

Hi Everyone,
Welcome to *Art Since 1945:
Mainstream & Margins*

This class is designed to bring attention to the **significant historic shifts** that have taken place since World War II.

When looking at art in any culture or time period, we realize **the subject matter, style and meaning are all dependent on historic and social context.**

We will be discussing how the **social, political, and cultural shifts** around the world **since the war are affecting how artists think about and make art.**



Propaganda poster encouraging women to go back to work and
Atom bomb explosion.

Class 1: Introduction

Some of the work is challenging if we compare it to artwork from the past, in particular, the Renaissance. But if we can learn to understand how the artwork fits in its **historic context**, it will make more sense.

In the course—in our book and lectures—understanding historic context is essential. Art is not created in a void. It is part of the historic time in which it's created.

You may not think it's particularly important to understand contemporary art.

However, if you can learn to critically analyze visual information within a context, this ability can be applied to all visual information.



Post WWII America witnessed the development of Television, and advertising that encouraged consumerism and a particular lifestyle (white, middle class and uncritical).

Class 1: Introduction

By looking at the artwork of any culture we can see what issues are important and how they are communicated in visual (in addition to textual) ways.

History is something that has already happened but understanding how the past affects the present helps us see more clearly the issues emerging in our own time, where they came from and how we might navigate them



Playboy magazine with Marilyn Monroe and print by Andy Warhol.

In these first lectures I'm presenting a very abbreviated history of art from prehistoric times until the war.

My hope is it will help you understand that the present is always influenced by the past and we rarely take the time to realize where ideas and beliefs come from.

Maybe you will begin to see that our beliefs have been molded by ideas passed down from one generation and culture to another.

I love understanding this because it's the only way we can begin to think in possibilities that challenge already existing beliefs.



Advertisement for the Macintosh personal computer in 1984 aligned itself with George Orwell's novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In contemporary times, this is the job of the artist (and the scientist):

1. to imagine something other than what is— to think in possibilities.
2. to make visible things that are invisible, bringing attention to aspects of culture we tend to ignore.
3. to remind us of shared humanity.

In the past, art has been made for other purposes.



Mel Chin, *Cross for the Unforgiven*. 2012

Mel Chin is a social and political contemporary artist who made a Maltese cross of the Crusades, from eight AK-47s, the international symbol of resistance to the West. It is a comment the relationship between religion and war.

The History

Some of the earliest artifacts of human creation are these small female figures found in Europe.

While the *Venus of Willendorf* is the most famous, all have similar exaggerated breasts and belly, a very well defined vulva and no facial features.

These sculptures indicate the importance of childbirth to early humans as the statues were carried as talismans. They have come to be regarded as early goddess figures and we see them in history appearing for about 35 or 40,000 years.

Nude woman (Venus of Willendorf), from Willendorf, Austria, ca. 28,000–25,000 BCE. Limestone, approx. 4 1/4" high. Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna.



A really great way to look at the history of art through many cultures around the world is at the Met Museum website, The Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>

I'm going to give a little context here. Please notice the dates.

Most of our expectations about art come from the Italian Renaissance, approx. 1500.

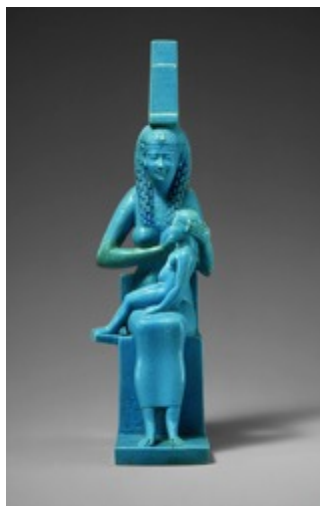
But if we look back, we see many more styles and interests that might even relate more to more current art.

The Greek statues is idealized and is the model Renaissance artists used for their style. Does the pose remind you of anything?

Notice different subjects and styles.



Horse Plaque, China, 3rd-1st century bce



Isis & Horus, Egypt, 304-30th century bce



Apoxyomenos, Greek, 320 cent bce

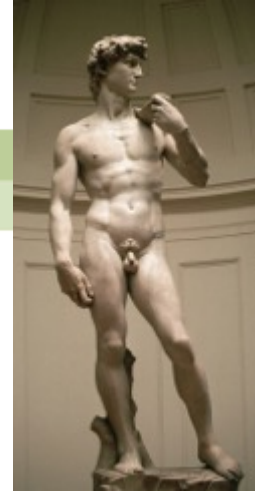


The Pieta, Germany Middle ages, 1400

In Western Art, after the fall of Rome, most artwork was Christian as it was commissioned by the Church.

And even as the Renaissance (1500s) was a time of rebirth of Greek and Roman art with the emergence of secular patrons, the subject matter was predominantly Christian.

But we begin to see other subjects cloaked in the guise of Greek or Roman Mythology as in the 'Venus of Urbino', a painting commissioned by the Duke of Urbino. Entitling the painting a Venus, made the nude acceptable to the norms of the time.



David, Renaissance, 1500, Michelangelo
(look back at previous page for a sculpture Michelangelo modeled his David on.)
And his version of the *Pieta*, 1499
(you might also compare his version to the one from the middle ages.)



School of Athens, Renaissance, Raphael, 1511

Painting that shows the major Greek Philosophers in an illusionistic space.



Venus of Urbino, Titian Renaissance, 1538

Female nude titled to suggest this is a mythological subject as opposed to a sexual one.

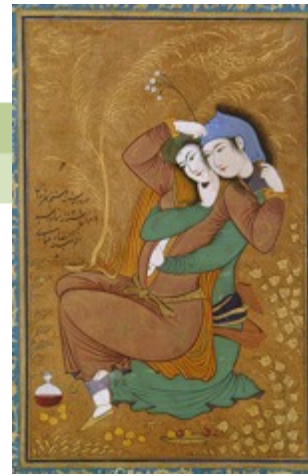
In other cultures, various styles and subject matters emerged.

In the West, the Renaissance model for style continued even as subject matter moved away from Christian and Mythological themes.

until the mid-1800s when the Industrial Revolution created changes in society and the development of photography changed the role of painting and sculpture.

Goya, maintaining naturalistic styles, made paintings and prints addressing his outrage over the wars.

The Impressionist artists became interested in images related to the new industrial age, including an understanding of how light really works.



Two Lovers, Iranian, 1630. Notice the figures are somewhat flat, positioned in a flat space.



Third of May, Goya, Romantic style, 1808—subject is based on event during Spanish resistance to Napoleon's occupation. Figures are round and naturalistic with deep background space.



St-Lazare Train Station, Monet, 1877--Impressionist

For our purposes, understanding how profoundly these two things—**Industrial Revolution and Photography**—shifted the subject matter and style of art is important.

Styles changed really quickly in Western art after the Renaissance, often depending on which country we look at.

Regardless of the differences in social context the styles continued to move away from Renaissance intentions of representing the ‘real’ world, to more formal or emotional reactions.

One artist whose shift in styles may help us understand this process is Matisse.

His two paintings of very similar subject matter done within 10 years show this move to abstraction.



The Dinner Table,
Matisse. 1896

These two paintings by Matisse were done less than 10 years apart. In the second one we see the influence of this move away from representation toward abstraction.



The Dessert
(*Harmony in Red*),
Matisse. 1908

Can you see the similarities between these two? What about differences?