

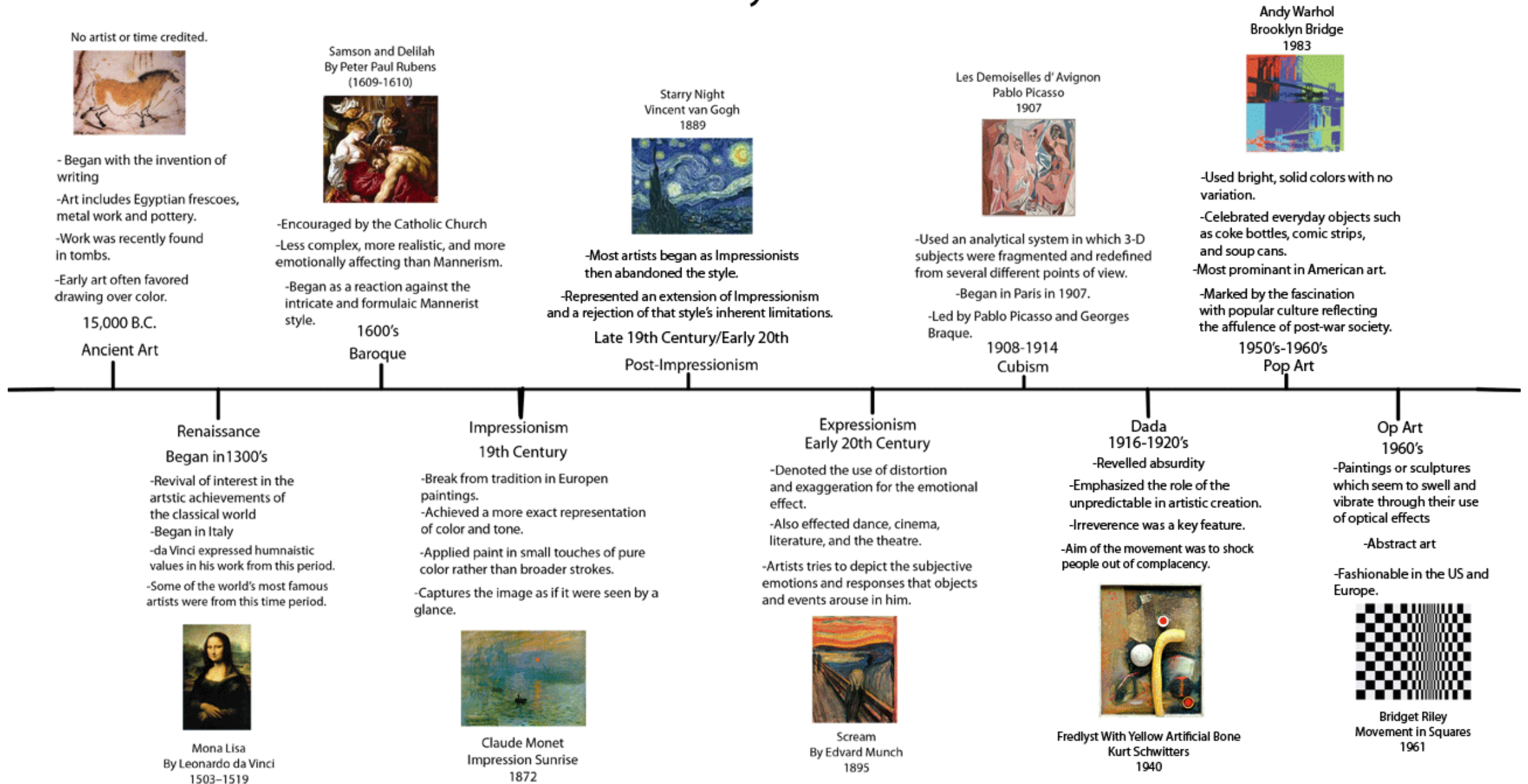
Contemporary Art

From Modernism to Postmodernism

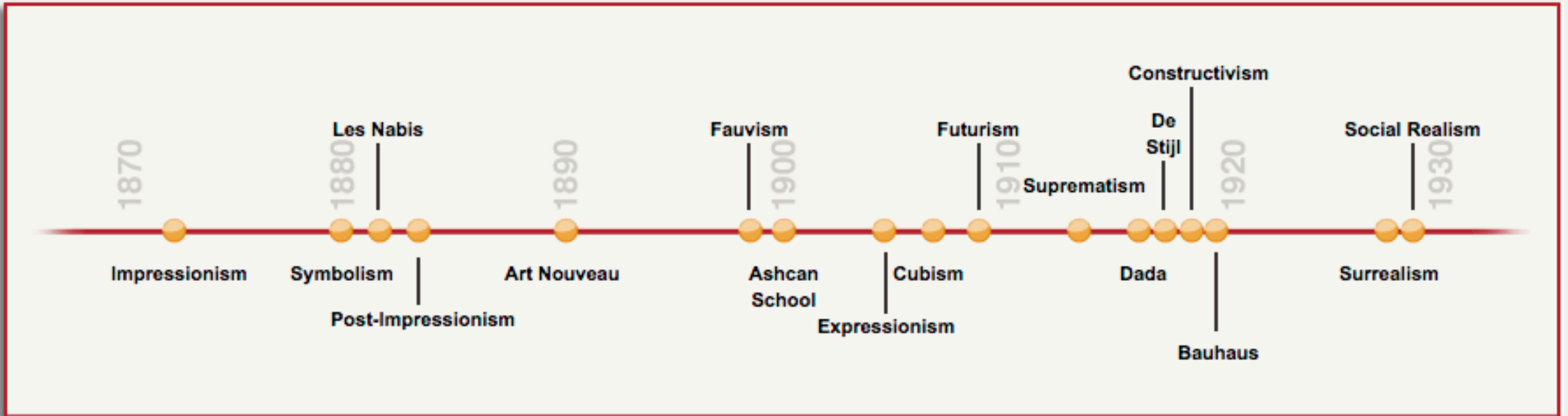
Coexistent Perspectives

PG ONLINE SHORT COURSE

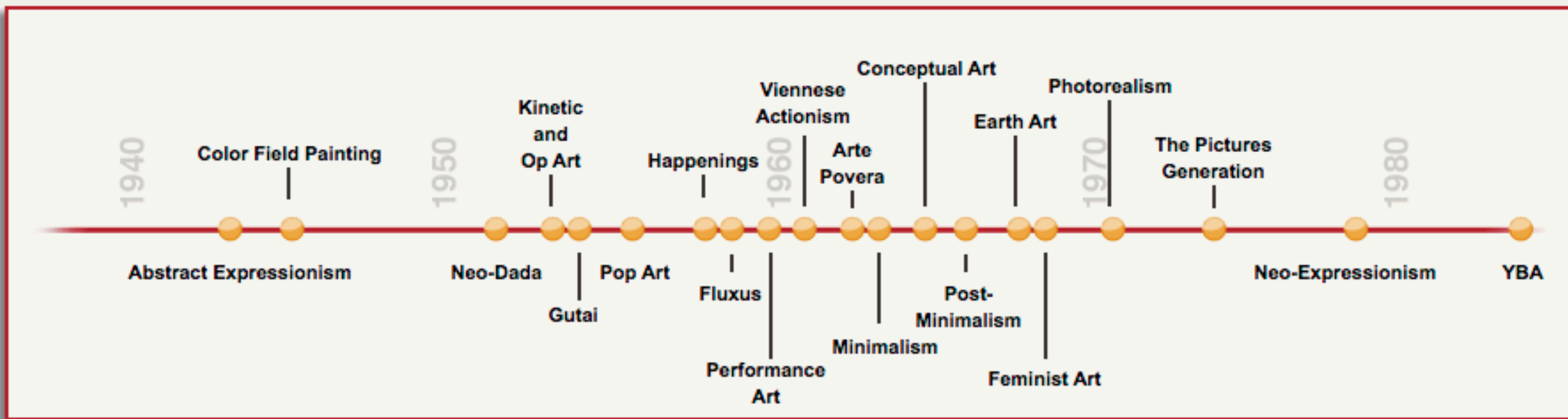
Art History Timeline



MOVEMENTS: 1870 to 1930



MOVEMENTS: 1940 to 1980



The Modern Age

The Evolution of Culture

How Did We Get Here?

- **A cultural period is a time marked by a particular way of understanding the world through culture and technology.** Changes in cultural periods are marked by fundamental changes in the way we perceive and understand the world. **The modern era began after the Middle Ages and lasted through the early decades of the 20th century, when the postmodern era began.**
- **The modern era was marked by Enlightenment philosophy,** which focused on the individual and placed a high value on rational decision making. This period saw the wide expansion of capitalism, colonialism, democracy, and science-based rationalism. **The Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the American and French Revolutions, and World War I** are all significant events that took place during the modern era. One of the most significant, however, was the **Industrial Revolution;** its emphasis on routinization and efficiency helped society restructure itself along those terms as well.
- **Postmodernity differed from modernity** in its questioning of reason, rejection of grand narratives, and emphasis on subcultures. Rather than searching for one ultimate truth that could explain all of history, the postmodernists focused on contingency, context, and diversity.

Contemporary Art

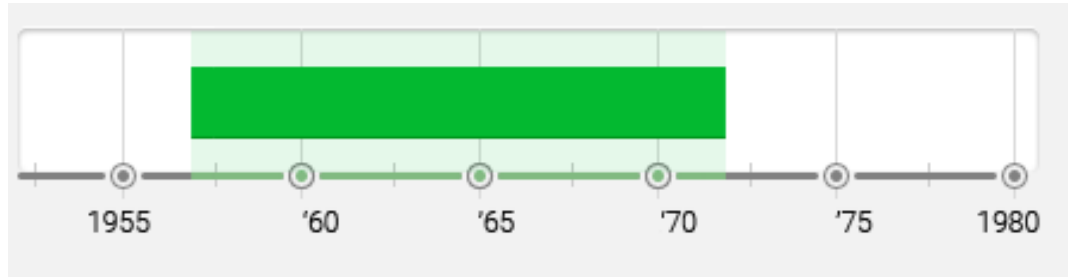
The Evolution of Culture

How Did We Get Here?

- Contemporary art is the art of today, produced in **the second half of the 20th century or in the 21st century.**
- Contemporary artists work in a globally influenced, culturally diverse, and technologically advancing world. Their art is a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that continue the challenging of boundaries that was already well underway in the 20th century.
- Diverse and eclectic, contemporary art as a whole is distinguished by the very lack of a uniform, organising principle, ideology, or "-ism".
- Contemporary art is part of a cultural dialogue that concerns larger contextual frameworks such as personal and cultural identity, family, community, and nationality.
- In vernacular English, modern and contemporary are synonyms, resulting in some conflation and confusion of the terms modern art and contemporary art by non-specialists.

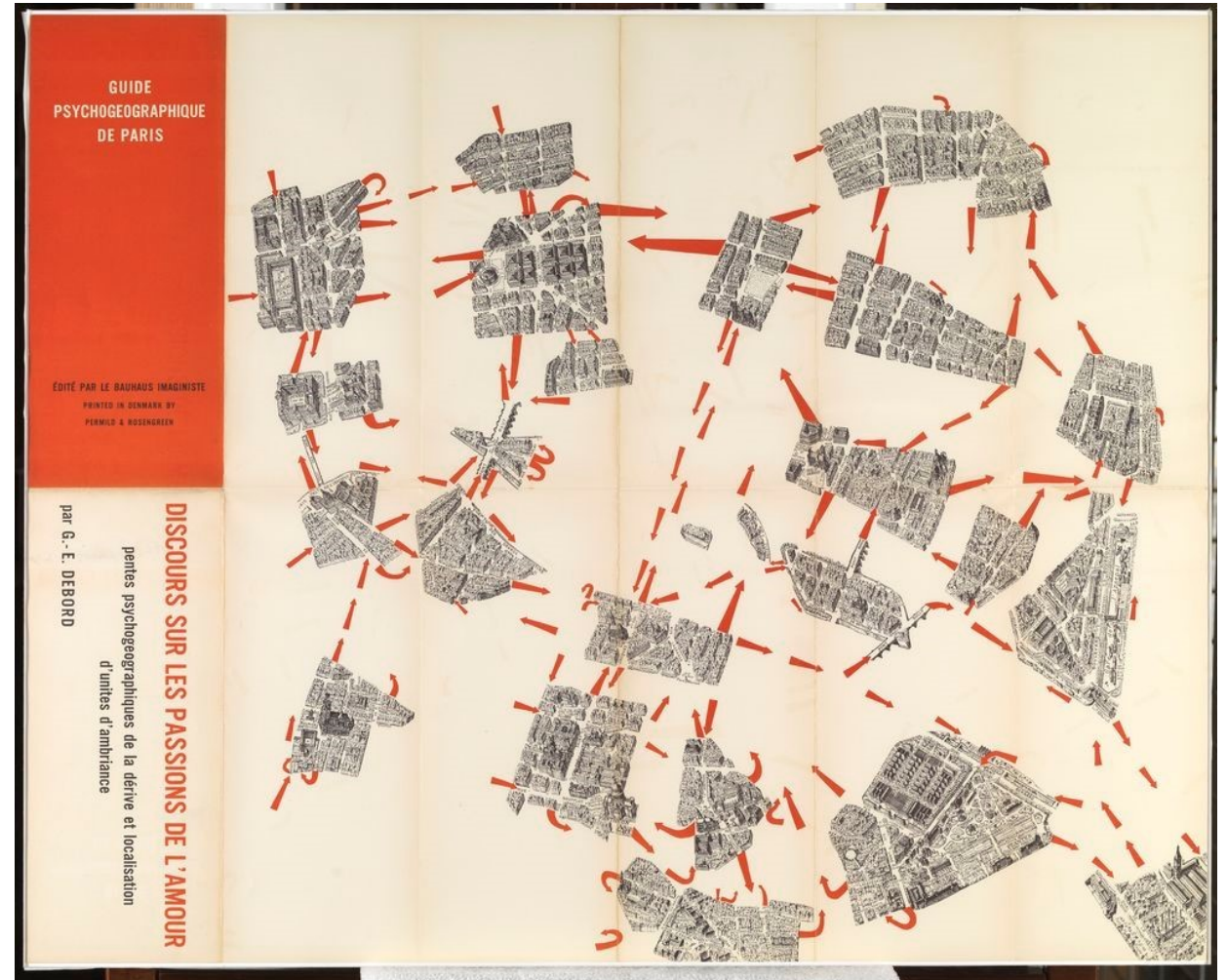
Situationist International

Started: c.1957 Ended: 1972



The world we live in is governed by unexamined and unrecognized cultural forces, which can only be undone through engineering radically different situations from which to reflect. This was the key concept behind the Situationist International (also known as SI), a group of left-wing artists and activists whose practices were designed to unsettle and disrupt the systems of consumerist homogeneity in late 20th century Western society. Activities like walking the city aimlessly were reimagined as statements against a society that demanded production, and maps were cut up and reassembled to facilitate wandering. Perhaps unusually for a small group of political artists, these ideas corresponded to real and widespread political and social action, most notably inspiring the 1968 protests and rioting in Paris in which Situationist graphics and slogans featured prominently.

Although falling foul of factionalism and disillusionment towards the end of the movement's most active period, SI's disruptive use of culture and commitment to alternative models of interaction between people and their environment was massively influential. Their notion of the "Spectacle" in particular has become a key critical mechanism for understanding advertising and consumerism's impact on our psyches. Elements of SI's activities can be seen in later Punk and Rave subcultures, in political movements like Occupy and Extinction Rebellion, as well as "artist" activity like "subvertising".



Psychogeographie de Paris. Speech on the Passions of Love (1957)

Artist: Guy Debord

Situationist International

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

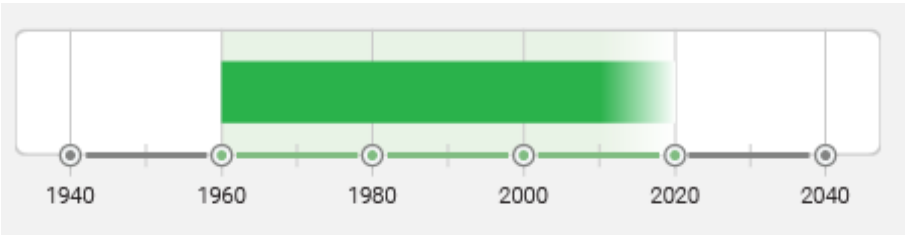


Letter to My Son (1956-57) Asger Jorn

- The Situationist International was a radical movement devoted to the disruption and reimagining of the systems which govern everyday life, growing out of several already existing political groups. Like those groups it was anti-capitalist, and left-leaning, but was also committed to the disruption of the hegemonic politics of Europe in the late 20th century through artistic praxis as well as political agitation. Although eventually fracturing, SI provided a blueprint for rebels and artistic dissidents still followed today.
- Situationism valued the decentralization of creation, with artists working in collaboration or under shared names to undermine the notion of the single genius or visionary. This has gone on to be one of the most enduring aspects of their legacy, directly inspiring many artist collectives and groups.
- Architecture and human geography were key influences on the movement and the art that came out of it, with maps in particular offering an opportunity to subvert the way people think about the spaces they move through. By positioning maps as socially agreed (and therefore rarely unbiased) representations of environments, the Situationist practice of cutting them up, ignoring or purposefully misreading them robbed them of their power to govern the way we negotiate the city.
- The notion of "Spectacle", originally outlined by Guy Debord in various Situationist writings, is key to understanding both the conceptual underpinnings of SI and its enduring legacy. The idea of a permanently distracting and preoccupying spectacle, which obfuscates the oppressive nature of capitalism, has been adopted by artists, activists, critics and academics as a key philosophical concept in the current moment of late capitalism.
- Although a collaborative and supposedly open movement, SI adhered relatively rigidly to the direction of Guy Debord and the key ideas and artistic strategies he identified. This is somewhat ironic, as it was actually the wider dissemination and public take up of their ideas that ensured their longevity long after the group fragmented.

Postmodern Art

Started: c.1950s



Postmodernism is best understood by defining the [modernist](#) ethos it replaced - that of the [avant-garde](#) who were active from 1860s to the 1950s. The various artists in the modern period were driven by a radical and forward thinking approach, ideas of technological positivity, and grand narratives of Western domination and progress. The arrival of [Neo-Dada](#) and [Pop art](#) in post-war America marked the beginning of a reaction against this mindset that came to be known as postmodernism. The reaction took on multiple artistic forms for the next four decades, including [Conceptual art](#), [Minimalism](#), [Video art](#), [Performance art](#), [Institutional Critique](#), and [Identity Politics](#). These movements are diverse and disparate but connected by certain characteristics: ironical and playful treatment of a fragmented subject, the breakdown of high and low culture hierarchies, undermining of concepts of authenticity and originality, and an emphasis on image and spectacle. Beyond these larger movements, many artists and less pronounced tendencies continue in the postmodern vein to this day.



Marilyn Diptych (1962), Andy Warhol

Postmodern Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

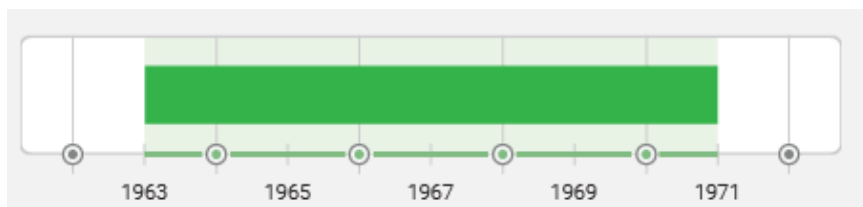


Apple Trees (1987) Gerhard Richter

- Postmodernism is distinguished by a questioning of the master narratives that were embraced during the modern period, the most important being the notion that all progress - especially technological - is positive. By rejecting such narratives, postmodernists reject the idea that knowledge or history can be encompassed in totalizing theories, embracing instead the local, the contingent, and the temporary. Other narratives rejected by postmodernists include the idea of artistic development as goal-oriented, the notion that only men are artistic geniuses, and the colonialist assumption that non-white races are inferior. Thus, Feminist art and minority art that challenged canonical ways of thinking are often included under the rubric of postmodernism or seen as representations of it.
- Postmodernism overturned the idea that there was one inherent meaning to a work of art or that this meaning was determined by the artist at the time of creation. Instead, the viewer became an important determiner of meaning, even allowed by some artists to participate in the work as in the case of some performance pieces. Other artists went further by creating works that required viewer intervention to create and/or complete the work.
- The Dada readymade had a marked influence on postmodernism in its questioning of authenticity and originality. Combined with the notion of appropriation, postmodernism often took the undermining of originality to the point of copyright infringement, even in the use of photographs with little or no alteration to the original.
- The idea of breaking down distinctions between high and low art, particularly with the incorporation of elements of popular culture, was also a key element of postmodernism that had its roots in the late-19th and early-20th centuries in the work of Edgar Degas, for example, who painted on fans, and later in Cubism where Pablo Picasso often included the lyrics of popular songs on his canvases. This idea that all visual culture is not only equally valid, but that it can also be appreciated and enjoyed without any aesthetic training, undermines notions of value and artistic worth, much like the use of readymades.

Capitalist Realism

Started: c.1943 **Ended:** 1965



Though a relatively short-lived movement, Capitalist Realism took a darker, more ironic stance than most of the **Pop Art** that spread across Western countries at the height of the Cold War. Started in Düsseldorf among a group of art students, including **Gerhard Richter** and **Sigmar Polke**, the Capital Realists shared a critical stance toward the invasion of American capitalism and consumerism into West Germany. A play on **Social Realism** and capitalism, Capitalist Realism used various styles and media to create imagery that called into question middle-class values and aspirations and that hoped to remind Germany of its not-so-distant traumatic past that the artists felt was being too easily repressed and papered over.

Coming out of the international **Fluxus movement**, the Capital Realists' most recognizable happenings and paintings were made in the mid-1960s, and its tenets and younger artists were later promoted by gallerist René Block. Its influence was consequential for German artists like **Martin Kippenberger**, who was a provocateur of Bad Painting, and the more contemporary **Neo Rauch**. Additionally, in the increasingly globalized world, many younger artists, including prominent artists such as **Ai Weiwei**, have taken up the Capital Realists' philosophical critiques of capitalism in their efforts to expose the unseemly side of its global reach.



Stag (Hirsch) (1963) Gerhard Richter

Capitalist Realism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

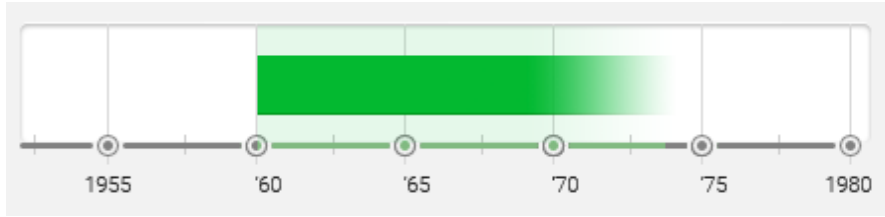


Moos (1963) Manfred Kutner

- Like its **British** and **American Pop Art** counterparts, **Capitalist Realism** employed mass media imagery, including advertisements and photographs to create their compositions, but **Capitalist Realists** tended to be more critical of consumer culture. This criticality had roots in the international **Fluxus** movement that often relied on staged events, or **Happenings**. It shared with Fluxus ideas about the democratization of art and the use of multiples to subvert art market value.
- **Capitalist Realism** is less a unified style than a set of political ideas and beliefs about art, Western culture, and capitalism. Critical towards traditional artistic and social values, **Capitalist Realists** employed photorealism, mechanical reproduction, as well as **collage** to take aim at their subjects. Because they rejected the unique, auratic art work that had traditionally been hailed by **Modernism** **Capitalist Realism** is one of the first recognizable **Postmodern** movements.
- While **Capitalist Realism** has had a global influence reaching to Japan and China, it was originally calibrated to the specifics of Cold War Germany and specifically West Germany with its influx of postwar capital and American influence. In addition to their leeriness of American influence and values, the **Capitalist Realists** felt that Germany had not sufficiently confronted the horrors perpetuated by Nazism during World War II, and many of their works address the widespread repression of memory the artists witnessed in West Germany.

Contemporary Realism

Started: c.1960 **Ended:** 1970s



Contemporary Realism emerged out of New York in direct defiance to the prevailing popularity of **Abstract Expressionism**. The movement signified a return to a straightforward representation of life via figurative artworks. A loosely connected and disparate group of initial artists borrowed heavily from roots embedded earlier by the 19th century **Realist** painters who aimed to depict the real rather than the ideal. Yet these new artists, proficient in modern art, employed this mission in a decidedly fresh fashion that built upon tradition while incorporating a contemporary sophistication and techniques in line with the current times. Reality suddenly became cool again swathed in the unique perspectives of artists working with, and documenting, their own experiences within a 20th century world.



Lying Female Nude on Purple Drape, **Philip Pearlstein**

Contemporary Realism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

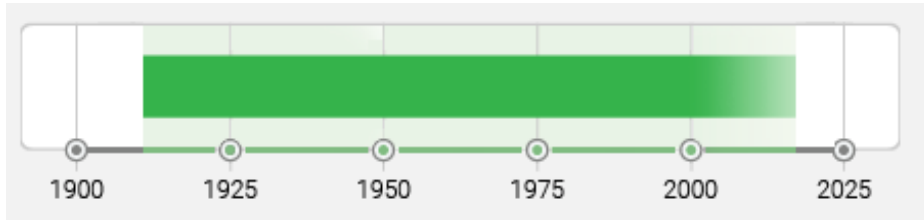


The Black Dress (1960) Alex Katz

- Many of the movement's artists came from an earlier inclusion in the **Abstract Expressionist** movement. Even as they eschewed its principles, they did adapt many of its techniques such as a similar use of brushwork, flatness, the use of large canvas, and innovative color and composition.
- Although there were other branches of art simultaneously inspired by the 19th century philosophies of **Realism**, such as **Social Realism** and **American Regionalism**, Contemporary Realist painters were largely distinctive for showing both urban and rural life in a simple fashion absent of sentimentality.
- Contemporary Realism was a way to express an immediate environment, most often through a glance at the people, landscapes, geography, still lifes and interiors that informed an artist's personal existence. These first glimpses originated around life in New York, Maine and Southampton, yet they were inspirational in establishing the concept of regional centers of art for other painters working in this vein.
- The movement revitalized realism, dusted off the perception of it being a dated historical antiquation, and gave it a new momentum that has continued throughout today in various forms including **Photorealism**, and **Neo-Expressionism**.

Assemblage

Started: c.1912



In the early 20th century, many artists increasingly began incorporating everyday objects into their paintings and sculptures, blurring the lines between art and life. Ranging across styles, avant-garde artists created three-dimensional, mixed-media assemblages that questioned the very definition of art as it had come to be known. Using mass-produced objects and junk, artists like Marcel Duchamp often made satirical and biting critiques of modern, commercial culture. In the 1950s, Jean Dubuffet coined the term Assemblage for this hybrid art form, and while other artists used terms like Combines or Accumulations, the trend took off in the second half of the 20th century.

Artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Arman, and Martha Rosler pushed the boundaries of Assemblage into the realm of Installation and Performance, creating immersive environments and experiential events. More contemporary artists such as David Hammons and Tracy Emin engage Assemblage techniques to create works that confront viewers in challenging ways.



Untitled (1936) (Soap Bubble Set Joseph Cornell)

Assemblage

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

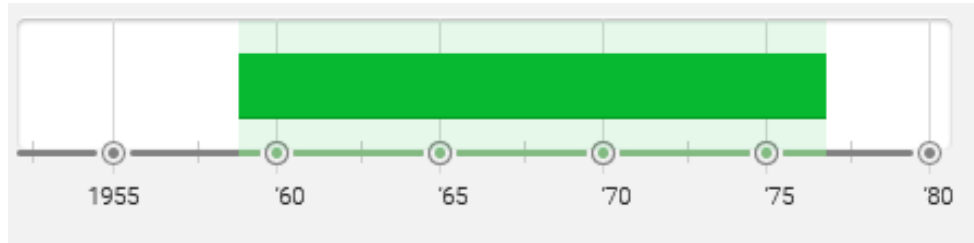


Monogram (1955-59) Robert Rauschenberg

- Assemblage art combines mundane objects in new and surprising ways, requiring the viewer to question their relation to the world of objects around them. Sometimes used as social critique or as an exploration of the fantastical and dream worlds, Assemblage art gives objects new meanings, makes creative connections between disparate elements, and elevates non-art materials into the realm of art.
- In combining readymade or found objects with varying degrees of modifications, Assemblage art challenges the medium specificity that formalist critics insisted structured the progress of modern art. Blurring the distinctions between painting, sculpture, and theater, Assemblage art is not just an optical experience but engages multiple senses and often requires more physical interaction on the viewer's part.
- Because it usually incorporates manufactured items and non-art materials, much Assemblage art aims to question notions of authorship and originality that have been so important to traditional concepts of the artist. In choosing the objects instead of hand-crafting them, the Assemblage artist subverts the traditional notion of the artist as a creator. Additionally, because Assemblage art is often a characteristic of folk art traditions, who can be considered an "artist" has greatly expanded over the decades, incorporating untrained and self-taught artists outside of the mainstream.

Collage

Started: 1958 **Ended:** 1970s



A common technique practiced by decorators, advertising agencies, and hobbyists alike, collage upended the fine-art world when Cubists Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso incorporated bits of newspaper and printed wallpaper into their paintings, subverting traditional definitions of what is important art. Combining painting, real-world objects, images, and ephemera into a single work, collage directly questions the tendency to separate fine art from everyday objects, the delineations between so-called high and low culture, and the status of the artist.

Adopted by subsequent artists, collage became a dominant technique in the Dada, Surrealist, Pop Art, and Neo-Dada movements, each using the technique to explore different subject matters. Because collage often incorporates mass-produced images, the practice is often inseparable from its historical and political context, making it a mode of powerful social commentary. Contemporary artists continue to explore the richness of collage in their efforts to question assumptions, biases, and pressing political crises.



Prevalence of Ritual/Conjur Woman No. 1 (1964) Romare Bearden

Collage

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

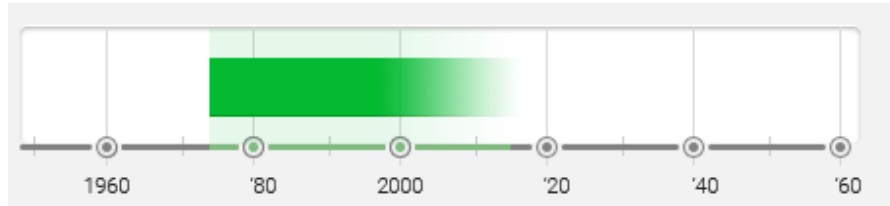


Joy of Living (1943) Robert Motherwell

- Whether purposefully or randomly composed, the juxtapositions between images and objects created by the collage technique have long intrigued artists. Because images can take on new meanings in new contexts, collage can subvert traditional meanings and at the same time multiply meanings, creating works that don't easily settle into single, fixed analyses.
- From the French meaning "to glue," collage describes the technique of composing an artwork by gluing a wide range of materials - including pieces of paper, fabric, newspaper clippings, and sometimes readymade objects - to a surface. Art historians make technical differentiations between collage techniques based on the materials an artist uses. *Papiers collés* are collages made only with bits of paper; decoupage, which means cutting, consists of cutting out colored paper or images and then gluing them to an object; photomontage uses photographs and images from mass-media sources, while assemblage is a three-dimensional accumulation of objects.
- Many [avant-garde](#) artists, from the earliest days of modernism to contemporary postmodernism, use collage to question the traditional role of the artist. By using found, often mass-produced, images and objects that the artists themselves don't make, collage undermines the traditional importance placed on the presence of the artist's hand in an original work of art. Additionally, often relying on chance to create compositions, many artists use collage to subvert the importance placed on the artist's creative genius in composing works.

Installation Art

Started: c.1970s



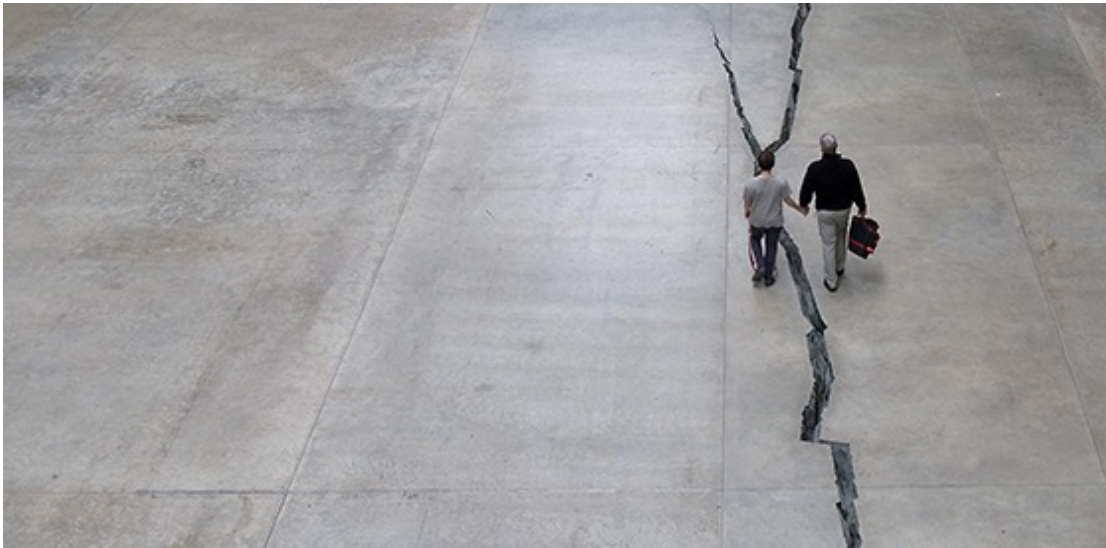
Installation art is a term generally used to describe artwork located in three-dimensional interior space as the word "install" means putting something inside of something else. It is often site-specific - designed to have a particular relationship, whether temporary or permanent, with its spatial environment on an architectural, conceptual, or social level. It also creates a high level of intimacy between itself and the viewer as it exists not as a precious object to be merely looked at but as a presence within the overall context of its container whether that is a building, museum, or designated room. Artworks are meant to evoke a mood or a feeling, and as such ask for a commitment from the viewer. The movement remains separate from its similar forms such as Land art, Intervention art, and Public art yet there are often overlaps between them. The ideas behind a piece of Installation art, and the responses it elicits, tend to be more important than the quality of its medium or technical merit. Artists champion this genre for its potential to transform the art world by surprising audiences and engaging viewers in new ways.



Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii
Artist: Nam June Paik

Installation Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Shibboleth (2007) Doris Salcedo

- Installation art champions a shift in focus from what art visually represents to what it communicates. Installation artists are less focused on presenting an aesthetically pleasing object to viewers as they are enfolding that viewer into an environment or set of systems of their own creation. Tweaking the subjective perception of the viewer is the artist's desired outcome. Pieces belonging to this movement resonate with our own human experiences - like us they exist within, and are always in conversation with, their lived environments.
- Installation artists are preoccupied with making art a less isolated concept - by installing work beyond the galleries and museums and by using more utilitarian components such as found objects, industrial and everyday items, commonplace materials, and technologies of the populous. This movement has broadened the scope of what qualifies as artwork.
- Because Installation art is especially difficult to collect and sell, this movement pushes against the commodification of art, thereby defying the traditional mechanisms used to determine the value of artworks.
- Attempts to sell installations have raised questions about the process of dismantling and reinstalling work that was conceived for a particular location, and how that might or might not decrease the original meaning and value. It has also provoked dialogue within the art and archival communities about whether or not a temporary piece might be reconstructed and sold in the guise of its original, or whether a non-permanent piece may be recreated ad infinitum to perpetuate its existence.

Obliteration Room(2002) Yayoi Kusama

Yayoi Kusama's *Obliteration Room* started out as a simple room, a completely commonplace one barring the fact that it was entirely painted over in white. Curious audience members were given a sheet of colored stickers made in accordance with the artist's specifications, and then invited to place the stickers anywhere they liked in the blank canvas of the room. Over the course of time the surfaces were transformed into an explosion of color with thousands of conglomerated spots covering every available surface.



The Matter of Time (2005) Richard Serra

Richard Serra's primary focus is on large-scale site-specific sculptures made from industrial materials that exist in conversation with the physical spaces they occupy. According to him, "I consider space to be a material. The articulation of space has come to take precedence over other concerns. I attempt to use sculptural form to make space distinct." Viewing these sculptures necessitates moving around and through them, and thus encountering them from constantly shifting perspectives.

The Matter of Time is an installation comprising one of Serra's older sculptures, entitled *Snake*, in addition to 8 new, torqued pieces of steel. It occupies an entire gallery space in the Guggenheim Bilbao Museo. The different shapes made of weathered metal vary from simple elliptical ones to more complex spiral forms, and as viewers walk among these forms they move through varying passages of steel. The spaces between the sheets of curved metal change from being narrow and encroaching to being wide and open causing the viewer to experience constant disorientation. Serra's choice of material, with its textured rust and spectrum of browns and oranges, adds yet another layer of visual interest to this breathtaking installation.



Rain Room (2012) Random International

In *Rain Room*, the collaborative studio group Random International, created a fully immersive environment, which travelled to various museums and architectural spaces consisting of an entire room filled with rain. Barely lit from above, visitors stood on the periphery to take in the emulation of a natural phenomenon. As guests stepped into the rain, their body heat triggered the rain to stop only in the spaces that contained them. It was meant to give a person peaceful respite from everyday life and to provoke sensory reflection on the relationship between man and nature. It also provided viewers the opportunity to control the rain. The piece aimed to question the human experience within a machine-led world.

Rain Room represents the exciting contemporary cross section of creativity, science, and technology currently informing cutting-edge installations that expand our traditional ideas of art.



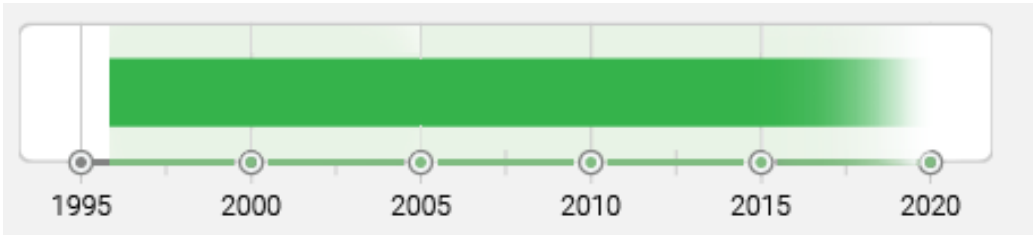
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4 Oct 2012 - 3 Mar 2013

**Random International
Rain Room**

Relational Aesthetics

Started: 1996



Classical painting versus live historical re-enactment? Traditional sculpture versus staged dinner for twenty? Still life photograph versus activist advertising campaign? When French curator Nicolas Bourriaud first coined the term Relational Aesthetics in 1996, the art world already had a long history of exploring questions surrounding what constitutes art. Art had journeyed over the centuries from being, initially, a presentation of physical objects for mere beauty to a complex genre containing many modes of articulating creative concepts. At the term's inception, Relational Aesthetics essentially encompassed work that sought to produce a temporary environment or event in which viewers could participate in order to assimilate and comprehend the artist's specific impetus or message; interactivity and experience becoming more central while material, content, and form are less prioritized. Although critically this distillation remains ambiguous in its open-endedness, it does reflect an important evolution in a long lineage of art that values social encounter over product.



Turkish Jokes1994) Jens Haaning

Relational Aesthetics

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

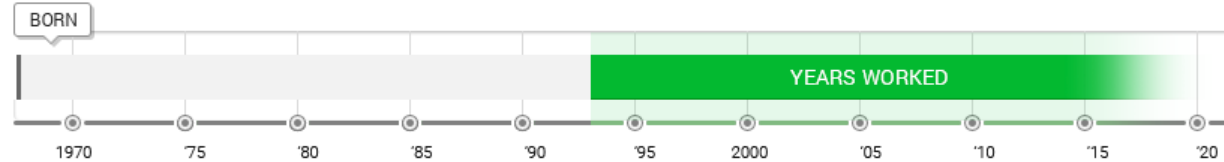


Green River Project (1998-2001, Olafur Eliasson)

- Works of Relational Aesthetics are typically based upon the artist's communication of his or her mission in a public, as opposed to institutional, space where the viewing population is not limited to the traditional art spectator. Thus, by expanding the works' exposure to a more far-reaching viewership, these pieces are often considered examples of temporary democracies.
- Bourriaud called relational artists and their audiences "microtopias," in that the communal bonds that are formed from these experiences create a temporary container for experiencing human connectivity within the social context of the works. Because of this, it's no surprise that much of this art evokes political consciousness and inspires change.
- Oftentimes, relational pieces evoke "witnessing publics," considered provocative in that they allow unrelated individuals to participate in a common feeling or event they might not otherwise experience collectively.
- An artist's subjectivity is often eschewed in the presentation of relational works. Instead, the experience itself and the people participating combine in a present time to determine the overarching tone and evoke the work's ultimate meaning.

Olafur Eliasson

Started: 1990s-



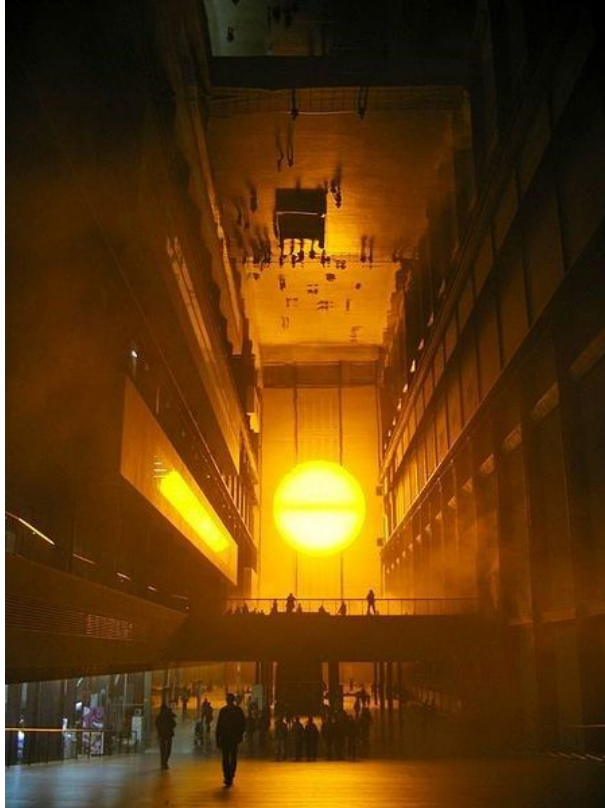
A noted member of the Social Practice movement, Olafur Eliasson injects his work with a universal conscience that catapults art outside of its normal confines and challenges the way we inhabit the world. With each endeavor, he asks people to fully embody their human experience by expanding their feelings of self into a connection with the broader public sphere. His art is derived through a sincere practice in which he collaborates with experts in various fields to create diverse pieces intended to propose critical interventions within existing social systems, an effort that is designed to inspire debate and fresh perceptions, or to catalyze change. Eliasson has become a progressive leader in the kind of creative thinking that provokes the way people perceive culture, community, and the natural environment around them. Although his career has reached iconic status, Eliasson's core motivations set him apart from other superstars of the art world; whereas some artists of his stature are known for their superegos, altruism is the dominant trait in his reputation.



Beauty (1993)

Olafur Eliasson

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



The Weather Project (2003)

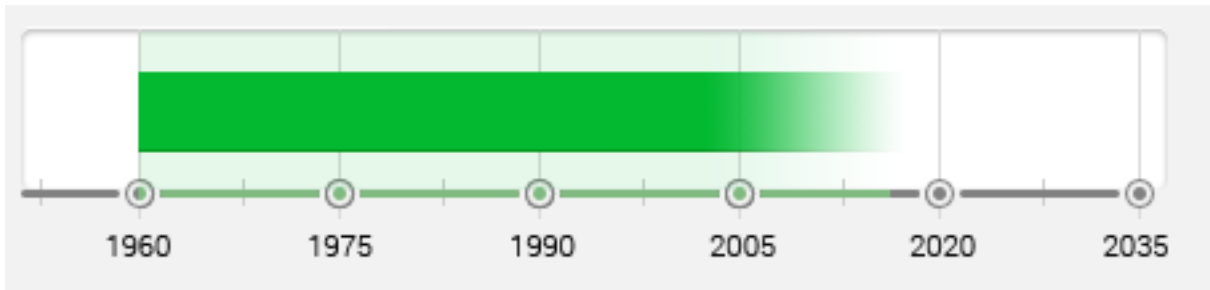
- Eliasson's underlying mission to make the world a better place is largely informed by work that asks viewers to think about their role in globalization and environmentalism. In doing this, he expands the historical role of Activist art with a focus less on the personal issues of our time and more on the overarching concerns that beg current contemplation toward a more humanitarian future.
- Eliasson strives to jostle the status quo by creating work that compels uncertainty, transforming the role of art beyond its simple aesthetic or experiential value and into a powerful tool for battling complacency. He has stated, "This uncertainty is important to me, as it encourages people to think and sense beyond the limits within which they are accustomed to function."
- The artist's presentation of our communal experience of space, ambiguous materialization, and its constant state of flux is often derived from the juxtaposition of manmade and ephemeral elements. His interactions with natural phenomena such as light, water, air, and the environment have vastly dissolved the boundaries of what is considered traditional artistic medium.
- Eliasson enforces his viewers to reconnect with the self, spurring reflection into their experiences within and relationship to the world at large. His work becomes a catalyst, which forwards the concept of individual agency.



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Identity Politics

Started: 1960



Does your identity as a black artist affect your ability to succeed in the art world? Are women less likely to be included in art history than men? Who gets to represent disabled bodies, and in what ways? Identity Politics is concerned with investigating these questions, and with the assertion and reflection of individual and group identities. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, artists of color, LGBTQ+ artists and women in particular have used their art to stage and display experiences of identity and community, frequently referencing their marginalization, alienation or disconnection from wider society. These assertions of identity through artistic practice have transformed the curatorial practices of the art world and made a profound contribution to the shifting of society towards tolerance and acknowledgement of the significance of diverse identities.

Despite that important social function, the label of "Identity Politics" is often used in contemporary journalism and mainstream media in a derogatory fashion, with the implication that such work can only function in relation to a political project and does not have its own aesthetic or conceptual merit. However, many artists and academics argue that the questions this type of work raises about how humans relate to each other is one of the most important and necessary functions of art, and that the illustration of individual and specific experiences in new ways is essential to the development of artistic practice.



Dinner Party (1974-79) Judy Chicago

Identity Politics

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

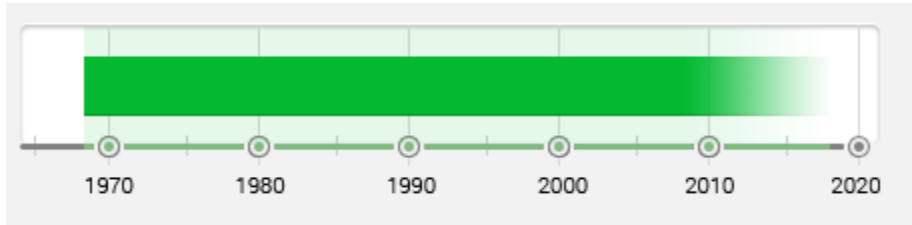


Untitled Film Still #35 (1979), Cindy Sherman

- "Identity Politics" as a label is a retrospective grouping together of several distinct struggles by groups and individuals. There is no single continuous history of it as a concept, and its development is marked instead by successive and/or overlapping social movements, with artists invested in those struggles often making art which reflected its concerns.
- Many artists have argued as part of these social movements that the default expectations of the art market and curatorial establishment are aesthetics rooted in white, male and heteronormative experiences. Identity Politics is therefore an attempt to readdress an imbalance, and to encourage reflection on operations of art history that have systematically disadvantaged those whose artwork did not conform to these expectations.
- A risk for artists engaged in Identity Politics is the potential to have their work read only in relation to a single issue or social struggle - as a political action rather than "good art" in its own right. This factor, coupled with the often-disingenuous debates around Identity Politics has seen several artists resist the definition of their work by the term. Although this criticism may be warranted in individual cases, this simplification attempts to undercut the charge that the criteria for "good art" is based on conventions that are gendered, racialized and heteronormative.
- Despite an often poorly framed debate around its importance, work engaging with Identity Politics has led to greater awareness and major changes in the way museums, galleries and critics address work by historically marginalized groups. Decolonization initiatives, diversity programs, and critically reflexive curation are all legacies of Identity Politics.
- Identity Politics is a concept which has far-reaching implications in both the art world and other mediums of cultural production. In the 21st century debates around its influence on the production of film, television and video games have been fierce, and in many cases mirror or pre-figure critical and curatorial controversies in museums, galleries and the art market.

Institutional Critique

Started: 1968



Is the gallery or museum where art is displayed a neutral space? Or is it compromised by the international art market, or biased due to corporate sponsorship and the businessmen on its board? Artists engaged in Institutional Critique ask these questions, and highlight the controversies, problems and blind spots of the institutions that display the treasures of our civilization.

Reflecting both a general term used for artists critiquing the way that galleries, museums and other institutions are run, and a specific group of **Conceptual** artists working between the 1960s and 1980s, Institutional Critique is a movement that makes the unacknowledged mechanics of art world funding, curation and acquisition explicit, in the hope that it can be changed.



Affichages Sauvages (1968-69), Daniel Buren

Institutional Critique

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk, (1989), Andrea Fraser

- Institutional Critique demands that the systems that allow art to be displayed, sold, bought or written about are as politically sound as the artworks themselves. Where an artwork highlights a political struggle, or gives voice to the oppressed, it should not move into a system that perpetuates the status quo or reinforces that oppression.
- In Institutional Critique the art objects themselves draw attention to the institutional apparatus around them, with the audience asked to reflect on the processes of art making as well as the finished product in front of them. They make their viewers think about how and why art is funded, and the often-invisible systems of preference and bias that dictate what work is displayed.
- As a predominantly Conceptual movement, artists engaged in Institutional Critique ask their viewers to imagine alternative institutions and systems of curation. This might be accomplished by the reimagining of an already existing space, by rearranging or displaying objects that change or reveal a museum's curatorial emphasis, or by creating new objects and installations to draw attention to what is or isn't already valued by galleries.
- Calling attention to these systems can cause controversy or individual artworks to be censored. Many artists engaged in Institutional Critique are charged with "biting the hand that feeds", or criticizing the industry that sustains them. But for many of the artists involved, the responsibility to address the inequality and hypocrisy that exists in the art world outweighs any negative effects on their career. Perhaps ironically, many of the artists most critical of the international art market have later achieved success and fame within it, revealing the adaptability of the institutional system and its ability to assimilate critique.
- Institutional Critique continues to be a live, 21st century concern of artists, with many of the same critiques levelled at institutions in the 1960s and 1980s, such as the compromising nature of corporate donations. Investment from arms manufacturers, fossil fuel companies or pharmaceutical corporations in museums have become a particular target for artists and activists in relation to greater public attention to climate change, the global refugee crisis, and the epidemic of opioid addiction in the United States.

Gift Horse (2014) Hans Haacke

This monumental bronze sculpture, more than 15 feet tall, occupies the space originally meant to be filled with a never-completed statue of King William IV (1765-1837). Haacke installed a rider-less skeletal horse in its place. Standing upon a stone base, the horse looms over Trafalgar Square, while a black bow tied around its left front leg flickers with a LED display that continuously updates the price fluctuations of stocks on the United Kingdom's stock exchange. As the artist said, "I've always been interested in systems and how they work. Political and social systems, of course, are part of that. They can't be escaped". Here the horse frames and illuminates the connections between three realms: the art world, the financial world, and political power. The work references George Stubb's *Whistlejacket*, both a 1762 engraving and life-sized painting of the most famous racehorse of the day which was commissioned by the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham, the horse's owner and the artist's patron.



Vanitas: Evidence, Ruin and Regeneration (1994)

Amalia Mesa-Bains

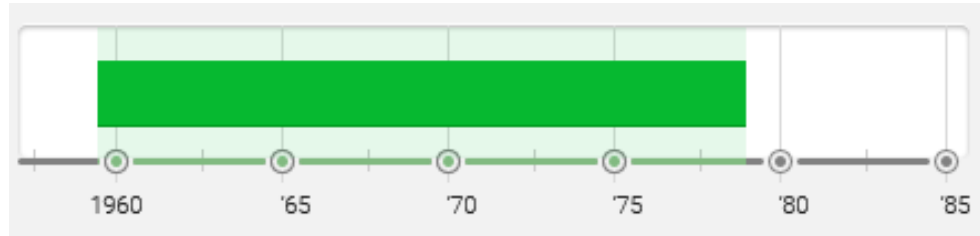
This work shows an installation that was originally staged at Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University in 1993. The installation included the Dutch artist David Bailly's *Vanitas with Negro Boy* (c. 1650), depicting the boy, thought to be a slave, standing beside a table holding his master's prized objects, including a human skull. The painting, framed by a stage-like setting of green satin curtains, becomes the central and somber focus of the room. To the right a telescope perhaps ironically comments upon the inability to 'see' what is so close, while trying to bring the 'faraway' of the historical past into view.

During the exhibition, Daniel Joseph Martinez's outdoor sculpture was vandalized with racial epithets and swastikas. Supporting the student protests that followed, Mesa-Bains attached 1969 photographs of African-American students occupying Cornell's student union to the veterinarian's table in the exhibit. As art curator Lowery Stokes Sims said, her "impact on the art world is not just in terms of being a preeminent artist associated with the Chicano Movement. Through her writings and her theories, she's one of the few to successfully combine a visual practice with a critical one, and her voice and her writings have been important beacons for talking about and impelling a lexicon for Latino and Chicano art."

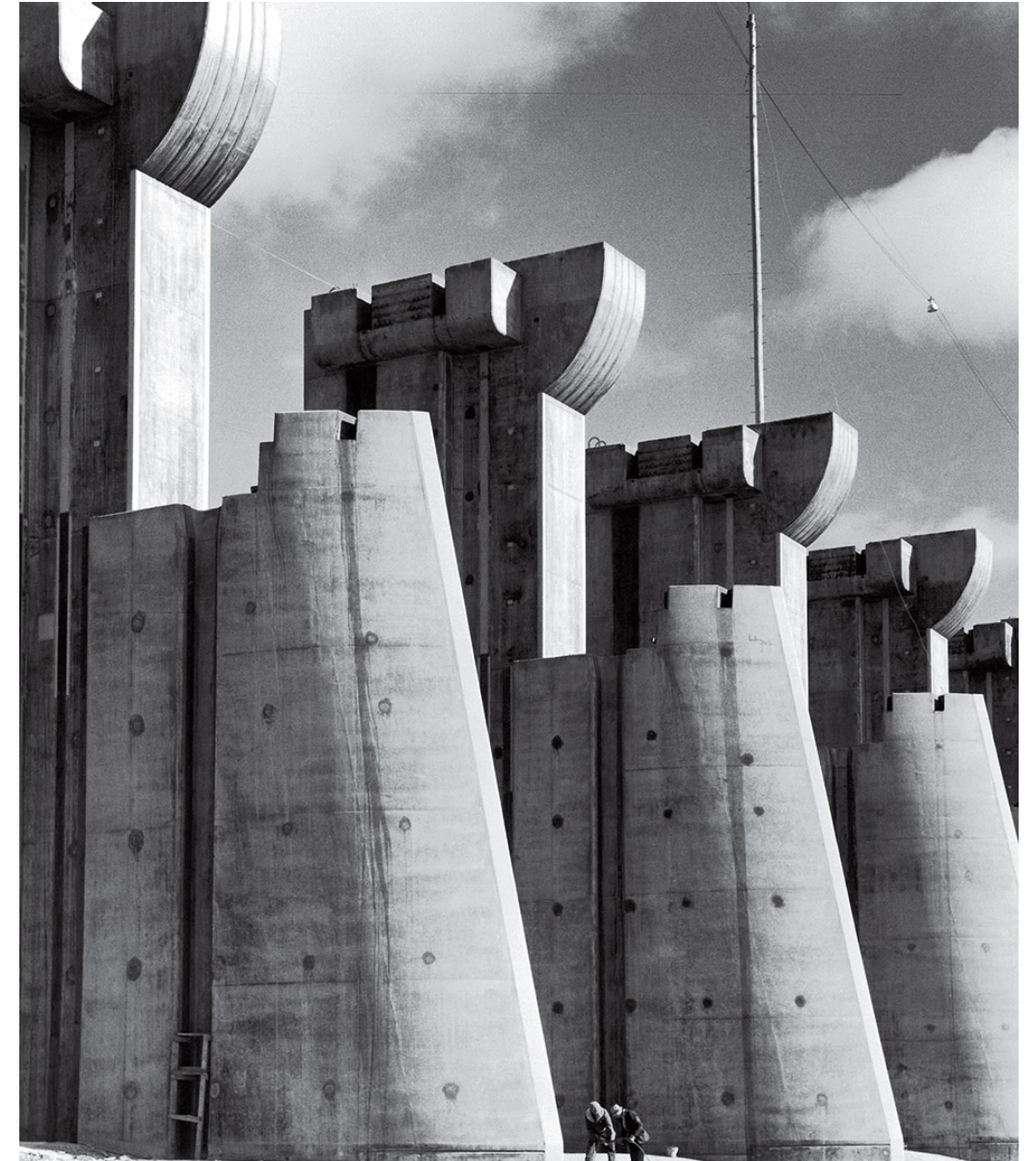


Modern Photography

Started: 1910 Ended: 1960



The birth of **Modern Photography** heralded a significant aesthetic change in photographic output as well as a shift in the way in which photography was produced, utilized and appreciated. **Modern Photography** encompassed trends in the medium from the early 1900s through to the 1960s. The move from early photography to **Modern Photography** is distinguished by a departure from the language and constraints of traditional art, such as painting, and this change in attitude was mirrored by changes in practice. Photographers started using the camera as a direct tool rather than manipulating images to conform to traditional notions of artistic beauty (a custom particularly associated with **Pictorialism**). In pioneering this move, modern photographers eventually disrupted the wider conventions of the art world by expanding both what was considered art and what was deemed an acceptable subject matter for it.



Fort Peck Dam, Montana (1936) Margaret Bourke-White

Modern Photography

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California (1936)
Dorothea Lange

- Although **Modern Photography** does not start until the beginning of the 20th century, earlier photographic innovations provide a technological and contextual framework for later developments and are important in understanding the stylistic changes of the period.
- Some of the key approaches of **Modern Photography** are unique to the medium whilst others align with wider art movements such as **Dada** and **Surrealism**.
- In contrast to earlier relationships between photography and artistic groups, which tended to be imitative, Modern Photography became fully embedded in these movements and provided a new and powerful medium for experimentation and expression.

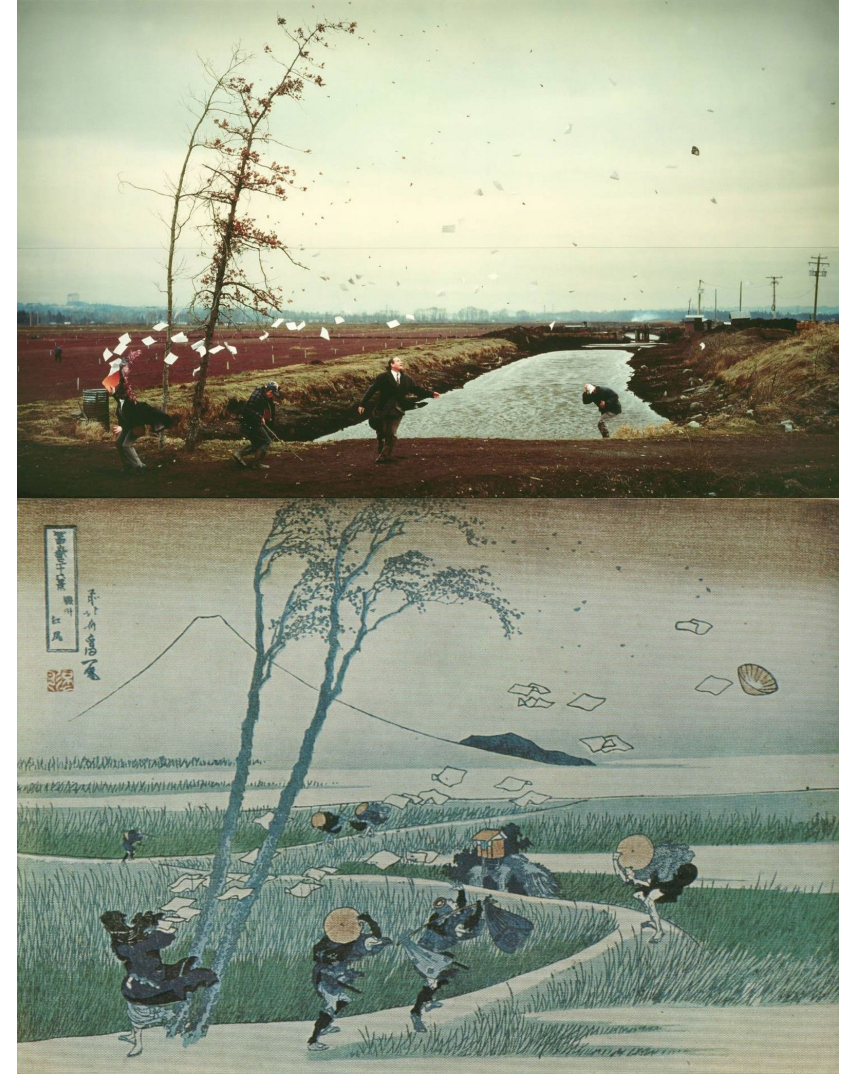
Jeff Wall

Started: 1970s -



Known as both an artist and art historian, Jeff Wall is a Canadian photographer and writer whose work simultaneously showcases and challenges some of the most dominant assumptions about art and art-making. Since in the late 1970s, Wall has created large-scale photographs that recall the imagery, subject matter, construction, and display methods of both pop culture advertising and cinema and the celebrated masterpieces of art history. His early photography shares qualities and themes with **Conceptual art**, as well as aspects of Appropriation art of the 1970s and 1980s, by investigating the assumed, required elements of fine art and borrowing narrative and visual details from outside the established art world genres.

In his wall-sized, brightly lit photographs, Wall combines opposing concepts in the same image, confronting viewers with questions of fabrication and authenticity, spontaneity and artistic process. Much of his subject matter comes from moments that Wall has witnessed, read, or heard in his own life. But, rather than exactly replicating those moments, Wall recreates these scenes to his own liking, changing visual and physical elements as he pleases and depicting the scenes as frozen moments in the middle of an event. Through his photography, Wall attempts to allow the meticulous craft of fine art to enter the imagery of the everyday, all while indulging his own visual and narrative desires and inviting viewers to indulge in their own as well.



A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai) (1993)

Jeff Wall

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Destroyed Room (1978)

- Wall carefully stages the scenes he photographs, intricately designing every detail to achieve his desired visual effects. Ironically, the final images often appear to be mid-action, spontaneous, and candid moments. Although a photograph traditionally captures a single moment in time, Wall's photographs also document the culmination of a time-consuming and laborious process to produce an artistic vision that intentionally obscures the creative process itself.
- In Wall's earliest photographs of the late 1970s and 1980s, clear references are made to some of the most famous paintings in the history of art since the **Renaissance**. Wall admits that in nodding toward the titans of early modern painting, such as **Delacroix** and **Manet**, he was "trying to continue an idea of historically and theoretically informed production." At the time, many contemporary artists were rejecting the presumed grandeur of fine art painting in materials, style, and subject matter. Quite uniquely, Wall uses modern-day items and scenes to compose his photographs, but designs these compositional elements in ways that clearly hint at earlier landmarks, showing reverence to both art history and to contemporary artistic interests in the same space.
- Rather than emphasizing the intimacy that photographs can carry through their small sizes and abilities to capture fond, personal memories, Wall challenges this intimacy by making his photographs large in size and displaying them in light boxes. The surprising scale of the photographs, along with the intense brightness of the images, commands the viewer's attention in the way that big, illuminated advertising signs do in modern life, from bus stops to billboards. The visual intensity of these photographs can elicit a diverse range of responses from their audiences, as viewers are thrust into the private lives and spaces of the people in the photographs or into environments that range from war-torn to idyllic.

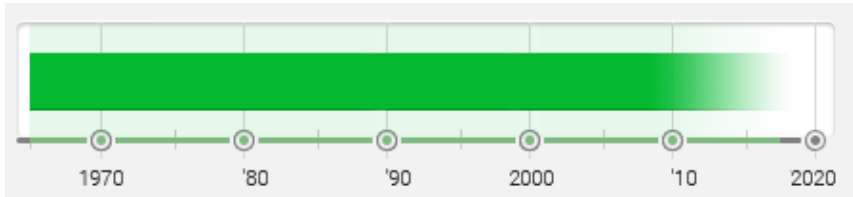
A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai) (1993), Jeff Wall



Wall's *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, reinterprets the scene in a woodcut print by Japanese printmaker and painter Katsushika Hokusai. Part of the larger portfolio called *The Thirty-six Views of Fuji*, Hokusai's original image, *Travelers Caught in a Sudden Breeze at Ejiri* (c. 1832), depicts seven individuals caught off-guard in the wind at different points along a narrow path. The path weaves its way through lush green and blue fields, with the majestic Mount Fuji resting in the background. In Wall's photographic work, the individuals caught in the wind in the foreground mimic the poses of the travelers in the earlier woodcut, but otherwise evoke a time and place far removed from the calm Japanese landscape.

Digital Art

Started: 1965



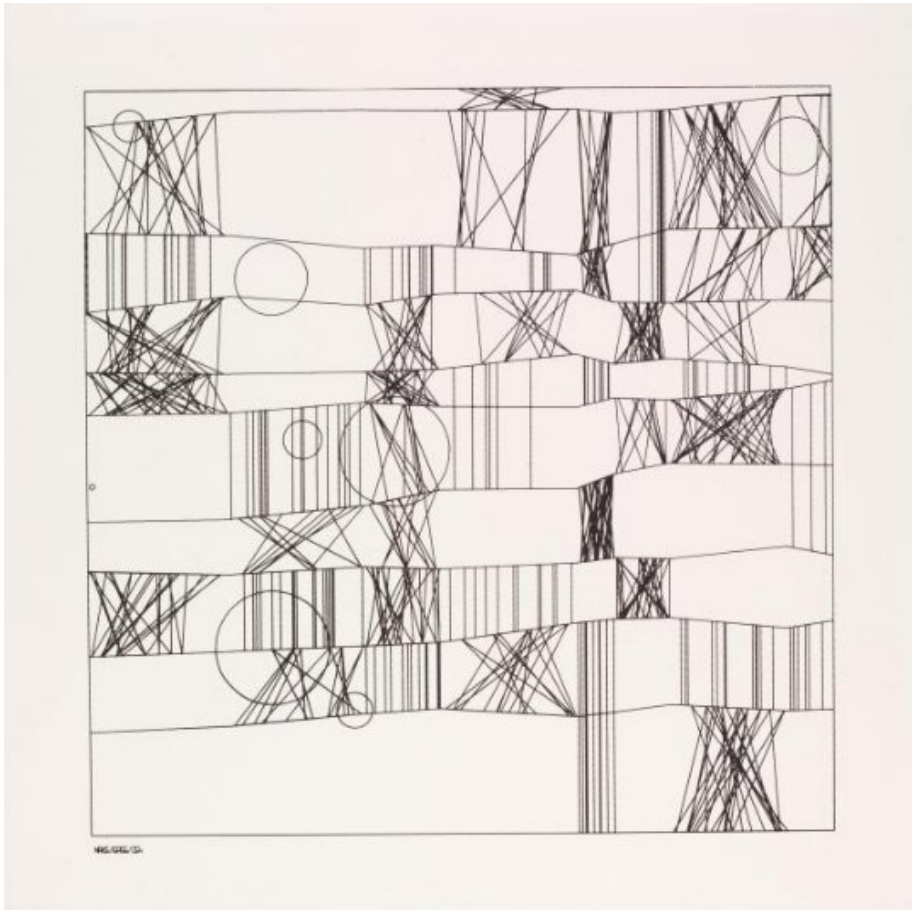
Not since the advent of the camera has something come along to change the very fabric of art making's possibilities on such a grand scale as digital art. In its most distilled essence, digital art encapsulates an artistic work or practice that uses any form of digital technology as part of its creation or presentation process. As the digital age (also known as the information age) marked its march into the world between 1950 and 1970, it was only a matter of time before artists would grasp its progressive technologies for their own creative output. As with all new mediums, artists began to wield these brave new innovations of society, including television, the introduction of the personal computer, the accessibility of audio and visual software, and eventually the internet, into works of their own, with minds ever eager for the expansive opportunities to utilize contemporary means to evolve their voices anew. Although digital art is not recognized as a distinct movement in and of itself, as technology continues its jackrabbit fast bloom into contemporary society, we will no doubt continue to see it unfold into a myriad, ever-changing landscape, solidifying itself as a credible alternative to traditional means of art making for a post-millennial society.



Hello (1969) Allan Kaprow

Digital Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



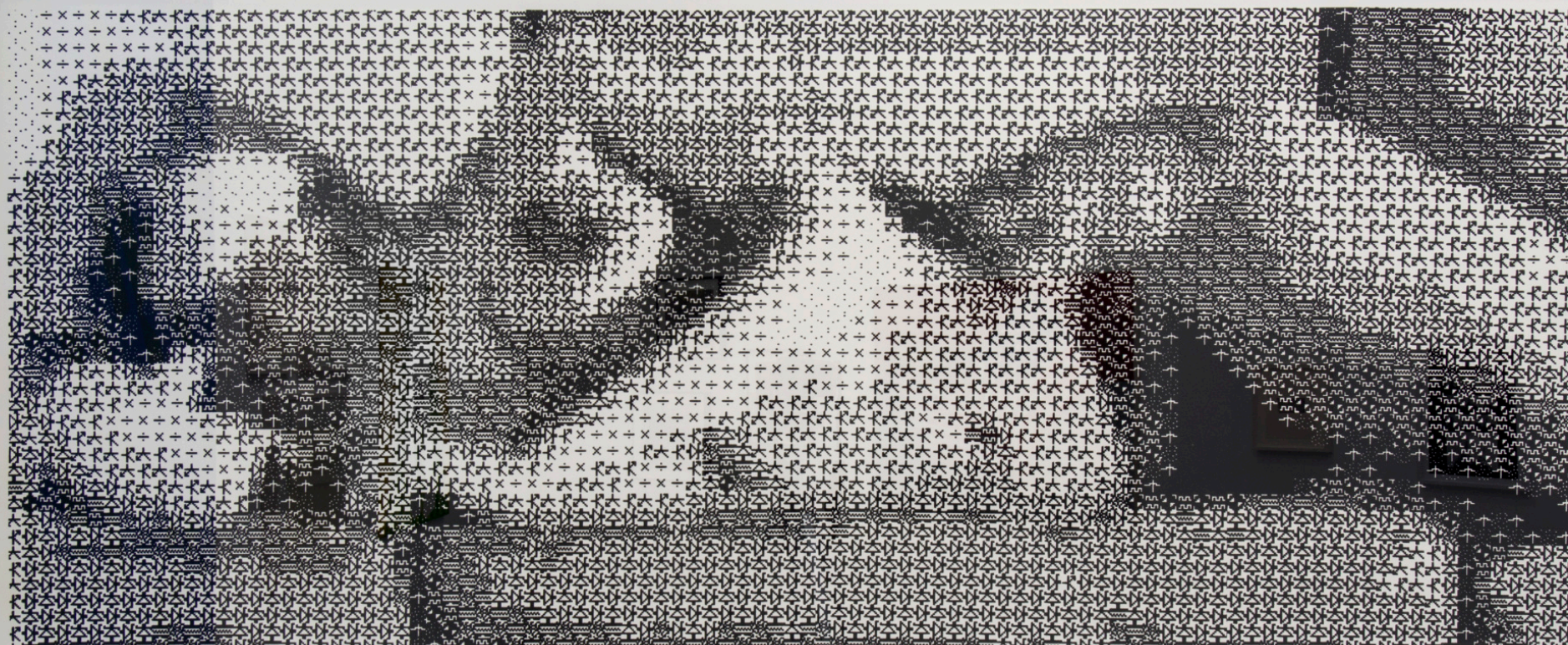
Homage a Paul Klee 13/9/65 Nr. 2(1965) Frieder Nake

At its inception, digital art marked a relationship between artists and engineers/scientists, which explored the connections between art and technology. As artists began to explore these technologies, they were not merely using the new medium but were oftentimes also asking viewers to reflect upon the impact of the information age on society overall.

Digital art greatly expanded the artist's toolbox from the traditional raw materials into the progressive new realm of electronic technologies. Instead of brush and acrylic, artists could now paint with light, sound, and pixels. **Instead of paper, artists could collage with found digital imagery or computer-generated graphics.** Instead of physical, two-dimensional canvas, artists could concoct three-dimensional graphic works for projection on screen or via multimedia projection.

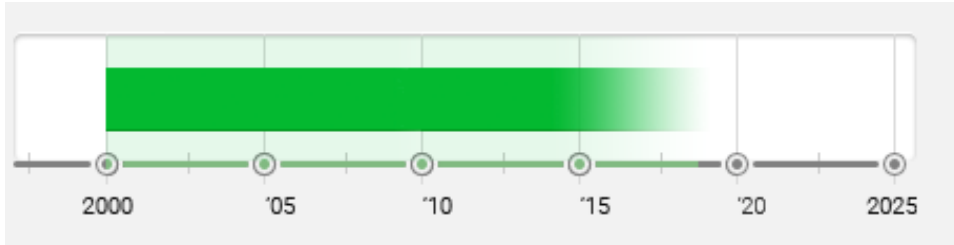
Digital art revolutionized the way art could be made, distributed, and viewed. Although some digital art leans heavily on the traditional gallery or museum venue for viewing, especially in the case of installations that require machinery and complex components, much of it can be easily transported and seen via the television, computer screen, social media, or internet. This has empowered artists to create their own careers without the necessity of representation, utilizing contemporary tools like crowdsourcing to fund their work, and the potential to go viral to spread their art into the mainstream consciousness.

Young Nude (1966)
Kenneth C. Knowlton and Leon Marmon



Superflat

Started: 2000



When Japanese artist Takashi Murakami coined the term Superflat in 2001, he launched one of postmodern art's most invigorated movements. Based on the compilation and compression of centuries' worth of Japanese "flat" art aesthetics, and inspired by the country's distinctively unique post World War II anime and manga craze, he inspired other artists to join him in putting Japan on the art world map. Often categorized as a Japanese form of Pop Art, Superflat has become an international phenomenon, infiltrating all areas of consumer culture from high to low art.



727 (1996) Takashi Murakami

Superflat

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

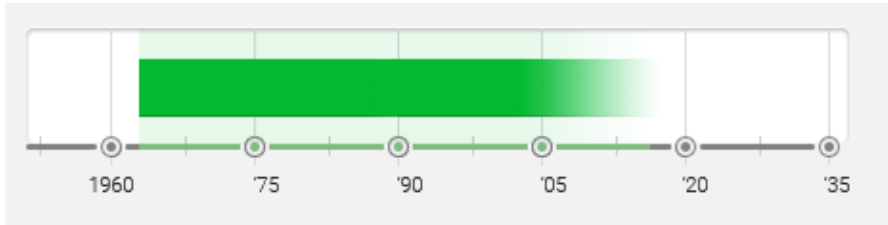


A to Z Memorial Dog (2006) Yoshitomo Nara

- The flat of Superflat has dual meanings. It refers not only to the history of non-three-dimensional styles of Japanese art, but also remarks on the flat, shallowness of consumer culture, something the movement has been doubly said to either celebrate or critically exploit.
- Although primarily drawing upon contemporary Japanese subcultures, the influence of Pop Art and Neo-Pop Art on Superflat cannot be denied because of its use of modern popular culture as a continual source of fodder. Not only does this expand Pop's reach as a movement but solidifies its foundation upon which artists worldwide are perpetually influenced by the constant stream of imagery and messages fed to society via mass media.
- Superflat has successfully and significantly blurred the lines between fine art and commercial art with work that ranges from traditional painting and sculpture to digital art, graphic design, and film to fashion and product design and development. Because of this, it has revolutionized the appropriation of globalized visual culture toward creating and manufacturing creative forms of art that can be accessed and bought by audiences across all economic spectrums.

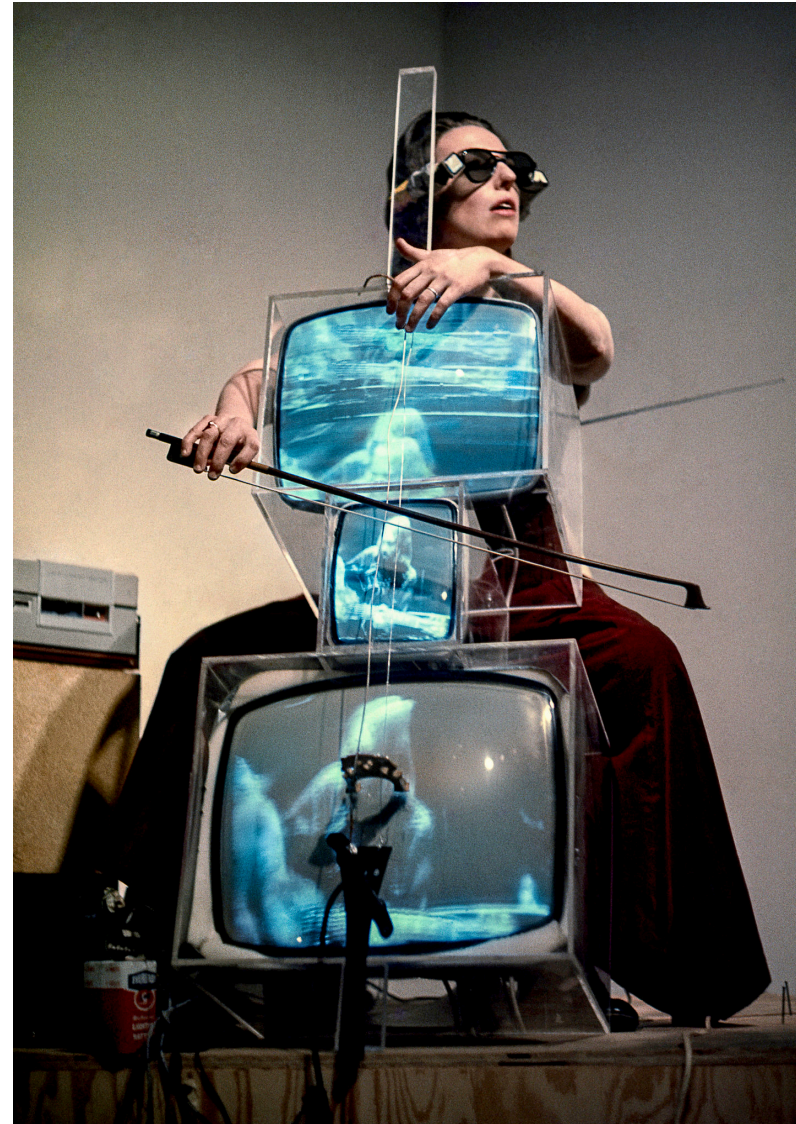
Video Art

Started: 1965



Video became an excitingly immediate medium for artists after its introduction in the early 1960s. The expensive technology, which had been available prior only within the corporate broadcasting arena, experienced an advent when Sony first created an economical consumer piece of equipment that allowed everyday people access to vast new possibilities in documentation. Understandably, this produced huge interest for the more experimental artists of the time, especially those involved with concurrent movements in **Conceptual art**, **Performance** and experimental film. It provided a cheap way of recording and representation through a dynamic new avenue, shattering an art world where forms such as painting, photography, and sculpture had been the long-held norm. This expanded the potential of individual creative voice and challenged artists to stretch toward new plateaus in their careers. It has also birthed an unmistakable population of artists who may never have entered the fine art field if stifled by the constraints of utilizing traditional mediums. With warp speed over the last half century, video has become accessible by the populous, spawning a continual evolution of its use; we live in an age where even your everyday smartphone has the ability to create high caliber works of art through the use of an ever increasing assortment of applications.

We now consider Video art to be a valid means of artistic creation with its own set of conventions and history. Taking a variety of forms - from gallery installations and sculptures that incorporate television sets, projectors, or computer peripherals to recordings of performance art to works created specifically to be encountered via distribution on tape, DVD or digital file - video is now considered in rank equal to other mediums. It is considered a genre rather than a movement in the traditional sense and is not to be confused with theatrical cinema, or artists' (or experimental) film. Although the mediums may sometimes appear interchangeable, their different origins cause art historians to consider them distinct from each other. So popular a medium, many art schools now offer video as a specialized art major.



TV Cello (1964) Nam June Paik

Video Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

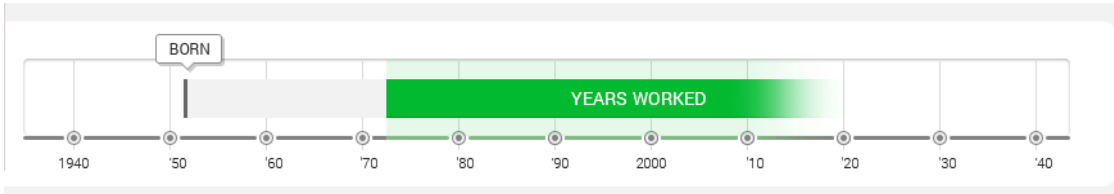


Sun in Your Head – Television Decollage (1963), Wolf Vostell

- With the introduction of the television set in the second half of the 20th century, people gained a new all-consuming pastime. Many artists of the era used video to make works that highlighted what they saw as TV's encroaching and progressively insidious power by producing parodies of advertising and television programs. They pointed provocative fingers at the way society had become (passively) entranced with television or had succumbed to its seductive illusions. By co-opting the technologies of this medium, artists brought their own perspectives to the table, rounding out the brave new world of broadcasting ability to include creative, idiosyncratic, and individualized contributions.
- Some artists have used video to make us think more critically about, and oftentimes look to dissect, Hollywood film conventions. By eschewing the typical templates of formulaic narration, or by presenting intensely personal and taboo subjects on screen as works of art, or by jostling our ideas about how a film should look and feel, these artists use the canvas borrowed from the cinema to eradicate preconceived ideas of what is suitable, palatable, or focus-group-friendly.
- Looking beyond video's recording capabilities, many artists use it as a medium for its intrinsic properties with work that mimics more traditional forms of art **like painting, sculpture, collage**, or abstraction. This might emerge as a series of blurred, spliced scenes composed as a visual image. It may take the shape of a recording of performance meant as a reflection on movement or the perception of space. It may consist of actual video equipment and its output as objects in a work. Finally, it may be a work that could not exist without the video component such as art pieces that utilize video signals, distortion and dissonance, or other audiovisual manipulations.
- Because Video art was radically new for its time, some artists who were trying to push limits in contemporary society felt video an ideal format for their own work. This can be seen in the Feminist art movement in which many women, who hoped to distance and distinguish themselves from their male artist forebears, chose the medium for its newness, its sense of progression, and its opportunities that had not been widely tapped or established yet. We saw this politically, too, as many artists with a cause began using video as a means to spread their message. It appeared socially as well, as many people working to expose or spread important, underexposed information, felt the medium was conducive to both grass roots affordability and yet very broad distribution capabilities.

Bill Viola

Started: 1970s =



Bill Viola has been referred to as "the Rembrandt of the video age" and, indeed, his work pays homage not only to the famous Dutch master but to the tradition of creating large-scale works of art that draw the viewer into beautifully painted images and compelling narratives. There is often a spiritual component to his work, with elements of Zen Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, and Christian mysticism underpinning themes considered universal: birth, death, love, sex, grief, and redemption. Viola considers the "phenomena of sense perception" as a path to self-awareness; therefore, his work is a blend of experimental video art and sound, including avant-garde music performance. He was one of the earliest artists to explore the potential of the video camera, which in its most basic form in the 1970s only vaguely resembles the sophisticated devices of today. As one of the pioneers of the medium, he has consistently exploited its rapidly changing technology to create over 150 artworks over the last 40 years



Bill Viola

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

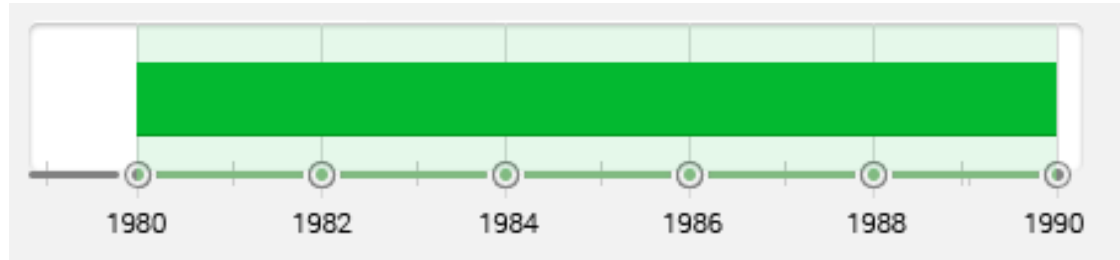


Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire, Water) (2014)

- For Viola, the video camera functions as a "microscope for being" with which events, from milestones to minutiae, may be fixed in time without the gaps that result from sleep or memory loss or even conscious alteration. With video it is even possible to slow down the otherwise inexorable and rapid progression of time, thus his use of extreme slow motion is a kind of response to the anxiety of being aware of our mortality.
- More than simply creating a video that is shown on a screen, Viola created environments that were highly immersive. For instance, his installations almost always incorporate sound, including experimental music, and are typically created and presented in an either darkened or at least otherwise barren exhibition space in order to eliminate any distractions that would prevent the viewer from fully engaging with the work.
- Viola's videos are usually sparsely populated and furnished. Including fewer figures and objects shifts the attention to the narrative, which is often the artist's goal: giving visual form to experiences that we cannot normally see or experience.
- When he first began producing videos, Viola was intent on "proving something, much like a scientist." He approached the creative process with video art like a "controlled experiment" in which he used the camera to record carefully devised images and narratives. As the technology improved, however, he realized that his approach should basically be the opposite: that he would adapt to the new possibilities presented by technological progress of the medium and be spontaneous, capturing life experiences rather than choreographing them. Rather than creating videos in the controlled environment of the studio, Viola began what would be a career-spanning practice of going out of the studio, turning on his camera, and opening his work to the spontaneity - and routine - of real life.

Neo Geo

Started: 1980s **Ended:** 1990s



Neo-Geo was for a time the "next big thing" in the art world of the late 1980s, a loose group of artists seemingly engaged in a critique of consumerism, commercialization, and the regulation of space through abstract aesthetics. Drawing on lessons learned from earlier forms of modernist artistic practice and influenced by European philosophy, artists deployed abstract forms to critique late 20th century Western civilization. Their work commented on increased levels of social isolation within society, the veneration of consumer goods, and the simulation of experience at the expense of the real. Perhaps ironically though, many of the artists went on to be hugely successful commodities in the art market, leading some critics to suggest that the movement was driven more by marketing and publicity hype than genuine social consciousness.

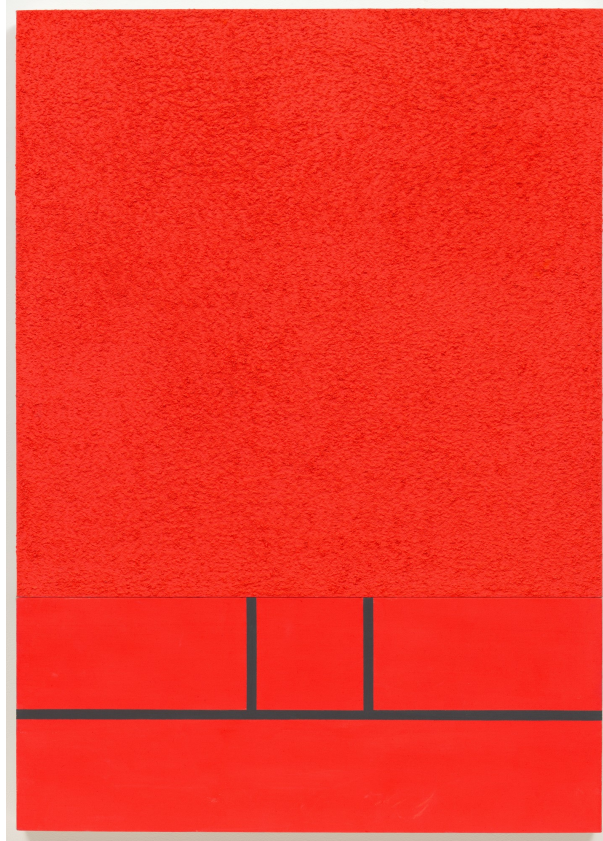
The movement's name derives from Neo-Geometric Conceptualism, but both critics and artists struggled to agree on a name for the group. "Post-Conceptualism", "Simulationism" and "Post-Abstract Abstraction" were alternatives used by various curators, artists, and writers, but all speak to the idea of an art movement devoted to the repurposing of already existing aesthetic languages to engage (mostly implicitly) with contemporary concerns about consumer culture and wider society.



Three Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Two Dr J Silver Series, Spalding NBA Tip-Off) (1985)
Jeff Koons

Neo Geo

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

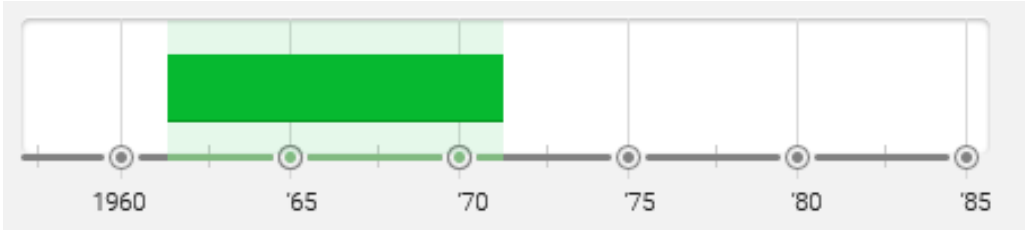


Red Cell with Conduit (1982)
Peter Halley

- Neo-Geo combines the aesthetics of earlier abstract art forms like Pop Art, Op Art and Minimalism with concepts derived from continental philosophy. Most notably this included the work of Jean Baudrillard, whose idea that desires are constructed rather than natural was particularly influential in relation to the critique of consumer culture.
- Artists also drew heavily on Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum, or the copy of a copy. Referring to the sense that reproductions rule the everyday, from brand logos to mass-produced items, Neo-Geo artists played with notions of authenticity in relation to it by, for example, presenting mass-produced objects as one-of-a-kind art objects. Rather than doing so to shock or trouble the notion of what art is, this was intended to simply reflect the reality already around the audience.
- This distinguishes Neo-Geo from previous artistic movements. After Dada and Pop, the reproduction of these objects was simply exemplary of their ubiquity, as it was no longer shocking to bourgeois sensibilities to use readymades in artistic practice. In an almost cynical manner, it suggested that both the art world and the real world were now predicated on the reproduction of the same objects, only able to be recombined to create new meaning.
- Unlike much of the more formally distinct work from the East Village scene of the 1980s (which many Neo-Geo artists had early ties to) these paintings and objects were able to be taken up as commodities by the art market with relative ease and several artists achieved rapid fame. This led to accusations from some critics that the subversive quality of critique implicit in their work had been lost. Several suggested that the masterful publicity campaign attached to the artists reflected an art world too ready to seize new work as the next major movement.

Biomorphism

Started: Early 1924 **Ended:** 1955



Amidst a societal hangover from World War I, many European artists were going inward to mine what lies beneath. Many took part in the burgeoning interest in psychology and the physical sciences, finding inspiration in both the invisible signs and symbols that bubbled up from the subconscious and the visible internal cellular structures and life forms that make up the body. With roots deeply connected to Dada and Surrealism, an intuitive mode of expression coined "Biomorphism" emerged, in which an artwork's elements became modeled on naturally occurring patterns, biological forms, and shapes. This fluid way of creating art from emotion and its resulting curvilinear aesthetic infiltrated all parts of society from painting and sculpture to decorative arts and interior design.

Uncapitalized, the term "biomorphic" was used to describe earlier treatments in art history, such as Rococo's common decorative motif resembling shells and acanthus leaves or Art Nouveau's serpentine arabesques, as well as in Islamic art's motifs evoking plant forms. It is also applied to organic-like forms used in various subsequent art movements.



Harlequin's Carnival (1924-25) Joan Miro

Biomorphism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

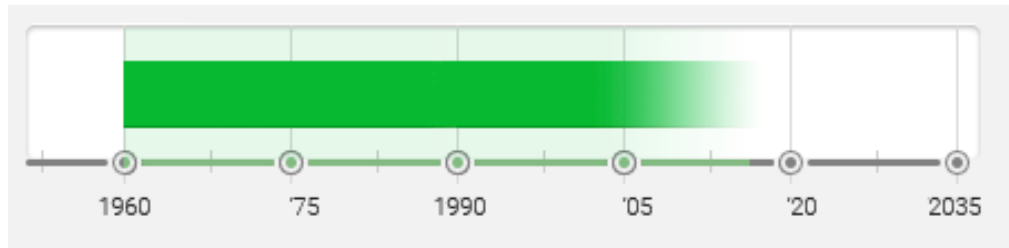


Reclining Figure)1951_ Henry Moore

- Biomorphism lent itself perfectly to the Surrealist impetus to portray the internal unconscious through automatic, stream-of-consciousness art. Even with sculpture, the practice of Direct Carving and using the material's grain, texture, and density to energetically shape the artwork, carried the mark of automatism. By allowing the art medium and material to inform an intuitive flow of expression, the artist brought forth a connection between the viewer and his or her own inner spirit - an artistic bridge between the human subconscious and reality.
- Many biomorphic forms were seen as abstracted derivations of reality, both slightly recognizable and non-identifiable simultaneously. A common motif emphasizing this relationship between familiarity and ambiguity was in the visual correspondence between the human body and the natural landscape.
- To create biomorphic images and textures, artists employed a slew of innovative painting techniques including decalcomania, where a piece of glass or paper was placed over a painted surface then removed; **grattage** in which an object was placed beneath paper and then painted over; and frottage, laying paper over an object and then rubbing with charcoal to create an imprint.
- Many Biomorphic artists believed that the intuitive process of organic abstraction in art was an essential vehicle, via which one could arrive at the great elemental truths of existence, fortify their own spiritual aspirations, and reveal visions and messages about the future.

Feminist Art

Started: 1960s



The Feminist art movement emerged in the late 1960s amidst the fervor of anti-war demonstrations and civil and queer rights movements. Harkening back to the utopian ideals of early-20th-century modernist movements, Feminist artists sought to rewrite a falsely male-dominated art history as well as change the contemporary world around them through their art, focusing on intervening in the established art world and the art canon's legacy, as well as in everyday social interactions. As artist **Suzanne Lacy** declared, the goal of Feminist art was to "influence cultural attitudes and transform stereotypes." Feminist art created opportunities and spaces that previously did not exist for women and minority artists, as well as paved the path for the Identity art and Activist art of the 1980s.



Womanhouse (1972) Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro

Feminist Art

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975) Martha Rosler

- Feminist artists sought to create a dialogue between the viewer and the artwork through the inclusion of women's perspective. Art was not merely an object for aesthetic admiration, but could also incite the viewer to question the social and political landscape, and through this questioning, possibly affect the world and bring change toward equality.
- Before feminism, the majority of women artists were invisible to the public eye. They were oftentimes denied exhibitions and gallery representation based on the sole fact of their gender. The art world was largely known, or promoted as, a boy's club, of which sects like the hard drinking, womanizing members of Abstract Expressionism were glamorized. To combat this, Feminist artists created alternative venues as well as worked to change established institutions' policies to promote women artists' visibility within the market.
- Feminist artists often embraced alternative materials that were connected to the female gender to create their work, such as textiles, or other media previously little used by men such as performance and video, which did not have the same historically male-dominated precedent that painting and sculpture carried. By expressing themselves through these non-traditional means, women sought to expand the definition of fine art, and to incorporate a wider variety of artistic perspectives.

Soft Landscape (1967)

Louise Bourgeois

Here, two **biomorphic** shapes seem to bubble out of a molten ground suggesting both landscape and the human body. The use of caramel-colored resin creates a sense of living fluidity, evoking membranes and soft moist surfaces that flux and burgeon, as the shapes take on an ambiguous sexuality. As the artist said, the "body could be considered from a topological point of view, a landscape with mounds and valleys and caves and holes, so it seems rather evident . . . that our body is a figuration that appears in Mother Earth."

In the 1950s Bourgeois began to explore what she called a "softening" in her work, using more curvilinear and bulbous forms, furthered emphasized in her 1960s turn to plastic and resins. Her work explored childhood trauma and the deep psychic recesses of human consciousness. She has said, "Psychoanalysis is my religion."

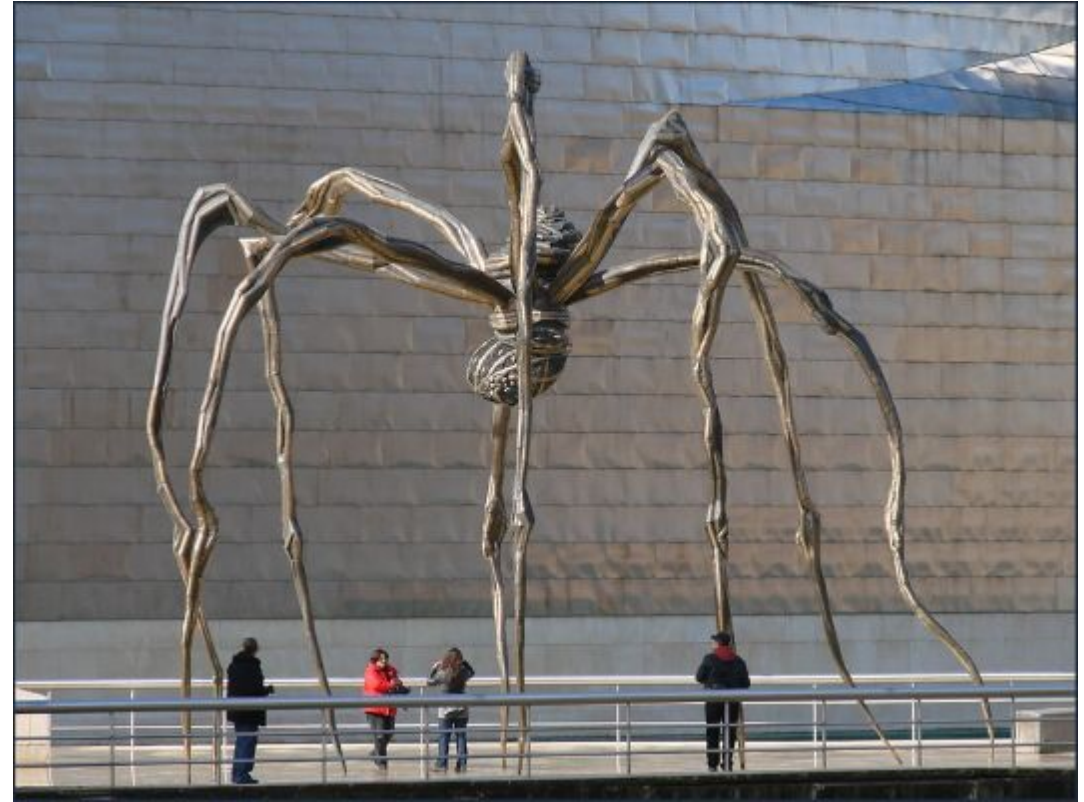
Bourgeois evolved the legacy of biomorphic Surrealism while innovatively exploring what critic Siri Hustvedt called, "a hallucinatory pre-linguistic space of primal drives" with its "unstable borders, sliding recognitions, aggressive sexual ambiguity, and visions of the body amputated, in pieces, or sprouting extra parts." By utilizing her own traumatic autobiography and personal psychology to guide highly intuitive works, she paved the way for a generation of artists who were turning the personal political, or trying to shed light on how art can process out wounds through the very act of its practice - the Surrealist impetus pushed into a contemporary, conceptual, confessional lexicon. Her work influenced artists like Louise Nevelson and informed the Feminist art movement of the 1970s, influencing Lynda Benglis and Judy Chicago, as well as later artists like Tracey Emin.



Louise Bourgeois

Started: 1930s – 1990s

Louise Bourgeois' life was a prolific demonstration of utilizing the creation of art as a tool for processing one's inner emotionality and psychological landscape. Working across a wide variety of mediums that included painting, drawing, and sculpture, her work dealt largely in dissecting, exploring, and reacting to the traumatic events from her own childhood that included her father's infidelity. Bourgeois' often brooding and sexually explicit subject matter and her presentation of the female viewpoint in regards to suppression, feminism, and sensuality alongside a distinct focus on three-dimensional form were rare for women artists at the time. Her single-minded devotion to expression, both as an artist and as a mentor to young artists, lent Bourgeois an international importance that remains vast, manifested most strongly through her influence on the development of conceptual and **Installation Art**.



Maman(1999)

Louise Bourgeois

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



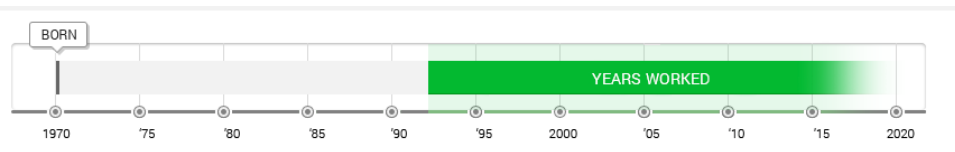
Foret (Night Garden) 1953

- Bourgeois wholly autobiographical artwork is renowned for its highly personal thematic content involving the unconscious, sexual desire, jealousy, betrayal, fear, anxiety, loneliness, and the body. These themes draw on events in her childhood for which she considered making art a therapeutic or cathartic process.
- Bourgeois transformed her experiences into a highly personal visual language through the use of mythological and archetypal imagery, adopting objects such as spirals, spiders, cages, medical tools, and sewn appendages to symbolize the feminine psyche, beauty, and psychological pain.
- The artist likened her work, and its myriad installation settings, as "cells" - or containers of memory, which both froze a recollection or feeling in time while also evoking the emotions that said memories produced.
- Through the use of abstract form and a wide variety of media, Bourgeois dealt with notions of universal balance, playfully juxtaposing materials conventionally considered male or female. She would, for example, use rough or hard materials most strongly associated with masculinity to sculpt soft **biomorphic** forms suggestive of femininity.



Jenny Saville

Started: 1990s -



Jenny Saville is often credited with reinventing figure painting for contemporary art, as well as originating a new and challenging way of painting the female nude. Saville is part of the generation of concept-driven British artists that came of age in the 1990s, the **YBAs**, but unlike her contemporaries, Saville's primary interests are painting and figuration.

Whether in her oil paintings of fleshy bodies, or charcoal drawings of layered and overlapping figures, **Saville combines figuration and abstraction to create direct and unidealized images of the human form.** Drawing on **precedents from the history of art**, she presents bodies (often damaged, dimpled, or altered) that speak to our contemporary moment. A prolific artist, she is one of the most important painters working today.



Branded 1992)

Jenny Saville

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

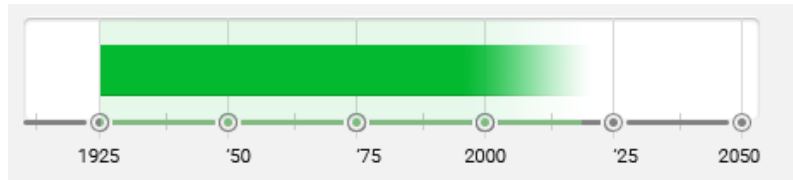


Mothers (2011)

- From the beginning of her career, Saville has engaged in an intense exploration of the body and its representation. Saville borrows conventions from a long tradition in figure painting, whether in poses borrowed from *Madonna and Child* paintings by **Leonardo da Vinci**, the use of a color palette reminiscent of **Peter Paul Rubens**, or the gestural painting of **Willem de Kooning** in his *Woman* series. Saville appropriates these techniques associated with male masters to show her own point of view as a woman.
- A painter of flesh with all its marks, blemishes and folds, Saville is best known for her large-scale paintings of towering fleshy female nudes set against a blank background. These figures represent the artist's desire to tackle taboo issues around motherhood, plastic surgery, dieting, exercise, and the representation of women in art and popular culture, themes that had mostly been missing from the history of paintings, including paintings of women.
- Saville uses the prolific art historical theme of the female nude and turns it upside down. Where paintings of the female nude tend to be small in size, centered in the picture frame, reclining in a docile manner and with extremely smooth, flat skin and beautiful unblemished features; her paintings are huge with layers of thick paint, bruised surfaces, hair, and figures that seem to be trying to escape the picture plane.
- The female nude is traditionally painted by men for other men to look at. Saville challenges this dynamic by often painting herself, often naked - becoming artist and artist's model, and thus claiming agency as the subject and author of her work. Saville's paintings of her own naked body towering over a viewer. They threaten the status quo of the clothed, male artist and naked woman model so central to art historical paintings of nudes.
- In her later work, Saville pays less attention to the built up layers of paint that characterize her early paintings in favor of the drawn lines (in charcoal) that allow for the overlapping of multiple figures in order to evoke movement, memory, and time.

Magic Realism

Started: 1925



The merging of present and past, the invention of strange objects, the juxtaposition of unlike things, and the depiction of alienation are just a few of the ways in which **Magic Realist** painters evoke the mysteriousness and uncanniness of everyday reality. The original movement emerged in the 1920s in Germany to counter the emphasis placed on individual subjectivity by earlier **avant-garde** artists. Initially synonymous with **Neue Sachlichkeit**, Magic Realism focused less on biting social critique and more on explorations of the strangeness and incongruousness of existence. Often using exquisite detail and unusual perspective, the artists conveyed the wonder of observable reality.

Magic Realism's influence spread across media, especially in literature, to become a diffuse practice in several areas around the globe. Never a unified movement, artists in various countries developed the ideas and styles, creating unique versions, which still resonate with contemporary innovators of many media to this day.



Soaring (1942-50), Andrew Wyeth

Magic Realism

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Milky Way (1989-90) Peter Doig

- Magic Realism was part of the trend toward classicism in the interwar years that aimed to move away from more expressive styles. Relying on the undistorted figure, the artists emphasized observable reality. To reinforce their classical tendencies many of used materials like egg tempera, which was popular in the **early Italian Renaissance**.
- While Magic Realism is often described as "surreal," the artists themselves were careful to distinguish themselves from the avant-garde group of **Surrealist** painters and poets. Unlike the Surrealists, the Magic Realists did not wish to probe the unconscious, dreams, or interior states, but rather they emphasized the often-times *strangeness* of outward experiences.
- While some Magic Realists use symbols and allegory, many relied on odd juxtapositions of objects, distortions of space, or hyperrealism to convey the mysteriousness of everyday life. By focusing on such devices, instead of fantastical or made-up elements, the artists create spaces that are more universally understood and that do not rely on specialized knowledge.
- While most Magic Realists avoided stinging satire and social critique of the most strident Neue Sachlichkeit artists, many explored the state of society and culture in a more nuanced way, often making commentaries about the feelings of alienation and isolation felt in the modern era.

Peter Doig

Started: 1960s -

Peter Doig went from being an artist whose peers were too embarrassed to show alongside him, to possibly the most internationally loved painter of our time. He is a leading figure in contemporary art's 'return to painting' and is particularly responsible for re-inserting magic, narrative, and lyricism into painting today.

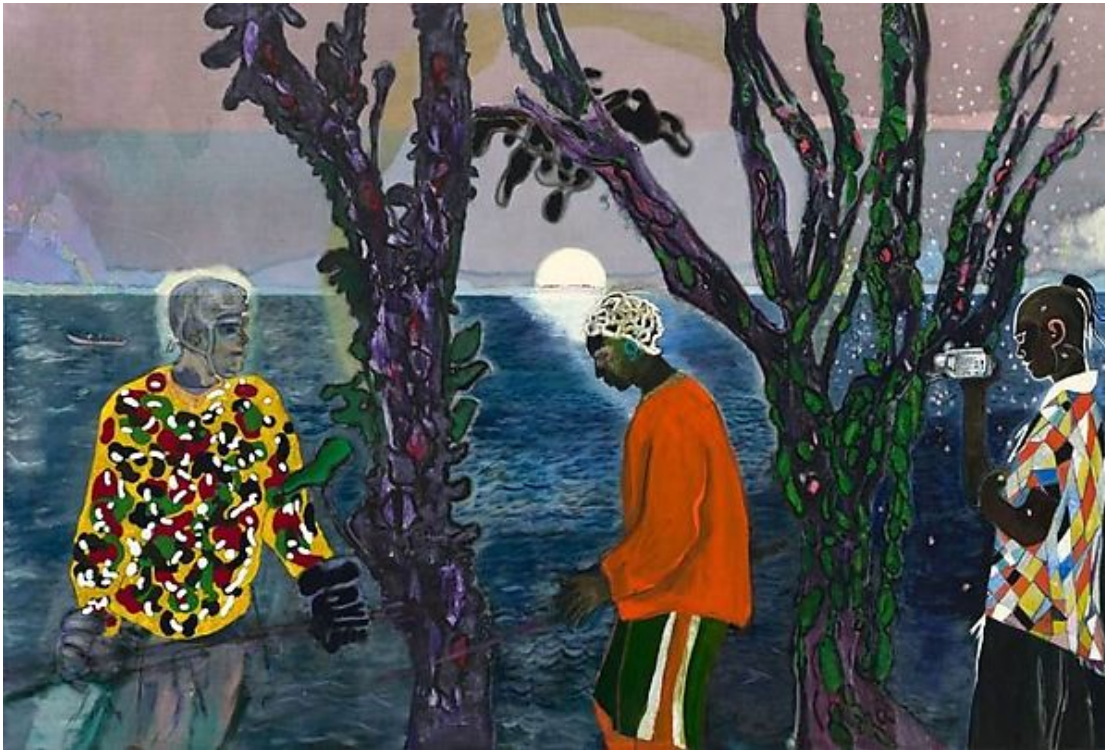
Doig is a meticulous colorist, who often uses uneasy, disquieting color combinations to create simultaneously charming and foreboding landscape paintings. Doig similarly combines seemingly incongruous, disparate reference points in his work often, inserting images from his own lived experience, film, art, and literary histories together in one composition.



Blotter 1993)

Peter Doig

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Two Trees (2017)

- Doig's paintings almost always contain human figures, although they are often partly obscured, hidden, or dwarfed by their environment. He rejects the split between figurative and abstract painting, however, and uses recognizable tropes of abstract painting - such as the dot or splatter - in the service of representation or suggestion - as in his snowscapes.
- Doig uses color chaotically and extremely effectively. His palettes can be subdued, cool, warm, or bright, but he is unparalleled in his understanding of how to (un)balance a composition via color. Complementary colors, sickly greens, sentimental pastels, and uncompromising reds all feature heavily, demonstrating a boldness with color that is unique in his generation.
- **Magical Realism** refers to a genre of literature and art in which everyday situations are interrupted, or mixed with, supernatural, spiritual, or other unlikely and uncanny events, environments, and characters. Doig has developed a magical realist painting style, which has some resonances with **Surrealism**, however is particular in its suggestion of narrative, character, and conflicting worlds. Doig combines imagery from multiple sources - film, art, and literary references as well as his own memories - to create these part realist, part magical scenes in his paintings.

Hilma af Klint

Started: 1880s – 1940s

Paradoxically delicate and powerful, the art of Hilma af Klint quietly and privately delivers a loud and essential message. Creating abstract canvases five years prior to the first by **Wassily Kandinsky**, and experimenting with writing and drawing guided by the unconscious decades before the **Surrealists**, the woman was a pioneer. Described as a mystic and a medium, af Klint conducted séances and communicated with spirits, even receiving a message from higher forces to create her most notable, devotional body of work, *Paintings for the Temple*. Yet, af Klint's sensitivity surrounding the ethereal was married to an analytical and scientific way of navigating the world. She was an eager botanist, well read in natural sciences and in world religions. With unsurpassed wisdom and in anticipation of human foolishness, not only did af Klint state that her work was not to be shown for 20 years following her death, but she also stipulated that no work could be sold separately, ensuring that her artworks could not become misunderstood commodities.



Evolution No. 12 (1908)

Hilma af Klint

Key Ideas & Accomplishments

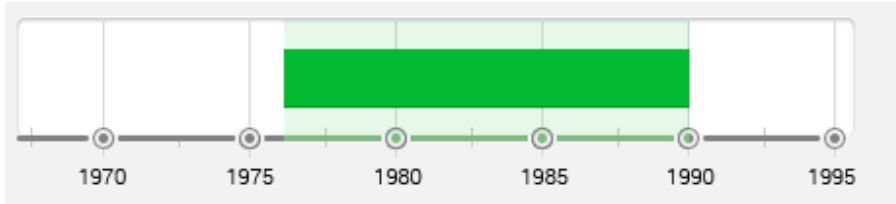


No.7 Adulthood (1907)

- In stark contrast to other pioneers of 20th century abstraction, af Klint worked away from the art world, without publishing manifestoes or participating in exhibitions. Despite her relative isolation she arrived at similar conclusions therefore questioning the need for audience and outward influences in the development of an artistic style. It is a great achievement to become a 'big name' having followed an inward path.
- Af Klint's combination of geometry, figuration, symbolism, language, scientific research, and religion not only establishes her as a forerunner in abstract art, but also exposes her work as significant in the broadest of artistic terms. Her route to abstraction drew not only from an interest in mathematics but also from her studies of organic growth, including shells and flowers, all culminating to portray life through a spiritual lens.
- The title for the artist's most important body of work, *Paintings for the Temple* is significant. It suggests that the canvases require a specific architectural 'home' and that they are designed to help viewers transcend beyond mortal and earthy realms. Af Klint does not make reference to any particular religion, (hence she does not use the word church, synagogue, or mosque) but instead aspires to build a 'temple', a universal place of worship dedicated to seeking balance through the union of opposites.
- As a researcher, she worked in series, and as a linguist, she had her own language. This is perhaps true of many artists, but af Klint made this obvious, and therefore de-mystified the process and role of 'being an artist' and in turn making the language of art more accessible. She explains in detail what her individual symbols mean in notebooks that accompany her paintings.
- Aside from the *Primordial Chaos* series, af Klint's paintings are typically very large. This is unusual for a female artist and recalls the heroism and masculinity of the later Abstract Expressionists. Grand scale better conveys the vast and epic powers of nature and the tone of connectivity found in the endless pattern dots by aboriginal artists.
- The delay in this artist's emergence raises questions surrounding the authority of 'art history'. We start to wonder if artists interested in self-promotion and audience response are likely to be woven into a trajectory more quickly than figures who, like af Klint, remain private, have no need for public acknowledgement, and yet remain hugely important to the same history of art.

School of London

Started: 1976 – Ended: 1990



Less a stylistic movement and more a social group of artists who explored similar themes, the School of London revolutionized figurative painting after World War II. Not named such until 1976, a diverse group of artists, including **R. B. Kitaj**, **Lucian Freud**, **Francis Bacon**, **Howard Hodgkin**, Leon Kossoff, Michael Andrews, and **David Hockney**, explored the human form and devastated landscapes in the wake of the physical and moral destruction wreaked by war. They wrote no manifestoes or credos and painted in diverse styles, but they mostly probed autobiographical subjects, including portraits and settings of friends and intimates.

Finding commonalities with other artists across Europe and even in the United States who were not committed to pure abstraction, the School of London generated enormous interest in figurative painting among a younger generation of artists, including **Jenny Saville**, **Cecily Brown**, and **Peter Doig** among many, many others.



Sleeping Figure (1959)

School of London

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



If Not, Not (1975-76), R.B. Kitaj

- Like many artists after World War II, the School of London artists attempted a reckoning of recent history and tried to imagine new ways of seeing oneself and one's fellow human beings. Like contemporary philosophers exploring Existentialism and phenomenology, the artists attempted to break down old habits and modes of seeing in order to recreate new ways of interaction.
- Paintings created by School of London artists ranged from pristinely smooth to thickly encrusted surfaces, but in all instances the artists hoped to convey the psychological depths not only of their subjects but their own as well. At times empathetic and other times damning, the artists depicted their subjects through their own personal lenses, creating complex portraits and landscapes that spoke to uneasy times.
- The artists combined influences of the **Old Masters** with popular culture, film, and literature, giving their subjects a seriousness and probity that had not recently been seen in figurative painting but that still felt current and recognizable.



Small Japanese Garden (1962-63) Howard Hodgkin



Rebuilding the Empire Cinema, Leicesiter Square (1962) Frank Auerbach

Francis Bacon

Started: 1930s – 1990s

Francis Bacon produced some of the most iconic images of wounded and traumatized humanity in post-war art. Borrowing inspiration from **Surrealism**, film, photography, and the **Old Masters**, he forged a distinctive style that made him one of the most widely recognized exponents of figurative art in the 1940s and 1950s. Bacon concentrated his energies on portraiture, often depicting habitués of the bars and clubs of London's Soho neighborhood. His subjects were always portrayed as violently distorted, almost slabs of raw meat, that are isolated souls imprisoned and tormented by existential dilemmas. One of the most successful British painters of the 20th century, Bacon's reputation was elevated further during the "art world's" widespread return to painting in the 1980s, and after his death he became regarded by some as one of the world's most important painters.



Crucifixion (1933)

Francis Bacon

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion (1944)

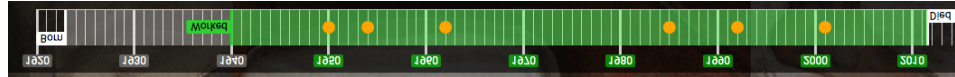
- Bacon's canvases communicate powerful emotions - whole tableaux seem to scream, not just the people depicted on them. This ability to create such powerful statements were foundational for Bacon's unique achievement in painting.
- Surrealism, and in particular **biomorphism**, shaped the style of *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944), the work that launched Bacon's reputation when it was exhibited in London in the final weeks of World War II. The work established many of the themes that would occupy the rest of his career, namely humanity's capacity for self-destruction and its fate in an age of global war.
- Bacon established his mature style in the late 1940s when he evolved his earlier Surrealism into an approach that borrowed from depictions of motion in film and photography, in particular the studies of figures in action produced by the early photographer **Eadweard Muybridge**. From these Bacon not only pioneered new ways to suggest movement in painting, but to bring painting and photography into a more coherent union.
- Although Bacon's success rested on his striking approach to figuration, his attitudes toward painting were profoundly traditional. The Old Masters were an important source of inspiration for him, particularly **Diego Velázquez's** *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (c.1650) which Bacon used as the basis for his own famous series of "screaming popes." At a time when many lost faith in painting, Bacon maintained his belief in the importance of the medium, saying of his own working that his own pictures "deserve either the National Gallery or the dustbin, with nothing in between."



Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion (1944)

Lucian Freud

Started: 1940s – **Died** 2010



Lucian Freud, renowned for his unflinching observations of anatomy and psychology, made even the beautiful people (including Kate Moss) look ugly. One of the late twentieth-century's most celebrated portraitists, Freud painted only those closest to him: friends and family, wives and mistresses, and, last but not least, himself. His insightful series of self-portraits spanned over six decades.

Unusual among artists with such long careers, his style remained remarkably consistent. Perhaps inevitably, the psychic intensity of his portraits, and his notoriously long sessions with sitters have been compared with the psychoanalytic practice of his famous grandfather, Sigmund Freud.



Reflection (Self-portrait) (1985)

Lucian Freud

Key Ideas & Accomplishments



HM Queen Elizabeth II 2000-2001

- Unapologetically self-absorbed, Freud embodied a notion that comes to us from the Renaissance, and which has been attributed to Leonardo da Vinci: "Every artist paints himself." Freud remained aloof from his sitters, a rapport that comes through in his work, referring to the work as "purely autobiographical" and the people he painted as merely the vehicle for figurative innovations: "I use the people to invent my pictures with, and I can work more freely when they are there."
- Freud was a key member of the so-called **School of London**, a group of artists dedicated to figurative realism, considered somewhat reactionary at the time because it eschewed the presence of **avant-garde** movements at the time, such as **Minimalism**, **Pop**, and **Conceptual art**. Compared with **David Hockney**, or even **Francis Bacon**, his contemporaries, Freud is stylistically conventional. The subject matter, however, is anything but.
- While life drawing classes had long included nude models, the expressive detail with which Freud paints genitals sets him apart from other artists in the history of portraiture. With the analytic scrutiny and detail a botanical illustrator might devote to a rare flower, Freud paints primary and secondary sex characteristics.
- Freud owes much to the early-20th-century **Expressionists**. His pronounced, expressive strokes recall **Egon Schiele** and **Edvard Munch**, and the tilted perspective and anthropomorphic depictions of chairs, shoes, and other inanimate objects bring to mind **Vincent van Gogh**.
- Freud was one of the great self-portraitists of the 20th century. He painted himself obsessively. While it may lack the range of **Rembrandt**, **Van Gogh**, or **Schiele**, Freud's self-portraits form one of the most complete visual autobiographies of any painter, yielding insight into the self-absorption and relentless drive that fueled the artist.