

The High Renaissance (c.1480-1520)

The **High Renaissance** marks the pinnacle of artistic development in Italian art of the late 14th, 15th and early 16th centuries. The word 'Renaissance' means 'rebirth' - a rebirth of the classical ideals from Ancient Rome and Greece.

The great artists of the High Renaissance were Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti from Florence, Raphael Sanzio from Umbria, and Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) and Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti) from Venice. They painted artworks of unprecedented skill and beauty and were responsible for raising the status of the artist in society from the level of artisan to an intellectual plane on a par with writers, philosophers and scientists. These great masters achieved what artists had aspired to since the Early Renaissance: a revival of the classical ideals of beauty and form; an anatomical and scientific accuracy in drawing; a sensual and psychological response to color and composition, and an acceptance and appreciation of classical content as the subject matter for art.



LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452-1519)
'The Madonna of the Rocks', 1483-86
(oil on panel)

Mannerism (c. 1520-1580)

Mannerism is a 20th century term that was used to describe several exaggerated or mannered styles of art that evolved towards the end of the High Renaissance. Mannerist artists valued a personal and idealized response to beauty over the classical ideal of 'truth to nature'. The more robust qualities of Mannerism are found in the exaggerated physiques and contorted figures from the late work of Michelangelo, Raphael, Tintoretto and El Greco. A more refined response to the Mannerist style is seen in the elegant and elongated figures from the paintings of Agnolo Bronzino, Parmigianino and Jacopo Pontormo.



BRONZINO (Agnolo di Cosimo)
(1503-1572)
'Portrait of Laura Battiferri', 1555
(oil on canvas)

The Northern Renaissance (c.1420-1520)

The **Northern Renaissance** is the term given to the art of north and west Europe during the Italian Renaissance.

In the 15th century, art in the north was still linked to the Gothic tradition but rendered with an exquisite naturalistic detail in the new medium of oil paints. Flanders was the main focus of artistic activity with artists such as Robert Campin, Rogier van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes and Jan van Eyck.

In the 16th century the Gothic influence had its final say in the art of Hieronymus Bosch and Matthias Grünewald. Gradually the influence of the Italian Renaissance took hold, particularly in the work of Albrecht Dürer which offered a Protestant challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church.



ALBRECHT DÜRER (1471-1528)
'Self Portrait', 1500 (oil on wood panel)

Baroque Art (c.1600-1700)



CARAVAGGIO (1571-1610)
'David with the Head of Goliath',
1610 (oil on canvas)

Baroque was a reaction against the artificial stylization of Mannerism. It spread throughout Europe during the 17th century. Among the great Baroque masters were the Italian painter Caravaggio and sculptor Bernini, the Flemish artist Rubens, Velazquez from Spain, and Rembrandt, the greatest of all Dutch painters.

Baroque art is identified by realistic subjects that depict spectacular action and generate powerful emotions. Religious, mystical and historical subjects, which were often propaganda for the Church or State, were brought to life with characters in contemporary clothing, by naturalistic painting of outstanding virtuosity, dramatic lighting (chiaroscuro) and bold asymmetric and diagonal compositions.

Dutch Art (c.1620-1670)

Dutch Art has become famous for its still lifes, portraits, landscapes, interiors and genre painting. With the spread of Protestantism in Holland and the rejection of Catholic Baroque, Dutch artists had to focus on a more limited range of secular subjects to which there were no objections on religious grounds. Consequently, artists tended to specialize more narrowly, often in one subject. For example, Willem Kalf painted still lifes, Frans Hals portraits, Jacob van Ruisdael landscapes, and Jan Vermeer was the outstanding genre painter. The exception was Rembrandt, the greatest of the Dutch masters whose genius is evident through a range of media and subjects that capture the essence of the human condition.



JAN VERMEER (1632-1675)
'The Milkmaid', 1658-61 (oil on canvas)

Rococo Art (c.1700-1775)



JEAN HONORÉ FRAGONARD
(1732-1806)
'The Progress of Love - The Meeting',
1773 (oil on canvas)

Rococo is a term that derives from the French word 'rocaille' which means rock-work, referring to a style of interior decoration that swirls with arrangements of curves and scrolls. The style was essentially French but spread throughout Europe.

As Mannerism was a stylistic reaction to Renaissance art, so Rococo was a decorative response to the realism of Baroque. While some authorities consider Rococo to be a refined, elegant, and allegorical style, others judge it as pompous, indulgent and pretentious.

Notable Rococo artists were Watteau, Boucher and Fragonard in France, Tiepolo, Guardi and Canaletto in Italy, and to some extent Hogarth in England.

Neoclassicism (c.1765-1850)

Neoclassicism was a reaction against the pomposity of Rococo. This was the Age of the Enlightenment and political, social and cultural revolution were in the air. Artists needed a serious art for serious times and once again they looked back to the art of Antiquity as their model. Inspired by the archaeological discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii, Neoclassicism had a historical accuracy that earlier classical revivals lacked. Historical scenes of heroism and virtue were used as patriotic propaganda or allegories on contemporary circumstances. Jacques Louis David and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres were the outstanding virtuosos of Neoclassical painting.



JACQUES LOUIS DAVID
(1748-1825)
'Napoleon Crossing the Alps', 1801
(oil on canvas)

Romanticism (c.1765-1850)



JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER
(1775-1851)
'The Fighting Temeraire', 1839 (oil on canvas)

Romanticism valued the expression of emotion over the control of Classicism. This was achieved through spectacular painting technique and the choice of emotive and sensual subjects which often commemorated dramatic contemporary and historical events. In France, Delacroix and Géricault were the pioneers of Romanticism; in England, it was Turner and Constable; in Germany, Caspar David Friedrich and in Spain, Goya.

Realism (c.1840-1880)

Realism was a French style of painting that focused on the everyday reality of a subject, warts and all. Realist artists such as Millet, Corot, Courbet and Manet reacted against the heightened emotions of Romanticism. They sought an objective truth that reflected the social realities of the common man in his natural environment. Realism was also inspired by a new exploration of 'visual reality' that followed the invention of photography around 1840.



GUSTAVE COURBET
(1819-1877)
'Apples and a Pomegranate', 1871 (oil on canvas)