.

### Expressionism As a General Style

As you can see from the above explanation, expressionism, is really a general style of art - rather than a specific movement. Thus, one might argue that expressionism really began with prehistoric [cave painting](#), was continued by anonymous artists throughout Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages, before being taken up by Italian Renaissance artists like [Donatello](#) (1386-1466), Northerners like [Roger Van der Weyden](#) (1400-1464), [Hieronymus Bosch](#) (1450-1516) and [Matthias Grunewald](#) (c.1475-1528), Mannerists like [El Greco](#), and artists throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, up to mid-20th century masters like [Francis Bacon](#) (1909-1992) and Georg Baselitz (b.1938).

In short, as a general style of painting and sculpture, expressionism has always existed, and will always continue to exist.



Self-Portrait In Olive And Brown (1945) by Max Beckmann.

### The History of Expressionism

As a *movement*, the term 'Expressionism' usually denotes the late-19th century, early-20th century schools of emotive or interpretive art, which emerged mainly in Germany and Paris as a *reaction* to the more passive style of Impressionism. In the sense that it was a reaction to Impressionism, we may describe expressionism as an example of "[post-Impressionism](#)". In any event, whereas Impressionist painters sought only to reproduce nature (notably the effects of sunlight), [Expressionist painters](#) sought to express their feelings about what they saw. It was a more active, more subjective type of [art](#).

The archetyp



Portrait of Frau Reuther (c.1921) by Oskar Kokoschka. One of the great [expressionist portraits](#).

### Pioneers of Expressionism

[Van Gogh](#) (1853-90) exemplifies expressionism. Not only were most of his pictures autobiographical, in that they chronicled his thoughts, feelings and mental equilibrium, but even the composition, colours and brushwork of his paintings were a close reflection of his feelings as he painted. Few artists have since equalled his genuine intensity of self-expression.

If Van Gogh distorted form and colour to convey his inner feelings, the French artist [Paul Gauguin](#) (1848-1903) relied on colour to express his emotions. He also employed symbolism, but it was his [colour in painting](#) that truly set him apart. As well as expressionism, he also influenced the

development of Synthetism, Cloisonism, and Primitivism.

The third great pioneer of expressionism was [Edvard Munch](#) (1863-1944), the neurotic Norwegian painter and printmaker who, despite being emotionally scarred in early life, managed to live to over 80 years of age. However, nearly all his best pictures were painted before his nervous breakdown in 1908.

### **How Did Expressionism Develop?**

Although one might say that the *Worpswede* group (1889-1905) in Germany and to a lesser extent *Les Nabis* group in Paris, were expressionistic, the first distinct style of expressionism to emerge was [Fauvism](#), whose exponents included [Henri Matisse](#) (1869-1954), [Andre Derain](#) (1880-1954), Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958), Georges Braque (1882-1963), Raoul Dufy (1877-1953), Albert Marquet (1875-1947) and Georges Rouault (1871-1958). Characterized by violent and vivid colours, fauvist paintings were first exhibited at the 1905 *Salon d'Automne* exhibition in Paris. However, the movement was short-lived.

Expressionism really took root in Germany, in Dresden, Munich and Berlin. Three separate groups emerged, which are collectively referred to by art historians as [German Expressionism](#): *Die Brucke* (1905-13), *Der Blaue Reiter* (1909-14), and the post-war *Die Neue Sachlichkeit* (1920s).

#### **Die Brucke (1905-13) (The Bridge)**

Based in Dresden, this group combined traditional German art with African, Post-Impressionist and Fauvist styles. Important members included: [Ernst Ludwig Kirchner](#) (1880-1938), Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976), Erich Heckel (1883-1970), [Emil Nolde](#) (1867-1956), and Max Pechstein (1881-1955).

#### **Der Blaue Reiter (1909-14) (The Blue Rider)**

Based in Munich, it was named after a Kandinsky painting from the cover of their 1912 Manifesto. The group included a number of avant-garde artists, such as Alexei von Jawlensky (1864-1941), [Wassily Kandinsky](#) (1866-1944), [Paul Klee](#) (1879-1940), and [Franz Marc](#) (1880-1916).

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1. No. 5, 1948 (1948) Jackson Pollock

**EVOLUTION OF VISUAL ART**  
For details of art movements and styles, see: [History of Art](#).

## Abstract Expressionism

"Abstract Expressionism" is a vague term which refers to a general movement of largely non-representative painting, which flourished in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. Spearheaded by a generation of American artists - strongly influenced by European expatriates - who had grown up during the Depression and were influenced both by World War II and its Cold War aftermath, the movement was neither wholly [abstract](#) nor [expressionist](#) and encompassed several quite different styles. Even so, the diverse exponents of Abstract Expressionism had several aims in common, not least a desire to redefine the nature of painting and in the process create a new [type of art](#).

Leading practitioners included: **Jackson Pollock** (1912-56), his wife **Lee Krasner** (1908-1984), **Franz Kline** (1910-62), **Robert Motherwell** (1915-1991), **Willem De Kooning** (1904-1997), **Mark Rothko** (1903-70), **Clyfford Still** (1904-80), **Barnett Newman** (1905-70), **Josef Albers** (1888-1976), **Philip Guston** (1913-80), **Adolph Gottlieb** (1903-1974), and **William Bazotes** (1912-63).



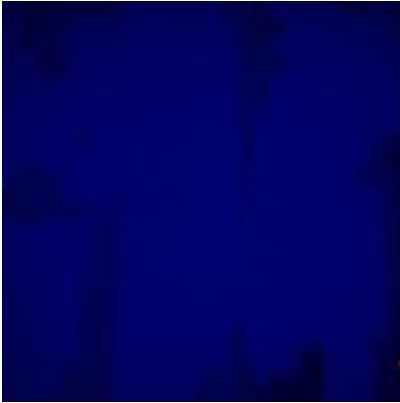
Woman V (1952). Willem De Kooning

**HISTORY OF FINE ARTS**  
For more about the evolution of oils, acrylics, watercolours and other types of paintings, as well as famous artists, see: [Fine Art Painting](#).

The term "Abstract Expressionism" was initially coined in Europe to describe works by [German Expressionist](#) painters. Only later, in 1946, was it applied to [American art](#) by the art critic Robert Coates. An alternative label, "Action Painting", was coined in 1952 by **Harold Rosenberg** who, along with Clement Greenberg, was the most influential critic and apologist of the new movement, which became known also as "The New York School." By 1955, Abstract Expressionism had become almost a new orthodoxy, matched by parallel or dependent movements in Western Europe under various titles, such as "Tachisme" "Art Informel" and "Abstraction Lyrique". It was an expression of fervent individualism and the Communist cultures of Eastern Europe rejected it entirely.

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M (1950) Clyfford Still

## History

The America of the 1940s, from which Abstract Expressionism emerged, was still reeling from the collapse of world order triggered by World War II. This was a major influence on the country's artists - many of whom still remembered The Great Depression and its relief programs like the Works Progress Administration which had afforded them the opportunity to develop a painting career, and they began searching for ways of responding to the uncertain climate.

The problem was that the two main art movements of the 1930s - namely, *Regionalism* and *Social Realism* - failed to satisfy their desire for a break with current thinking. In this, they were strongly influenced by the arrival of numerous modern artist refugees from Europe, whose radical approach to art opened up a series of new possibilities.



Orange & Yellow (1956)  
By Mark Rothko, famous for his large-scale [colour painting](#).

These exiles included figures like the Armenian-born **Arshile Gorky** (1905-48), who settled in the US in 1920, German-born **Hans Hofmann** (1880-1966) who migrated to America in 1930, as well as the German Expressionist George Grosz (1893-1959), the Cubist [Fernand Leger](#) (1881-1955), the Bauhaus abstract painter **Josef Albers** (1888-1976) and the geometrical abstractionist [Piet Mondrian](#) (1872-1944). Other influential immigrants included the [Dada](#) artist [Marcel Duchamp](#) (1887-1968), and the Surrealists Yves Tanguy (1900-55), Andre Masson (1896-1987), Max Ernst (1891-1976) and Andre Breton (1896-1966). The [Surrealist artists](#) were especially influential, with their idea of unconscious 'automatic' painting which was taken up by Jackson Pollock and others.

The significance of these artists for the new American movement was acknowledged as early as 1944 by Jackson Pollock himself: "The fact that good European Moderns are now here is very important for they bring with them an understanding of the problems of modern painting."



Homage to the Square: Apparition (1959)  
Josef Albers.

The exchange of ideas was assisted in New York by a growing infrastructure of venues and exhibitions promoting modern art, such as **The Museum of Modern Art** (founded 1929) which hosted exhibitions of [Cubism](#), various other styles of abstract art, Dada, Fantastic Art and Surrealism, along with retrospectives of Leger, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso, among others. Works by Gabo, Mondrian, El Lissitzky, and other avant-garde artists were also shown at Albert Gallatin's **Museum of Living Art**. Another venue was the **Museum of Non-Objective Painting** (founded 1939), the forerunner of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, which was noted for its collection of paintings by Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). The themes and ideas of European modernism were also disseminated through education. The German artist immigrant Hans

Hofmann became a huge influence on painters, critics and the development of American modern art through his New York art school where he taught from 1933 until 1958. Lastly, one should not underestimate the role of famous American private patrons and collectors - notably **Peggy Guggenheim** (1898-1979) - who were active and creative agents for the new movement.

### **Key Figures in the Development of Abstract Expressionism**

Among indigenous painters, a key transitional figure linking pre-war with post-war American art was **Stuart Davis** (1894-1964), who brought a focused integrity to his pursuit of pictorial structure. (In a curious parallel with George Stubbs' months-long study of horse carcasses in order to improve his knowledge of equine anatomy Davis closeted himself for a long period in 1927 to study an egg beater). His contribution can be seen as an American extension of Cubism: he was at times close to Fernand Leger, but he used colour very differently, bright and clear, solid and flat. This together with his conspicuous modernity, his use of the banal vocabulary of everyday urban life, was a decisive influence on artists of the 1940s and 1950s and then on Pop Art. Also significant were the **Precisionists**, a loosely unified group who portrayed contemporary America in a hard-edged, boldly coloured version of Cubism. For a time they included Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), who in a long career developed an increasingly abstract imagery, based on magnified organic forms and the rolling windswept plains of Texas.

But the two main forerunners of Abstract Expressionism were **Arshile Gorky** and **Hans Hofmann**. Gorky by 1942 had arrived at a very free, calligraphic brushwork, very bright in colour, often entirely without figurative reference. "I never finish a painting, I just stop working on it for a while." Hofmann established a profoundly influential school in New York where he not only provided a forcefully articulated theoretical support for non-figurative art, but remained very open to the stimulus of the new. In particular he reflected symbolist ideas of the independence of the world of art from the world of appearances: he used colour to express mood as Kandinsky had, yet retained a feeling for structure that derives from [Paul Cezanne](#) (1839-1906) and Cubism. Anticipating Pollock, he even experimented with "drip" techniques in 1940, but his own most magical colouristic inventions, coming at the end of his life, express a radiant serenity very different from anything Pollock produced. Among Hofmann's acolytes was the art critic **Clement Greenberg**, a vigorous advocate of Abstract Expressionism, and among his students was the artist Lee Krasner who introduced Hofmann to her husband Jackson Pollock.

## The Two Styles

In simple terms, the Abstract Expressionism movement encompassed two broad groupings. These included: the so-called "**action painters**" such as **Jackson Pollock** and **Willem De Kooning** who focused on an active gestural style, and the more passive "**colour-field**" painters, notably **Mark Rothko**, **Barnett Newman** and **Clyfford Still**, who were concerned with reflection and mood. That said, it is not always easy to draw the line between these two types of Abstract Expressionism, and several artists contributed to both.

## Action Painting

In 1947, [Jackson Pollock](#) developed a radical new technique (one that both Hofmann and Krasner had tried earlier), which involved dripping thinned paint onto raw canvas laid on the ground using wide and rhythmic sweeps of a large and loaded brush (if a brush was used) or, more usually direct from the can - a far cry from the traditional painterly method whereby pigment was applied by brush to a canvas on an easel. Pollock worked in a highly spontaneous improvisatory manner, famously dancing around the canvas pouring, throwing and dripping paint onto it. By doing this, he claimed to be channelling his inner impulses directly onto the canvas, in a form of automatic or subconscious painting.

Pollock's paintings smashed all conventions of traditional American art. Their subject matter was entirely abstract, their scale was huge, and their iconoclastic production method became almost as important as the works themselves. This was because, for these Abstract Expressionists, the authenticity of a painting lay in its directness and immediacy of expression: in how the artist conveyed his inner impulses, his unconscious being. In a sense, the painting itself became an event, a drama of self-revelation. Hence the term "action painting".

An important feature of this "event" was the "all-over" or shapeless character of the paintings. Pollock's works in particular seemed to flow beyond the canvas, being cut off only by the physical limits of the canvas edges.

In short, Pollock (and others) jettisoned all the traditional concepts of composition, space, volume and depth, allowing the flatness of the picture plane to take centre stage. Not surprisingly, the paintings caused a sensation. The New York Times art critic John Canaday was highly critical, but Clement Greenberg proclaimed abstract expressionism in general and Jackson Pollock in particular, as the epitome of aesthetic value, enthusiastically supporting Pollock's work on formalistic grounds as the best painting of its day and the heir to an art tradition - stretching back to the Cubism of Pablo Picasso, the cube-like pictures of Paul Cézanne and the Water Lily series of [Claude Monet](#) - whose defining characteristic is the making of marks on a flat surface. Harold Rosenberg highlighted the



"existential" nature of Pollock's work, stating that "what was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event".

Although [Willem De Kooning](#) is also grouped with Pollock in the highly charged active type of Abstract Expressionism, his works are different both technically and aesthetically to those of the latter. His violent and sinister *Women* series of six paintings (1950-3), portraying a three-quarter-length female figure, exemplified his figurative style, although he also produced more abstract works. However, like Pollock, De Kooning was a strong believer in the idea that an artist acted out his inner impulses, and that something of his emotion or state of mind could be read by the viewer in the resulting paint marks. "I paint this way because I can keep putting more and more things into it – drama, anger, pain, love... through your eyes it again becomes an emotion or an idea."

Other important contributors to action painting included: Franz Kline, an artist whose works include colour field compositions as well as vigorous gestural work, sometimes compared to gigantically enlarged fragments of Chinese calligraphy); Robert Motherwell (in his series entitled *Elegy to the Spanish Republic*, and his powerful black and white paintings); Cy Twombly (in his gestural works based on calligraphic, linear symbols), Lee Krasner and others.

Artists associated with the technique of action-painting continue to be highly sought-after by collectors. Both Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning feature in the world's [Top 10 Most Expensive Paintings](#).

### **Colour Field Painting**

Evolving slightly later than action-painting was a second style of Abstract Expressionism, which became known as Colour Field Painting. (An offshoot of this style was Josef Albers' *Homage to the Square* series.) It emerged as several important artists in America in the late 1940s and 1950s (eg. Mark Rothko, Clyfford Stills, Barnett Newman) were experimenting with the use of flat areas or fields of colour to induce contemplation in the viewer - even to a pitch of mystic intensity. They were very much on the passive wing of the Abstract Expressionist movement, in contrast to the agitation of Pollock or De Kooning, though it is hard to draw a definitive dividing line. Clyfford Stills' work, for example, can be thunderous in mood but is positively severe in contrast with Pollock's action. The work of these artists was on a very large scale, in which it differed sharply from the related investigations of Albers and others, the scale being necessary to the creation of the effect.

The impulse behind Colour Field painting was reflective and cerebral, characterized by simple pictorial imagery designed to create emotional impact. Rothko and Newman, among others, described their desire to achieve the "sublime" rather than the "beautiful." A type of highly coloured minimalism, their style (according to Newman) aimed to liberate the artist from "all

constraints of memory, association, nostalgia, legend, and myth that have been the devices of Western European painting." Rothko's own soft-edged rectangular shapes of glowing colour sought to envelop the viewer and trigger a semi-religious emotional experience, to the point of tears. Like Pollock and the action-painters, colour field paintings were executed on a monumental scale for optimum impact - not to invoke heroic grandeur but rather to influence and create an intimate relationship with the individual spectator. Rothko said, "I paint big to be intimate."

The most distinguished of these colour-field painters was [Mark Rothko](#). He has been described, along with Clyfford Still as the chief exponent of the "American Sublime". He first showed in 1929 and by about 1940 was working in a Surrealistic vein. By 1947, however, he was evolving the formula to which he was to remain faithful for the rest of his life. This formula, though generally interpreted on a monumental scale is almost as simple as Albers' square. Rothko's paintings typically comprise two or three horizontal or vertical rectangles of different colours, varying in width or in height, on an even coloured background. The rectangles are filled with colour, which is washed or stained with shifting tones and luminous intensities, and their edges blur into soft-focus. This blurring of edges makes the colour seem to float. So powerful and intense is the impression of mysterious radiance flooding from these great canvases, that viewers themselves can also experience a floating sensation.

[Clyfford Still](#), always a detached figure, also worked on a very large scale. His signature style being a heavily [impasted](#), jagged form, silhouetted in dramatic contrast against a broad, even plane of colour.

Barnett Newman, associated with Rothko and Motherwell in the founding of an Art School on 8th Avenue, New York in 1947, worked for a time on the magazine *The Tiger's Eye*, which voiced the opinion of many of the group. In his mature work he arrived at even more simplified solutions than Rothko and was never influenced by the gestural painting of Pollock. In his formula, however, the mystical aim is distilled down to the sparsest symbolic geometry, involving a rectangular canvas featuring an area of colour divided by one or more vertical stripes. His work is unimpassioned in character and essentially cool.

Other Colour Field artists included William Baziotis, who was close in mood both to Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, except he developed a style that verged on the figurative as their's never did. His paintings contain often relatively complex shapes suggestive of animate or inanimate forms; Philip Guston (1913-80), who had his own highly personal variation, sometimes called "Abstract [Impressionism](#)", from which he moved on to a more expressive style in the late 1950s; Adolf Gottlieb, a close contemporary of Clyfford Stills, exploited Surrealist imagery in the 1930s but was also deeply interested in Indian Art and from this he developed in the

1940s his so-called "Pictographs" characterised by very Freudian imagery. Another important figure in the development of Colour Field painting was Helen Frankenthaler (b.1928), who began as a Cubist before exploring Abstract Expressionist styles in the early 1950s, making a significant development of Pollock's "drip" technique.

Mark Rothko's painting *White Center* (1950) sold at auction in 2007 for a record \$72.8 million. See the World's [Top 20 Most Expensive Paintings](#).

### **Josef Albers: Homage to the Square**

An offshoot of Colour Field art which explored harmony and proportion in Abstract Expressionism, was developed by the German painter [Josef Albers](#), from 1933 a teacher at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. In his teaching he investigated the relations between geometry and colour in a series of paintings, entitled *Variations on a Theme*. After moving to Yale in 1950, he began his sequence called ***Homage to the Square***. This massive body of work consisted of hundreds of paintings and prints all within a square format. Though they vary in size they all feature three or four squares superimposed - a nest of squares positioned with vertical but not horizontal symmetry. Albers used the formula to demonstrate his abiding belief in an essential dichotomy of art - "the discrepancy between physical fact and physic effect" - thus the linear structure of his square pictures is of the most simple clarity. The colour structure is created likewise in evenly applied paint, straight from the tube. The colour of each of the three or four squares usually has no variation of intensity, and so is completely inexpressive of any quality other than it's particular tone. In the eyes of the onlooker, the flat picture plane becomes three-dimensional as one colour seems to advance, another to recede, according to its contrasting nature. Furthermore, the pure evenness of colour within each square is affected optically by its reaction to its neighbours, and all the colours change in character as the light in which they are seen, changes.

Some art critics have compared Albers' *Homage to the Square* series to Claude Monet's famous Water Lily paintings, except Albers' heirs were the Americans of the late 1950s and 1960s who, while respecting the Abstract Expressionism achievement, found in his work a pattern and an intense colour sensation on which they could build. Later again, his interest in perception became relevant for Op Art and even [Conceptual Art](#).

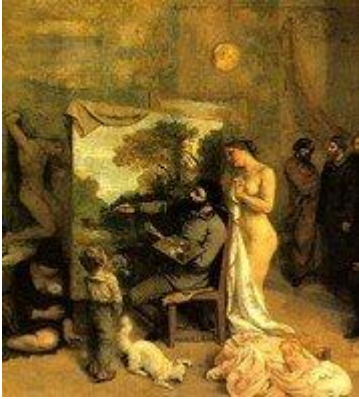
### **Legacy**

The first generation of Abstract Expressionist artists flourished between 1943 and the mid-1950s. They had a major impact on the reputation of American painting, leading to the establishment of New York as the centre of world art. The style was introduced to Paris in the 1950s by Canadian artist **Jean-Paul Riopelle** (1923-2002), who received great

assistance from Michel Tapié's seminal book, *Un Art Autre* (1952). **Michel Tapié** also promoted the works of Jackson Pollock and Hans Hofmann in Europe. At the same time, several new sub-movements like **Hard-edge painting** - exemplified by artists like Ad Reinhardt (1913-67), Frank Stella (b.1936), Jules Olitski (b.1922) and Al Held (b.1928) - and **Lyrical Abstraction**, along with certain types of geometric abstraction, began to emerge, that eliminated some of the more subjective elements of the first generation Abstract Expressionism. For example, in the early 1960s, a purely abstract form of Colour Field painting appeared in works by Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis (1912-62), Kenneth Noland (b.1924) and others. It dispensed with the emotional, or religious content of the earlier style of Abstract Expressionism, as well as the highly personal or gestural application associated with it. In 1964, the art critic Clement Greenberg curated an influential exhibition ("**Post-Painterly Abstraction**") of works by 31 artists associated with this development at the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#). The show subsequently travelled to important art museums across America. Meanwhile in Britain during the 1960s, a new variant of Colour Field painting appeared in works by Robyn Denny, John Hoyland, Richard Smith and others.

By the 1960s, the movement's initial affect had been assimilated, yet its methods and proponents remained highly influential in art, affecting profoundly the work of many artists who followed.

By the 1960s, the main effects of Abstract Expressionism had been thoroughly absorbed, although its themes and techniques continued to influence later artists from a variety of different schools, including Op Art, Fluxus, Pop Art, [Minimalism](#), Post-Minimalism, Neo-Expressionism, and others.



The Painter's Studio (1855) by Gustave Courbet.

# Realism

## (19th & 20th Century)

From 1400 to 1800, Western art was dominated by Renaissance-inspired academic theories of idealized painting and high art executed in the Grand Manner. Thereafter, partly caused by the huge social changes triggered by the Industrial Revolution, there was a greater focus on realism of subject, that is subject matter *outside* the high art tradition. The term Realism was promoted by the French novelist Champfleury during the 1840s, although it began in earnest in 1855, with an Exposition by the French painter [Gustave Courbet](#) (1819-77), after one of his paintings (The Painter's Studio) had been rejected by the Universal Exhibition. Courbet set up his own marquee nearby and issued a manifesto to accompany his personal exhibition. It was entitled **Le Realisme**.



The Laundress (1860-1) by Honore Daumier.

### Genres

The style of Realism spread to almost all genres, including History painting, portraits, genre-painting, and landscapes. For example, landscape artists went out to the provinces in search of the 'real' France, setting up artistic colonies in places like [Barbizon](#), and later at Grez-Sur-Loing, Pont-Aven, and Concarneau.

### Subject Matter

Favourite subject matter for Realist artists included: genre scenes of rural and urban working class life, scenes of street-life, cafes and night clubs, as well as increasing frankness in the treatment of the body, nudity and sexual subjects. Not surprisingly, this gritty approach shocked many of the upper and middle class patrons of the visual arts.



The Third Class Carriage (1863-65) (detail) by Honore Daumier.

A general trend as well as a specific style of art, Realism heralded a general move away from the 'ideal' (as typified by the art of Classical mythology, so beloved by Renaissance artists and sculptors) towards the ordinary. Thus, in their [figure drawing](#) and [figure painting](#), Realists portrayed real people not idealized types. From now on, artists felt increasingly free to depict real-life situations stripped of aesthetics and universal truths. In this sense, Realism reflected a progressive and highly influential shift in the significance and function of art in general, including literature as well as fine art. It influenced [Impressionism](#) and several other modern art styles, such as Pop-Art. The style retains its influence on the visual arts to this day.



The Sower (c.1856-66) by Jean-Francois Millet.

## Realist Artists

[Famous painters](#), strongly associated with the 19th century Realist movement include: **Jean-Francois Millet** (1814-75), **Gustave Courbet** (1819-77), **Honore Daumier** (1808-79). However, many more were influenced by Realism without allowing it to dominate their work. An interesting example is the Russian painter **Ilya Repin** (1844-1930), who produced outstanding realist style works such as *Bargemen on the Volga* (1870), as well as dramatic Romantic works like *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan* (1885).

The realist style was taken up and adapted by French Impressionists like [Edgar Degas](#) (for example, in his picture *The Absinthe Drinker*), as well as by other exponents of 19th century Realism, see [Realist Artists](#).



Bargemen on the Volga (1870) by Ilya Repin.

## Forms of Realist Art

Realism retained its appeal for artists throughout the succeeding twentieth century, with different movements and styles, including: **Verismo** at the turn of the century; the **Ashcan School** (New York City) in the immediate pre-war years; [Surrealism](#) launched in Paris in 1924; **Magic Realism** and French **Traditionisme** from 1925 onwards; **Social Realism** in America during the 1930s; **Socialist Realism** in the Soviet bloc; the **Euston Road School** just before World War II; the **Beaux Arts Quartet** and **Kitchen Sink art** in the 1950s; **Photorealism** and **Contemporary Realism** in America during the late 1960s/early 1970s; and **Hyper-Realism** during the early 1970s.

## Famous 19th Century Realist Paintings

### [Jean-Francois Millet](#)

The Winower (1847-8), National Gallery, London.  
 the Sower (1850), Boston Museum of Fine Arts.  
 The Angelus (1857-9), Musee d'Orsay.

### [Gustave Courbet](#)

The Stone Breakers (1849), destroyed in WWII.  
 A Burial at Ornans (1849-50), Musee d'Orsay.  
 The Painter's Studio (1855), Musee d'Orsay.

### [Honore Daumier](#)

The Laundress (c.1860), Musee d'Orsay.  
 The Third Class Carriage (1864), Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

### [Thomas Eakins](#)

Max Schmitt in a Single Scull (1871) oil, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.  
 The Gross Clinic (1875) oil on canvas, University of Pennsylvania.

**Winslow Homer**

*Gulf Stream* (1899, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City)

**Realism in the Twentieth Century**

With two horrific world wars, a worldwide depression, the holocaust, the Vietnam War and the appearance of nuclear weapons, twentieth century realist artists had no shortage of subjects. Indeed, modern realism appeared in a wide variety of forms. Here is a short introduction to a selection of realist schools and themes in fine art painting and sculpture.

**Verismo** (1890s/1900s)

This Italian term implies extreme raw realism, without any interpretation. The word first appeared in the violent melodramatic operas of Mascagnie, such as *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890), and was taken up by Italian artists like Telemaco Signorini (1835-1901).

**The Ashcan School** (c.1908-1913)

The [Ashcan School](#) was a small group of painters who strove to chronicle everyday life in New York City during the pre-war period, producing realistic and unvarnished pictures and etchings of urban streetscapes and genre scenes. Led by Robert Henri (1865-1929), who was influenced by the strong unglamorous realism of Thomas Eakins and Thomas Anshutz, the Ashcan school included other painters like Everett Shinn (1876-1953), George Luks (1866-1933), George Wesley Bellows (1882-1925), William Glackens (1870-1938) and John Sloan (1871-1951). The legacy of the Ashcan School endured in the American Social Realism scene painting of the 1920s and 1930s.

**Social Realism** (1920s/1930s)

The term Social Realists describes the urban American Scene artists who worked during the Depression era. Social Realism is a naturalistic style of realism which focuses exclusively on social issues and everyday hardships. Best known members of the group include Ben Shahn, Jack Levine and Jacob Lawrence. All were significantly influenced by the earlier Ashcan School of New York city. Also included is Diego Rivera.



The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street (1914) Giorgio de Chirico.

## The Surrealist Art Movement

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Dog Barking at the Moon (1926) Joan Miro.

### What is Surrealism?

Surrealism was "the" fashionable art movement of the inter-war years, flourishing first in Paris from where it spread across Europe, becoming one of the most influential schools or styles of avant-garde art. Its name derived from the phrase *Drame surrealiste*, the sub-title of a 1917 play by the writer and art critic **Guillaume Apollinaire** (1880-1918). Surrealism evolved out of the nihilistic "anti-art" [Dada](#) movement, most of whose members became surrealists. However, while every bit as "revolutionary" as Dada, Surrealism was less overtly political and advocated a more positive philosophy - summed up by André Breton as "*thought expressed in the absence of any control exerted by reason, and outside all moral and aesthetic considerations.*"

Initially, its main focus was literature but this rapidly broadened to encompass painting, sculpture and other forms of contemporary visual art. In simple terms, surrealists aimed to generate an entirely new set of imagery by **liberating the creative power of the unconscious mind.**



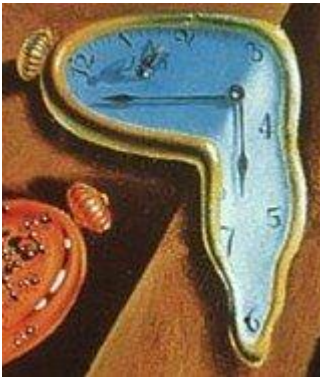
The Human Condition (1933) Rene Magritte.

All sorts of techniques and phenomena were employed to achieve this, including dreams, hallucinations, automatic or random image generation - basically anything that circumvented the usual "rational" thought processes involved in creating works of art. The rational approach (reflecting outdated bourgeois values) was rejected by surrealist theorists as fundamentally reactionary, untruthful and highly limiting.

Not surprisingly, in its attempt to produce works of art untainted by bourgeois rationalism, Surrealism was responsible for a host of incredibly innovative but often bizarre, and sometimes unintelligible compositions. Nonetheless, despite its absurdist features, Surrealism was



(and continues to be) highly appealing both to artists and the public. Indeed, in its iconic pictures and its impact on modern art, Surrealism has established itself as one of the 20th century's most enduring movements.



Detail from Salvador Dali's work *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) showing his "melting" watches.

### Who Founded Surrealism?

The writer **André Breton** (1896-1966), nicknamed "the Pope of Surrealism", was the movement's founder and chief theorist. He introduced and defined the new style in his initial 1924 manifesto (*Manifeste du Surrealisme*) and later in his painting bulletin (*Surrealisme et la Peinture*). An ex-Dadaist, Breton deplored the nihilistic and destructive character of Dada, nevertheless he built on many Dada ideas to create a movement with a coherent though doctrinaire philosophy, from which he tolerated no deviation, expelling rebellious members as he saw fit. Breton's overall aim was in fact highly revolutionary. He aimed at nothing less than a total transformation of the way people thought. By breaking down the barriers between their inner and outer worlds, and changing the way they perceived reality, he intended to liberate the unconscious, reconcile it with the conscious, and free mankind from the bourgeois shackles of logic and reason which thus far had led only to war and domination.



Mae West Lips Sofa (1938)  
Salvador Dali.

### Other Leading Exponents

Several leading Paris surrealists were former Dadaists, such as Max Ernst (1891-1976), Man Ray (1890-1976), and [Jean Arp](#) (1887-1966), but the movement fostered its own [famous painters](#), like [Joan Miro](#) (1893-1983), [Rene Magritte](#) (1898-1967)\*\* and [Salvador Dali](#) (1904-89). Other important figures included Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), Paul Delvaux (1897-1994)\*\*, Andre Masson (1896-1987), Yves Tanguy (1900-55), Pierre Roy (1880-1950), and Maurits Escher (1898-1972)\*\* as well as Tristan Tzara (1896-1963), the film-maker Luis Bunuel (1900-83), [Alberto Giacometti](#) (1901-66), Roberto Matta Echaurren [Robert Matta] (1911-2002) and Hans Bellmer (1902-75).

Other artists were *claimed* for Surrealism whether they liked it or not, such as [Pablo Picasso](#) (1881-1973)\*\*, [Marc Chagall](#) (1887-1985)\*\* and Paul Klee (1879-1940)\*\*. Leading American surrealists included: Frederick Kiesler (1896-1965), Enrico Donati (1909-2006), Arshile Gorky (1905-48) and Joseph Cornell (1903-73).

[\*\* Not official members of the Surrealist Movement.]



Lobster Telephone (1936)  
Salvador Dali.

### Surrealist Women Artists

Despite the deprecation of women implicit in numerous surrealist works, there were several important female surrealist artists, notably Valentine Hugo (1887-1968), Eileen Agar (1899-1991), [Frida Kahlo](#) (1907-1954), Leonor Fini (1908-96), Jacqueline Breton (1910-2003),

Dorothea Tanning (b.1910), and [Meret Oppenheim](#) (1913-85) and Lenora Carrington (b.1917).



The Listening Room (1933)  
Rene Magritte.

### Origins and Influences of Surrealism

The most formative intellectual influence on the philosophy of Surrealism were the theories of **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939), the Viennese neurologist and founder of **psychoanalysis**. Breton and other surrealists were highly impressed with Freud's insights into the **unconscious**, which they thought would be a major source of untapped pictures and imagery. They used his theories to clear away boundaries between fantasy and reality, and to address a number of disquieting drives as fear, desire and eroticisation.

In their art, surrealists gained inspiration from many different sources. Essentially, they wanted an art to marvel at - something mystical. As far as the European fine art tradition was concerned, they preferred **obsession** and **imaginative eccentricity** to rational academic work.

Particular favourites were the detailed fantasies of [Hieronymous Bosch](#) (1453-1516); the menacing engravings of prisons by **Giovanni Battista Piranesi** (1720-1778); and the dramatic nightmare pictures of the Swiss symbolist painter [Henri Fuseli](#) (1741-1825). Regarding nineteenth century styles, surrealists rejected Impressionism as too naturalistic, preferring [Pre-Raphaelite](#) and Symbolist works, as well as the vivid **Oceanic primitivism** of [Paul Gauguin](#). Breton in particular was impressed with the visionary paintings of the workaholic history painter **Gustave Moreau** (1828-1898). Cubism was also rejected for being too logical (the exception being Picasso's iconic early Cubist masterpiece *Les Femmes d'Alger*). Aside from Dada, two other important influences on Surrealism - at least its figurative wing - was the 19th century [Symbolism](#) movement, and the Italian school of **Metaphysical Painting**, originated by [Giorgio de Chirico](#) (1888-1978).

Symbolism, with its esoteric references and hidden or unconscious meanings, was an important source of imagery and forms. Rene Magritte's works have even been described as "Symbolism + Freud". Meanwhile Chirico's unsettling compositions of deserted Italianate squares (eg. "The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street", 1914) with exaggerated perspectives, irrational shadow, wrongly-sized objects/people, contained an air of unfathomable menace. According to Breton who greatly admired him, Chirico was considered to be a major precursor of Surrealism. But the most important and most immediate influence on the movement was Dada: for its anti-aesthetic approach, its determination to shatter the prevailing bourgeois traditions of art, and its innovative techniques.

## History of the Surrealism Movement

In brief, Surrealism sprang up in Paris and became embedded in the avant-garde art world (of which Paris was still the world centre). During the 1930s, some adherents left the movement, while others joined. Then, during the war, many members fled to America where they had a significant impact on US contemporary art, before returning to Paris in the late 1940s early 1950s.

### Paris

Seeing themselves as revolutionaries in the spirit of Dada, surrealists were attracted by the liberating philosophies of socialism and communism - with whom they tried unsuccessfully to form an alliance - and by Soviet-style organizational structures. They issued their first manifesto in 1924 and, at the same time, founded a Bureau of surrealist Research, as well as an irreverent, scandalous journal called *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924-9). Most of the early discussions, interchanges and pooling of ideas took place in cafes. Although principally literary to begin with, the movement quickly expanded into the visual arts (Breton courted Picasso assiduously, to no avail), and its first painting show - *La Peinture Surrealiste* - was staged at Galerie Pierre in 1925. A year later, a new *Galerie Surréaliste* opened with an exhibition by the photographer Man Ray. The movement continued to thrive in Paris during the late 1920s, becoming the dominant school among the city's avant-garde in all arts disciplines.

### Surrealism During the 1930s

The movement burst onto the international stage during the 1930s with major shows in Brussels, Copenhagen, London, New York and Paris. It rapidly became a worldwide popular phenomenon with branches in England, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Egypt, Denmark, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania and Hungary.

The most memorable pictures were produced by **Salvador Dali** and **Rene Magritte**, who between them did much to establish the visual style of Surrealism between 1930 and 1935, a style which aimed to explore psychological truth by detaching ordinary objects from their normal context in order to create a compelling image. Dali's melting watches (eg. in "The Persistence of Memory"), along with Yves Tanguy's molten forms and liquid shapes (eg. in "Promontory Palace"), became recognizable trademarks of the new style. Although its philosophical and cerebral aspirations may not have been grasped, its pictorial images captured the public imagination, and its strange juxtapositions, and dream imagery found its way into everything from fine art, photography and film, to high fashion design, to advertising, and applied art (eg. Dali's **lobster telephone** and **Mae West lips sofa**; and Méret Oppenheim's fur-covered tea cup). The same desire for

glamour and escapism during the 1930s that led to the popularity of [Art Deco](#) also drew the public to Surrealism.

The *London International Surrealist Exhibition*, organised by the art historian Herbert Read in 1936, represented the zenith of Surrealism's reputation and influence. During the same year, New York's Museum of Modern Art hosted a major show entitled "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism". The last great 30s show, the *International Surrealist Exhibition* (designed by [Marcel Duchamp](#)), was held in 1938, at the Beaux-Arts Gallery in Paris. At the entrance visitors in evening dress were greeted by the sight of Dali's *Rainy Taxi* (an old cab, rigged to produce a steady drizzle of water down the inside of the windows, containing a figure with a shark's head in the driver's seat and a blond mannequin alive with live snails in the rear). Inside, the lobby was decorated like the interior of a dark cave, with over one thousand bags of coal hanging from the ceiling, lit by a single light bulb. Patrons had to be given flashlights to view the exhibits. On the floor was a carpet of dead leaves, and other plant-life. Not surprisingly, visitors were scandalized - much to the glee of the organizers.

### **Surrealism During World War Two**

By 1939, many of the major surrealists, including Andre Breton, Max Ernst and Andre Masson, were in the United States. Assisted by the American influence and contacts of Marcel Duchamp, during his earlier visits to America, as well as the marriage in 1941 between Max Ernst and the millionairess Peggy Guggenheim, they proved quite influential and acquired new adherents like Dorothea Tanning, Frederick Kiesler, Enrico Donati, Arshile Gorky and Joseph Cornell. And while the dominant American art school of the 1940s was Abstract Expressionism, its early work contains a number of Surrealist (and Dadaist) features. Indeed a good deal of late-modern and contemporary American art (eg. Pop-Art, [Assemblage](#), [Installation](#), [Conceptual art](#), [Performance](#)) was inspired by Surrealism in one way or another.

### **Surrealism in Britain**

British painters had taken Surrealism to heart from 1936, if not before, but especially during the 1940s. The sculptor [Henry Moore](#) (1898-1986) took an interest in biomorphic figures, while [Lucian Freud](#) (b.1922) the grandson of Surrealism's mentor Sigmund Freud, Francis Bacon and Paul Nash experimented with surrealist techniques. However, its staunchest and most consistent advocate was the British painter Conroy Maddox (1912-2005), who in 1978 commented: "No other movement has had more to say about the human condition."

### **Post-War Surrealism**

Although Andre Breton's return to Paris after the war triggered a new phase of surrealist activity, the exceptionally depressing mood of post-war France was not receptive to whimsy or

satire. Instead, Breton found the movement under attack from former members such as Tristan Tzara and the new leader of the avant-garde, the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, who damned it for its stupid optimism. Despite this, major surrealist exhibitions were held in Paris in 1947 and 1959, and surrealist ideas and techniques made their mark on many of the post-war art movements. For a South American artist influenced by the movement, see [Fernando Botero](#) (b.1932).

### **End of Surrealism**

There is no clear agreement between critics or historians about the end of Surrealism. Some art experts consider that it disbanded after the war; others cite the death of André Breton in 1966 (or that of Salvador Dali in 1989) as marking the end of Surrealism as an organized movement. Whatever about its demise, Surrealism as a style was (and still is) immensely popular with the art public. Recent exhibitions of Surrealism have been hosted in New York City by The Guggenheim Museum and The Met (1999,2002), while in 2001 the [Tate Modern](#) in London held an exhibition of surrealist art that drew 170,000 visitors. This was followed in Europe by a packed show - "La Révolution Surréaliste" - at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

### **Surrealist Art Styles: Figuration and Abstraction**

There were two main trends within Surrealism. One was [representational](#): dependent on figuration, on the precise reproduction of natural forms - generally detached, dislocated, juxtaposed, transposed, or mutated far from real-life situations. The second style of Surrealism was [abstract](#), based on imagery without specific reference to natural shapes, and was largely dependent on forms generated by the unconscious.

### **Figurative Surrealism**

The figurative or representational style of Surrealism (Veristic) appears at its most successful in the work of Magritte, Dali and Delvaux, and in the work of certain other artists who in their variety and achievement escape categorization in anyone mode. Picasso was one, Ernst was another, and Arp yet another, and in the 1930s and 1940s Giacometti and Moore (1898-1986).

### **Rene Magritte**

The most outstanding figurative surrealist was the Belgian Rene Magritte, who specialized in academic, naturalistic, but illusionistic pictures. Apart from a brief stay near Paris in 1927-30, when he met Breton and exhibited with the surrealists, Magritte spent a discreet and industrious life in Brussels, painting the impossible with calm, confident conviction. He was the most dazzling dissembler of conventional expectations, exploiting astonishing discrepancies of scale (an apple fills a room; a train bursts

through a giant fireplace); and defying the laws of gravity. His unique effect is heightened by his use of everyday objects. For example, the hero of many of his later pictures is the man in urban uniform - coat, bowler hat, sometimes a brief-case - as expressionless as a tailor's dummy. The ambiguity of the object versus its painted image is stressed constantly - a faithful likeness of a pipe, inscribed "This is not a pipe". His most famous surrealist paintings include "La Condition Humaine" (1933) and "The Red Model" (1935).

### **Salvador Dali**

In contrast to the publicity surrounding other artists, the quietness of Magritte's method meant that initially his achievement was undervalued. Instead, public attention was concentrated on the frenetic activities of the Spaniard Salvador Dali, provocateur-in-chief of the bourgeoisie from his first association with Parisian Surrealism in 1927. Ironically, like Magritte, Dali's painterly technique was one of 19th century academic naturalism, applied to un-real subjects as if they were real. He worked in many media, in writing, painting, jewellery, film (with Luis Bunuel) - but perhaps above all in his own fantastically moustachioed person, in a spectacular public career often virtually like show business - a giant egocentricity powered by an energetic paranoia. His relations with official Surrealism, at first euphoric, later became strained. Famous surrealist works by Dali include: "The Persistence of Memory" (1931) and "Soft Construction with Boiled Beans" (1936), among many others.

### **Paul Delvaux**

A slightly narrower talent, but one that introduced an enduringly mysterious note into the range of surrealist imagery, was that of another Belgian, Paul Delvaux. In his haunting paintings he presents a world of lonely alienation: suburbs of desolation haunted by trains and trams, peopled by silent waiting women who prove on closer inspection to be all identical - perhaps the most intense realization of dream or nightmare achieved by any surrealist. However, he was not officially associated with the movement; nor was **Maurits Escher** (1898-1972), a Dutchman whose best-known works are his brilliantly calculated [drawings](#) - games with perspective, presenting with great precision quite different images interpenetrating with such ambiguity that the eye cannot establish where one begins and the other ends.

### **Francis Bacon**

The Irish artist [Francis Bacon](#) (1909-92) must be considered one of the top contemporary exponents of figurative Surrealism, although interviews reveal that his complex repertoire of human forms represented his conscious attempt to create a new kind of figurative narration in tune with modern filmic imagery as well as his view of the age of alienation through which he was living.

### **Was Figurative Surrealism Unconscious? If Not, Was it Surrealistic?**

Given that these representational works required meticulous "rational" thought, one would have thought that they fell outside the definition of surrealist art as the product of unconscious thought. Not so, apparently. Figurative works were permitted (by Breton and other theorists) as long as they questioned the normal "rational" reality. Thus Magritte's [academic style](#) work was considered surrealist due to its bizarre juxtapositions which stood reality on its head and presented a new surreality. Dali's works also passed muster because they were created (according to Dali) in a semi-hallucinatory state which he named critical paranoia. *"I would awake at sunrise and, without washing or dressing, sit down before the easel... my eyes staring fixedly, trying to "see" like a medium the images that would spring up in my imagination. When I saw these images exactly situated in the painting, I would paint them on the spot, immediately."* Dali's imagery, like his melting watches and his bizarre half-human figures have made him the most celebrated of all surrealist painters. Even so, in 1937, when he switched to a more regular academic style, Breton expelled him from the movement. On balance, one can say that surrealist art included even highly representational work, provided that it illustrated the limitations of a reason-based reality.

### **Abstract Surrealism**

In brief, surrealist abstraction rejected geometric shapes in favour of the visual and emotional impact of **organic forms of nature**: either actual (Jean Arp, Andre Masson, Joan Miro) or imagined (Yves Tanguy, Robert Matta).

The non-representational arm of Surrealism was no less vigorous. The work especially of Jean Arp was more often non-figurative than not, but the major artists most consistently independent of natural phenomena were the Spaniard Joan Miro (1893-1983) and the Frenchman Andre Masson (1896-1987), who had studios side by side in Paris and who both joined Breton's surrealist group at its launch in 1924. For a spell both artists experimented freely with "automatic" drawings, the visual counterpart of the crucial "non-technique" of surrealist irrationalism, "automatic" writing. (Its aim was to allow the free association needed to create an absolutely spontaneous expression.) But both artists found that geometric abstraction - whether in the rigid doctrinaire Cubist theories of Gleizes, or the austere geometric reductions of [Piet Mondrian](#) (1872-1944) - was sterile and inadequate to their needs.

### **Andre Masson**

Masson's outlook was conditioned permanently by appalling experiences in World War I; he was obsessed by the domination of the rule of tooth and claw in all life, animal or human, and his work is a release of the violence of base instincts, as illustrated by "Battle of Fishes" (1926). Masson was himself a violent man, who bellowed emotive phrases while he worked, and often physically attacked unsatisfactory canvases. In 1926 he began exploiting chance and accident as

part of his technique: he would scatter sand over canvases previously spread in haphazard areas with glue, and then, at great speed, orchestrate their random configurations and textures into loose patterns of brushwork and colour. The images that appeared were brutal; as they gradually became more specific, horrific creatures emerged. Three years later, he withdrew from the official surrealist cadre, and some find his work of the 1930s less intense and less successful. However, in America during World War II, moved once again by the horror of man's inhumanity to man, he reverted to more "automatic" procedures, and his work of these years influenced the subsequent emergence of the Abstract Expressionist school.

### **Joan Miro**

The prolific, versatile, genial and also generally the most optimistic of the creative practitioners of abstract Surrealism, was the Spanish painter and sculptor Joan Miro, though he himself has always dismissed suggestions that his work was abstract. In his eyes, each of his fantastic forms always signified a real object. He was, like Picasso and Dali, one of that brilliant breed of new Spanish artists who arrived in Paris in the early twentieth century but, unlike Picasso, he returned constantly from Parisian turmoil to his native country. At the end of World War I, he was working in a style of meticulous realism, from which the development of his mature style emerged almost abruptly about 1924, like a butterfly from its chrysalis, largely as a result of his surrealist contacts. If, as some art critics have alleged, there are any sinister undertones in his work, particularly during and after the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), they are more than outweighed by the child-like gaiety that sparkles from his canvases. His abstract images are typically biomorphic, similar to those of Arp, and his fantasy often approaches that of [Paul Klee](#). Unknown but convincingly depicted organisms take shape, defined in clear outline and sharp colours - primary reds, blacks and whites predominate, as illustrated by "Harlequin's Carnival" (1924). In slight contrast, Miro's semi-abstract pictorial imagery is exemplified by his famous work "Dog Barking at the Moon" (1926). Miro claimed that his ideas sprang from "a state of hallucination, provoked by some shock or other, objective or subjective, for which I am entirely irresponsible". Whatever the source, his initial conception is then marshalled by an unerring sense of design, of space and interval, into a strange formal harmony. In Spain during the Second World War, he turned his attention to [printmaking](#), and later to sculpture and especially [ceramics](#). Afterwards he was drawn to monumental works and giant murals like those for the Terrace Hilton Hotel in Cincinnati, and the ceramic walls of the UNESCO building in Paris (1958). A constant innovator, he was willing to investigate the possibilities of any medium, often in collaboration with specialist craftsmen, and the fertility of his vision never slackened in his long career.

### **Yves Tanguy**

The surrealist abstract painter Yves Tanguy evolved and developed (but never escaped from) a style of imagery



landscapes or sea-beds populated by bizarre but compelling half-vegetable, half-animal forms, and amoeba-like organisms previously unknown to science, derived from hallucinations. More and more he developed the contrasts and variety of his textures, so that his pictures might be classed as a kind of metaphysical Dutch [still-life painting](#). Forms grew beneath Tanguy's brush under their own mysterious prompting, so he maintained, rather than by any intervention on his part. Key works by Tanguy include "The Look of Amber" (1929), Promontory Palace (1931) and "The Palace of the Windowed Rocks" (1942).

### **Jean Arp**

The ex-Dadaist Jean Arp, a close friend of Max Ernst, was a participant in the first surrealist exhibition in Paris at *Galerie Pierre* in 1925, and a regular contributor to Surrealism until 1930. Known originally for his Dadaist wood-reliefs, cardboard cut-outs and torn paper [collages](#), his surrealist works comprised simple biomorphic shapes sometimes with echoes of primitive art. He also experimented with automatic composition (automatism). In 1930, he joined *Cercle et Carré* (Circle and Square) a Parisian discussion and exhibition society for (mainly) geometric abstract artists, and in 1931 became a member of the larger *Abstraction-Creation* group, with whom he began producing his sensuous organic abstract sculptures in marble or bronze. This terminated his rather short involvement with Surrealism. Despite this, he was a forceful personality within both Dada and Surrealism, while his signature biomorphic forms have had a strong influence on a number of other sculptors, notably Henry Moore, as well as the school of Organic Abstraction.

### **Surrealist Art Techniques**

Surrealists invented a number of techniques to produce random or chance images. A great deal of pioneering work in this area was done by the extraordinary German painter, sculptor, graphic artist, and poet **Max Ernst** (1891-1976). A man of enormous creativity, Ernst first married an art-historian, then lived with the British-born surrealist painter Leonora Carrington; afterwards married and divorced the art-collector Peggy Guggenheim, before finally marrying another outstanding surrealist artist, Dorothea Tanning. He continued to produce innovative work until his death. His important works include "Forest and Dove" (1927), "La Femme 100 tetes" series (1930s), "The Entire City" (1935), and "Immortel" (1966) a glass chess-game.

### **Frottage**

An early member of both Dada and Surrealism, Ernst invented *frottage* (1925) - a technique of creating an image by placing a piece of paper over a rough surface, like grainy wood or stone, and rubbing the paper with a pencil or crayon until it acquires an impression of the surface quality of the substance beneath. vsn making an impression of a textured surface by placing a piece of thin material and rubbing it with (eg) a wax

crayon - to procure images.

### **Decalcomania**

In addition, Ernst invented *decalcomania*, a technique in which paint is splashed onto paper, typically with a big brush, then - while still wet - covered with another sheet of paper, and rubbed together. This results in a range of weird forest-like patterns.

### **Grattage**

Ernst also pioneered the technique known as *grattage*. This involved laying a painted canvas over a textured surface (like wire-mesh or a floorboard) and scraping the paint away to produce an impression.

### **Collage**

Around 1930, Ernst began a series of "collage novels" of which the most famous is "Une Semaine de Bonte" (A Week of Plenty). Cutting up and rearranging Victorian steel engravings, he produced bizarre fantasies out of the safe bourgeois world in which he had grown up.

### **Drip-Painting**

Moving to New York during World War II, Ernst then began working with paint dripped from a swinging can, a method which may well have started [Jackson Pollock](#) on his method of *action-painting*.

### **Fumage**

Another surrealist technique was known as *fumage* (smoking). Pioneered by Wolfgang Paalen (1907-1959) during the late 1930s, it involved placing a candle under a sheet of paper to form patterns of soot. Moving the candle varied the patterns.

### **Automatic Drawing**

Pioneered by Andre Masson, Joan Miro, and Paul Klee, the technique of automatic drawing involved allowing the line of a pen or other drawing instrument to rove at will without any conscious planning.

### **Automatic Painting**

About 1926, Andre Masson began experimenting by placing sand and glue onto canvas, on which he then applied oil paint and made paintings based around the shapes that formed.

### **Abstract Expressionist Use of Surrealist Techniques**

Although many European surrealists dabbled with several of these random-style "automatic" painting methods, most moved away from automatism by the early 1940s. However, their influence in America (to where many relocated during WWII) was profound. In New York for instance, European surrealists introduced their ideas to key opinion-formers like Leo Steinberg, Clement Greenberg and Peggy Guggenheim, as well as avant-garde artists such as Arshile Gorky (1904-48), Jackson Pollock (1912-56), Robert Motherwell (1915-91),

Mark Tobey (1890-1976) and Robert Matta (1911-2002). The large-scale "action-painting" abstractions of Jackson Pollock in particular, contain a strong element of surrealist automatism.

### **Surrealist Sculpture**

Giacometti created masterpieces of surrealist culture such as "Woman With Her Throat Cut" (1932), a bronze construction of a dismembered female corpse and "The Invisible Object" (Hands Holding the Void) (1934). Both portrayed the body of the female as inhuman and dangerous. However, when he returned to a more classical style in the later 1930s, working from life models, he was expelled from the movement. Numerous other sculptors have experimented with surrealist styles, including Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore and the Irish sculptor [FE McWilliam](#).

### **Surrealist Photography**

Man Ray was the first surrealist photographer. One of his best known works being "Enigma of Isadore Ducasse" (1920), now known only in his own photograph of a sewing machine wrapped in a blanket tied with string. He created it in homage to the poet Lautreamont (ie, Isadore Ducasse) whose pithy comment: **"as beautiful as the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table"** became a defining comment on Surrealism's aesthetic philosophy. Highly skilled in darkroom manipulation, close-ups and unexpected juxtapositions, Man Ray worked successfully in the seemingly incompatible worlds of the Parisian avant-garde society and commercial photography. His photographs were published in both specialist and popular periodicals - from *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* to *La Surrealisme au service de la Revolution* (1930-33) and *La Revolution Surrealiste* (1924-29). He invented several techniques such as **solarization** and **rayographs**, and his sitters included numerous famous artists such as James Joyce, Jean Cocteau and Méret Oppenheim. Other noteworthy exponents of surrealist-style [fine art photography](#) included Hans Bellmer (1902-75), Brassai (1899-1984), Jacques-Andre Boiffard (1902-61) and Raoul Ubac (1909-85).

### **Surrealist Film and Cinematography**

Luis Bunuel, who worked on several projects with Dali, is probably the most famous surrealist film director, although Man Ray also produced numerous short avant-garde films.

### **Collections**

Key collections of surrealist art are located in the following museums, among others.

Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, USA  
 Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

Joan Miro Foundation, Barcelona  
Kunstmuseum, Dusseldorf  
Salvador Dali Museum, St Petersburg, Florida  
Tate Modern, London

### **The Legacy of Surrealism**

The influence of Surrealism as a style of art can be found in a wide variety of modern and contemporary schools - notably, early Abstract Expressionism, [Pop-Art](#) and Conceptualism - and permeated nearly all contemporary art forms, including Assemblage, Installation and Performance. In addition, it anticipated many of the major concepts of [postmodernism](#). For example, the Britart of [Damien Hirst](#) and several other *Young British Artists* would have fitted perfectly into the surrealist and Dadaist avant-garde of Paris in the 1920s.

See also [Paul D'Arcy](#)'s 21st century symbolist art, also known as Surreptualism.

- For post-1860 artworks, see [Modern Art](#).



Les Demoiselles D'Avignon (1907)  
by Pablo Picasso, the first  
Cubist  
style painting.

## Cubism (c.1907-20)

In fine art, the term Cubism describes the revolutionary style of art designed by [Georges Braque](#) (1882-1963) and [Pablo Picasso](#) (1881-1973) in Paris, during the years 1907-8. Their Cubist style of painting - initially influenced by the geometric landscape compositions of the Post-Impressionist artist [Paul Cezanne](#) - radically redefined the nature and scope of fine art painting and, to a lesser extent, sculpture, as previously practised, and heralded an entirely new way of representing reality.

In the history of art, Cubism marks the end of the Renaissance-dominated era, and the beginning of modern art.

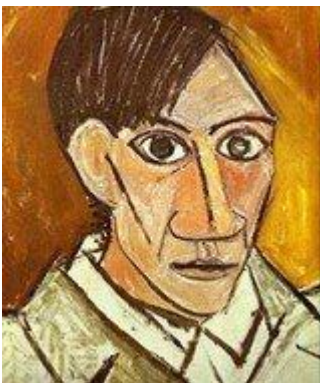


Les Demoiselles D'Avignon (1907)  
(detail).

Other [famous painters](#) who influenced (and were influenced by) Cubism include the painters [Juan Gris](#) (1887-1927), [Fernand Leger](#) (1881-1955), [Robert Delaunay](#) (1885-1941), Albert Gleizes (1881-1953), Roger de La Fresnaye (1885-1925), Jean Metzinger (1883-1956), Francis Picabia (1879-1953), the painter/sculptor [Marcel Duchamp](#) (1887-1968), and the sculptors [Jacques Lipchitz](#) (1891-1973), Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964). See [Cubist Painters](#).

For examples of Irish Cubist-style painters, see: [Mary Swanzy](#), [Evie Hone](#) and [Mainie Jellett](#).

Cubism can be seen as the starting point for, or an essential element in, several other modern art movements, including Futurism (1909-14), Orphism (1912-14), Vorticism (1914-17), [Constructivism](#), (c.1919-1932), and Purism (1920-25). The Cubist movement itself is typically classified into three stages: (1) [Proto-type Cubism](#), (2) [Analytical Cubism](#), and (3) [Synthetic Cubism](#).



Self-Portrait (1907), by Picasso.  
Note the stylistic similarity to  
Les Demoiselles D'Avignon.

### How Cubist Art Began

After three decades of Impressionist-inspired art, culminating in the [Fauvist colourist movement](#) (of which, incidentally, Braque had been a member), Picasso began to worry that this type of painting was a dead-end with less and less potential for intellectual exploration. In this frame of mind, and recently exposed to African [tribal art](#) whilst in Spain, he began painting Les Femmes d'Avignon, his ground-breaking masterpiece, whose flat splintered planes replaced traditional linear perspective and rounded volumes thereby signalling his break with the naturalistic traditions of Western art. At the same time, Georges Braque, a former student at the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, had just been overwhelmed by the Exhibition of Cezanne's work at the Parisian Salon D'Automne and the Bernheim-Jeune. The pair then met in October 1907, and over the next two years developed what became known as Cubism - a completely new method of depicting the visual world.



Landscape at La Ciotat (1907)  
by Georges Braque.

## The Origin of the Term 'Cubism'

In the summer of 1908, while staying at L'Estaque near Marseilles, Braque painted a series of landscapes which were shown later that year at a Gallery in Paris owned by Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler. When reviewing this exhibition, the famous art critic **Louis Vauxcelles** commented on Braque's way of reducing everything - sights, figures and houses - to geometric outlines, to cubes. The following year, Vauxcelles used the expression 'bizarreries cubiques' (cubic excentricities) and by 1911 the term Cubism had entered the English language. The description is quite apt for the blocklike forms in some of Braques early landscapes, and in a few similiar works by Picasso, but less so for their later Cubist pictures in which the forms are broken down into facets rather than fashioned into cubes. The term was taken up by two practising Cubists, Gleizes and Metzinger in their 1912 book *Du Cubisme*.

## How to Understand Cubism

First off, its very difficult to appreciate Cubism without examining its paintings. A good start is to compare early Cubist still-lifes with traditional still life from (say) the Impressionist or Dutch Realist schools. If nothing else, you will appreciate the radical nature of Cubism compared to traditional Western art.

## What Exactly is Cubism?

Ever since the [Renaissance](#), if not before, artists painted pictures from a single fixed viewpoint, as if they were taking a photograph. The illusion of background depth was created using standard conventions of linear perspective (eg. objects were shown smaller as they receded) and by painting figures and objects with rounded shaded surfaces to convey a 3-D effect.

In contrast, Braque and Picasso thought that the essence of an object could only be captured by showing it from multiple points of view simultaneously. So, they abandoned the idea of a single fixed viewpoint and instead used a multiplicity of viewpoints. The object was then reassembled out of fragments of these different views, rather like a complex jigsaw puzzle. In this way, many different views of an object were simultaneously depicted in the same picture. In a sense, it's like taking 5 different photographs of the same object, then cutting them up and reassembling them in an overlapping manner on a flat surface.

Such fragmentation and rearrangement of form meant that a painting could now be regarded less as a kind of window on the world and more as a physical object on which a subjective response to the world is created. As far as artistic technique was concerned, Cubism showed how a sense of solidity and pictorial structure could be created without traditional

perspective or modelling.

Thus the Cubist style focused on the flat, two-dimensional surface of the picture plane, and rejected the traditional conventions and techniques of linear perspective, [chiaroscuro](#) (use of shading to show light and shadow) and the traditional idea of imitating nature. Instead of creating natural-looking 3-D objects, Cubist painters offered a brand new set of images reassembled from 2-D fragments which showed the objects from several sides simultaneously. If Fauvists and Impressionists strove to express their personal sensation of a particular object or scene, Cubists sought to depict the intellectual idea or form of an object, and its relationship to others.

### **Cubist Exhibitions**

Cubism had two identities, a public and a private. The style was jointly evolved by Pablo Picasso and Goerges Braque on the basis of observations derived from Cezanne, and also, to some extent, from ethnographical styles such as Picasso's [African art](#) Period. It made its public debut with Braque's one-man exhibition organized by Kahnweiler in November 1908. But after this both he and Picasso more or less went to ground, and the Cubist banner was upheld by others, notably Robert Delaunay, Albert Gleizes, Fernand Leger, Henri Le Fauconnier, and Jean Metzinger at the Salon des Independants in 1910; and by these and others at the same Salon in 1911.

In 1912, a group of Cubists with Delaunay at their head exhibited at the Galerie La Boetie, now calling themselves the Section d'Or. When he reviewed this show, the art critic Guillaume Apollinaire coined the term 'Orphism', applying it to Delaunay in particular. The first published statement of Cubist theory was *Du Cubisme*, by Metzinger and Gleizes, published in 1912; this was followed by Apollinaire's *Les Peintres Cubistes*, published in 1913. The internal logic of Cubist development led Picasso and Braque from the Analytic Cubism with which they started, to the Synthetic Cubism of 1912, which sprang from the new technique of [collage](#). At this point they were joined in their explorations by Juan Gris. Cubism had a widespread and persistent influence, and affected artists generally classified as [Expressionists](#), Futurists, and [Dada](#).



Example of Art Nouveau Architecture: Casa Mila, also known as La Pedrera, Barcelona (1906–1910), designed by Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926).

## Art Nouveau

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Salome (1892) Art Nouveau drawing by [Aubrey Beardsley](#) (1872-98).

**DESIGN STYLES and MOVEMENTS**  
 For details of late 19th-century and early 20th century styles of art and design, see: [Modern Art Movements](#).  
 For details of contemporary art design styles since the 1960s, see: [Contemporary Art Movements](#).

### Introduction

Art Nouveau was an innovative international style of [modern art](#) that became fashionable from about 1890 to the First World War. Arising as a reaction to 19th-century designs dominated by historicism in general and neoclassicism in particular, it promulgated the idea of [art](#) as part of everyday life. Henceforth artists should not overlook any everyday object, no matter how functional it might be. This aesthetic was considered to be quite revolutionary and new, hence its name - New Art - or Art Nouveau. Hence also the fact that it was applied to a host of different art forms including architecture, [fine art](#), [applied art](#), and [decorative art](#). Rooted partly in the Industrial Revolution, and the Arts and [Crafts](#) Movement, but also influenced by Japonisme and [Celtic designs](#), Art Nouveau was given a major boost by the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris. After this, it spread across Europe and as far as the United States and Australia, under local names like **Jugendstil** (Germany), **Stile Liberty** (Italy), **Sezessionstil** (Austria) and **Tiffany style** (America). A highly decorative idiom, Art Nouveau typically employed intricate curvilinear patterns of sinuous asymmetrical lines, often based on plant-forms (sometimes derived from [La Tene](#) forms of [Celtic art](#)). Floral and other plant-inspired motifs are popular Art Nouveau designs, as are female silhouettes and forms. Employing a variety of materials, the style was used in architecture, interior design, glassware, jewellery, poster-design and illustration, as well as painting and sculpture. The movement was replaced in the 1920s by [Art Deco](#).

### Definition, Meaning, Focus of the Movement

There is no single definition or meaning of Art Nouveau. But the following are distinguishing factors. (1) Art Nouveau philosophy was in favour of applying artistic designs to everyday objects, in order to make beautiful things available



to everyone. No object was too utilitarian to be "beautified". (2) Art Nouveau saw no separation in principle between fine art (painting and sculpture) and applied or decorative arts (ceramics, furniture, and other practical objects). (3) In content, the style was a reaction to a world of art which was dominated by the precise geometry of Neoclassical forms. It sought a new graphic design language, as far away as possible from the historical and classical models employed by the arts academies. (4) Art Nouveau remains something of an umbrella term which embraces a variety of stylistic interpretations: some artists used new low-cost materials and mass production methods while others used more expensive materials and valued high craftsmanship.

### **Types of Designs**

In line with with the Art Nouveau philosophy that art should become part of everyday life, it employed flat, decorative patterns that could be used in all art forms. Typical decorative elements include leaf and tendril motifs, intertwined organic forms, mostly curvaceous in shape, although right-angled designs were also prevalent in Scotland and in Austria. Art made in this style typically depicted lavish birds, flowers, insects and other zoomorphs, as well as the hair and curvaceous bodies of beautiful women. For Art Nouveau architectural designs, see the exaggerated bulbous forms of the Spanish architect **Antoni Gaudi** (1852-1926), and the stylistic Parisian Metro entrances of **Hector Guimard** (1867-1942).

### **Applications**

Art nouveau designs were most common in glassware, jewellery, and other decorative objects like ceramics. But the style was also applied to textiles, household silver, domestic utensils, cigarette cases, furniture and lighting, as well as drawings, posters, paintings and book illustrations. Art nouveau also had a strong application in the field of architecture and interior design. In this area, it exemplified a more humanistic and less functionalist approach to the urban environment. Hyperbolas and parabolas in windows, arches, and doors were typical as were plant-derived forms for moldings. Art Nouveau interior designers updated some of the more abstract elements of [Rococo](#) style, such as flame and shell textures, and also employed highly stylized organic forms, expanding the 'natural' repertoire to include seaweed, grasses, and insects. Art Nouveau architectural designs made broad use of exposed iron and large, irregular pieces of glass.

### **Decorative Arts - Glass and Jewellery**

In both these areas, Art Nouveau found tremendous expression, as exemplified in works by **Louis Comfort Tiffany** in New York, **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** in Glasgow and **Emile Galle** and the **Daum brothers** in Nancy, France. Jewellery of the Art Nouveau period saw new levels of

virtuosity in enameling as well as the introduction of new materials such as moulded glass, horn, and ivory. The growth of interest in Japanese art (Japonisme), along with increased respect for Japanese metalworking skills, also stimulated new themes and approaches to ornamentation. As a result, jewellers stopped seeing themselves as mere craftsmen whose task was to provide settings for precious stones like diamonds, and began seeing themselves as artist-designers. A new type of jewellery emerged that depended less on its gemstone content and more on its designwork. The jewellers of Paris and Brussels were at the forefront of the Art Nouveau movement and it was in these cities that it achieved the greatest success.

### **Influences**

As a movement, Art Nouveau shared certain features with [Romanticism](#), the [Pre-Raphaelites](#), the Symbolists, and the Arts & Crafts Movement, although each differed in various ways. For example, unlike Symbolist painting, Art Nouveau has a distinctive visual look; and, in contrast to the artisan-oriented Arts & Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau artists readily employed new materials, and did not turn their backs on mass-produced or machined surfaces.

### **History**

The term "Art Nouveau" stemmed from the name of the Parisian art gallery, called "La Maison de l'Art Nouveau", owned by the avant-garde art-collector **Siegfried Bing** (1838-1905), which showcased works created in the art nouveau style. The gallery's reputation and fame was considerably boosted by its installations of modern furniture, tapestries and objets d'art at the 1900 Exposition Universelle, after which the gallery's name became almost synonymous with the style.

At the same time, in Germany, the style was popularized and promoted by a magazine called *Jugend: Münchner illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben* (Youth: the illustrated weekly magazine of art and lifestyle of Munich), hence German art nouveau - along with that of the Netherlands, the Baltic and the Nordic countries - has since been known as "Jugendstil" (youth-style). In Austria, art nouveau was first popularized by artists of the Vienna Secession movement, leading to the adoption of the name "Sezessionstil". In fact, the Vienna Secessionists influenced art and architecture throughout Austria-Hungary.

Other temporary names were used which reflected the novelty of the style, or its ribbon-like curvilinear designs. For example, in France it was also known as "le style moderne" or "le style nouille" (noodle style); in Spain, "arte joven" (young art); in Italy "arte nuova" and in the Netherlands "Nieuwe kunst" (both, new art). The style was also named after certain of its exponents or promoters. For instance, Hector Guimard's Parisian Metro entrances led to the temporary name "Style

Metro"; in America the movement was called the "Tiffany style" due to its connection with the art nouveau glassmaker and jeweller Louis Comfort Tiffany.

### Origins

The origins of Art Nouveau are unclear, although most art historians agree that its roots lay in [William Morris'](#) Arts and Crafts movement, as well as the flat-perspective and strong colours of Japanese woodcuts - the latter reinforced by the wave of Japonisme that swept through Europe in the 1880s and 1890s. Connections were also forged between practitioners of Jugendstil and Celtic-style artists, notably in the area of abstract patternwork. Perhaps the earliest example of art nouveau was the variety of rhythmic floral patterns used by **Arthur Mackmurdo** in his book-cover for Sir Christopher Wren's City Churches (1883). Whatever its exact origins, art nouveau benefited enormously from the exposure it received at international exhibitions such as the Paris Exposition Universelle (1900) and the Turin Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna (1902), as well as individual outlets such as London's Liberty & Co and Siegfried Bing's "Maison de l'Art Nouveau".

### Famous Art Nouveau Artists

**Emile Galle** of France and **Louis Comfort Tiffany** of the United States were famous for their colourful art nouveau glassware, as were the English artists **Aubrey Beardsley** and **Walter Crane** for their wonderful art nouveau drawings, and **Toulouse-Lautrec** of France for his renowned art nouveau posters. Other famous artists involved in the "new art" included: the French jewellery designer **Rene Lalique**, the Viennese painter **Gustav Klimt**, the Polish theatrical designer and stained glass artist **Stanislaw Wyspianski**, the graphic designer **Alphonse Mucha** of the Czech Republic, and the Scottish architect and designer **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** (1868-1928), leader of the Glasgow School.

In architecture, leading art nouveau designers included the Hungarian architect **Odon Lechner** (1845–1914), the French architect **Hector Guimard** (1867-1942), the Spanish architect **Antoni Gaudi** (1852-1926), the Belgian architect **Victor Horta** (1861-1947), and the Viennese designers **Otto Wagner** (1841-1918) and **Joseph Maria Olbrich** (1867-1908), to name but a few. In fact, art nouveau building designs were widespread throughout many parts of central and eastern Europe, including Latvia (Riga), the Czech Republic (Prague), Poland (Krakow), Slovenia (Ljubljana), as well as Spain (Casa Batllo, Casa Mila in Barcelona), and Italy. Further afield, examples of art nouveau-style buildings can be seen in South America (Uruguay's Montevideo) and Australia, though hardly at all in the United States where art nouveau's impact was more obvious on ornamental than spatial design.

## Legacy & Influence of Art Nouveau

while Art Nouveau promoted a more widespread adoption of "beautiful" design, it did not diminish the value of the machine or mass-production (as the Arts and Crafts Movement did), but instead took advantage of many technological innovations from the late 19th century. Even so, by World War I, it too succumbed to the more streamlined design processes that were beginning to become available.

Possibly its greatest influence was on (1) 20th-century advocates of integrated design, such as the German [Bauhaus design school](#) and the Dutch design movement De Stijl; and (2) [Graphic art](#) such as illustration and poster-design.

Nowadays, art nouveau is viewed as an important bridge between Neoclassicism and modernism, and a number of its monuments are on the UNESCO World Heritage List, notably the historic centre of Riga, Latvia with over 750 buildings in the art nouveau style.

# Ukiyo-E

Neo-Impressionist and Post Impressionist Painting.

[Encyclopedia of Irish and World Art - HOMEPAGE](#)



left: **Hiroshige**, "The Plum Garden in Kameido"

right: **Van Gogh**, "Flowering Plum Tree"



View of **Mount Fuji** from **Harajuku**, part of the *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* series by **Hiroshige**, published 1850



**The Great Wave off Kanagawa**, Hokusai's most famous print, the first in the series *36 Views of Mount Fuji*

**Ukiyo-e** (浮世絵 lit. "pictures of the floating world"<sup>?</sup>) (Japanese pronunciation: [\[ukijo.e\]](#) or [\[ukijo↑e\]](#)) is a genre of [Japanese woodblock prints](#) (or [woodcuts](#)) and [paintings](#) produced between the 17th and the 20th centuries, featuring motifs of landscapes, tales from history, and the [theatre](#). It is the main artistic genre of [woodblock printing in Japan](#).

Usually the word [ukiyo](#) is literally translated as "floating world" in English, referring to a conception of an evanescent world, impermanent, fleeting beauty and a realm of entertainments ([kabuki](#), [courtesans](#), [geisha](#)) divorced from the responsibilities of the mundane, everyday world; "pictures of the floating world", i.e. *ukiyo-e*, are considered a genre unto themselves.

The contemporary novelist [Asai Ryōi](#), in his [Ukiyo monogatari](#) (浮世物語 "Tales of the Floating World", c. 1661<sup>?</sup>), provides some insight into the concept of the floating world:

... Living only for the moment, turning our full attention to the pleasures of the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms and the maple leaves; singing songs, drinking wine, diverting ourselves in just floating, floating; ... refusing to be disheartened, like a gourd floating along with the river current: this is what we call the floating world...<sup>[1]</sup>

The art form rose to great popularity in the metropolitan culture of [Edo \(Tokyo\)](#) during the second half of the 17th century, originating with the single-color works of [Hishikawa Moronobu](#) in the 1670s. At first, only [India ink](#) was used, then some prints were manually colored with a brush, but in the 18th century [Suzuki Harunobu](#) developed the technique of polychrome printing to produce [nishiki-e](#).

The roots of ukiyo-e can be traced to the [urbanization](#) that took place in the late 16th century that led to the development of a class of merchants and artisans who began writing stories or novels, and painting pictures,



☞ The print *Red Fuji* from Hokusai's series, [Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji](#).

compiled in *ehon* (絵本, picture books, books with stories and picture illustrations), such as the 1608 edition of [Tales of Ise](#) by [Hon'ami Kōetsu](#). Ukiyo-e were often used for illustrations in these books, but came into their own as single-sheet prints (e.g., postcards or [kakemono-e](#)) or were posters for the [kabuki theater](#). Many stories were based on urban life and culture; guidebooks were also popular; and all in all had a commercial nature and were widely available. [Hishikawa Moronobu](#), who already used polychrome painting, became very influential after the 1670s.



☞ *Travellers Crossing the Oi River*, one of the ten prints Hokusai added to the original 36 prints in [36 Views of Mount Fuji](#). He was prompted to add these prints because of the popularity of the original series.

☞ Tōshūsai [Sharaku](#) – Otani Oniji II, dated 1794. The [Kabuki](#) actor Otani Oniji II in the role of Yakko (manservant) Edobe.

In the mid-18th century, techniques allowed for production of full-color prints, called [nishiki-e](#), and the ukiyo-e that are reproduced today on postcards and calendars date from this period on. [Utamaro](#), [Hokusai](#), [Hiroshige](#), and [Sharaku](#) were the prominent artists of this period. After studying [European](#) artwork, receding perspective entered the pictures and other ideas were picked up. Katsushika Hokusai's pictures depicted mostly landscapes and nature. His [Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji](#) (富嶽三十六景 *Fugaku sanjūrokkei?*) were published starting around 1831. Ando Hiroshige and [Kunisada](#) also published many pictures drawn on motifs from nature.



☞ View of Mount Fuji from Satta Point in the Suruga Bay, woodcut by Hiroshige, published posthumously [1859](#).

In 1842, pictures of [courtesans](#), [geisha](#) and actors (e.g., *onnagata*) were banned as part of the [Tenpō reforms](#). Pictures with these motifs experienced some revival when they were permitted again.

During the [Kaei era](#), (1848–1854), many foreign merchant ships came to Japan. The ukiyo-e of that time reflect the cultural changes.

Following the [Meiji Restoration](#) in 1868, Japan became open to imports from the West, including photography, which largely replaced ukiyo-e during the [bunmei-kaika](#) (文明開化, Japan's Westernization movement during the early Meiji period). Ukiyo-e fell so far out of fashion that the prints, now practically worthless, were used as packing material for trade goods. When Europeans saw them, however, they became a major source of inspiration for [Impressionist](#), [Cubist](#), and

Post-Impressionist artists, such as Vincent van Gogh, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and others. This influence has been called Japonisme.