

Modernism Art and Idea

Industrialization. Abstraction.
Primitivism.

BACKGROUND

Last week we looked at the growth of colonization and how it was justified through art.

Artwork at this time is commissioned by powerful and/or wealthy patrons or purchased by those with wealth and power.

What begins to happen in the 19th century is the growth of the idea of the Avant-Garde. This idea gives artists a sense of freedom to paint or sculpt what they wanted as opposed to what patrons wanted.

Slavery is abolished in Europe, though it still exists in the U.S. We will look at that more next week.



Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538

Manet, *Olympia*, 1863

BACKGROUND: MODERNISM

Modern can mean related to current times, but our definition is that it's a relationship to a particular set of ideas that, at the time of their development, were new or even experimental.

The birth of modernism and modern art can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution.

From the 18th to the 19th century western civilization sees rapid changes in:
Manufacturing— shifted agrarian culture to urban one

Transportation— changed the way people lived, expanded world view

Technology— manufacturing from wood to biofuel, steel, hydroelectric power (lighting, mining, textiles, etc.

Social Effects— standards of living, population increase, labor conditions, etc.



Photo of manufacturing.
Manchester, England ("Cottonopolis"), pictured
in 1840, showing the mass of factory chimneys

BACKGROUND: MODERN ART

During the 19th century, many artists started to make art about people, places, or ideas that interested them, and of which they had direct experience.

Challenging the notion that art must realistically depict the world (as in the Renaissance), some artists experimented with the expressive use of color, non-traditional materials, and new techniques and mediums.

One of these new mediums was PHOTOGRAPHY. Invented in 1830 this gave people a new method of depicting and reinterpreting the world.



Louis Daguerre, French Boulevard, 1838, photograph

Vincent Van Gogh, Stary Night, 1889

BACKGROUND: MODERN ART

Modern Art is a time of much diversity. Depending on the year and location we have many different 'isms' developing either by artists themselves or deemed by critics.

Impressionism— see Monet

Cubism—see Picasso

Expressionism— see Matisse

Dadaism

Surrealism

Are just a few.

This week we are looking at a few of the ideas in art and idea that affect our subjects; race, sex and gender.

1. Honesty in art
2. Abstraction in form and color
3. Images of women
4. Women in art
5. Ideas and images related to 'primitive'
6. Gender identity



CLAUDE MONET, *Saint-Lazare Train Station*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 2' 5 3/4" x 3' 5". – IMPRESSIONISM

HENRI MATISSE, *Red Room (Harmony in Red)*, 1908–1909. Oil on canvas, approx. 5' 11" x 8' 1". EXPRESSIONISM

HONESTY IN ART

Many artist of the 19th century believed that art must be 'true' to nature and strived for honesty.

As a result, they abandoned mythological and religious subjects in favor of scenes of every day life. They also abandoned the notions of linear perspective as seen in the Renaissance because paintings are flat (2 dimensional objects). To these artists, painting the 'illusion' of the 3 dimensional world on a 2 dimensional surface seemed 'dishonest.'

So, subject matter shifts and styles become less representational.

Courbet's, *Stone Breakers*, show poor working class people performing hard labor.
Cezanne abandons Renaissance style.



GUSTAVE COURBET, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849. Oil on canvas— everyday theme, ordinary people.

PAUL CÉZANNE, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1902–1904. Oil on canvas— abandoned linear perspective.

HONESTY IN ART

This painting by Manet created a scandal when exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1863.

At this time The Royal Academies in France and England ran schools and held annual exhibitions where artists could receive critical notice. It was here artists could promote themselves and find patronage for their work.

The Academy established a Hierarchy of subject matter or themes. Some were give higher status simply for the theme.



ÉDOUARD MANET, *Olympia*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 3". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

The themes in order:

1. History painting—including religious and mythological subjects
2. Portraits
3. Genre painting—everyday life
4. Landscape
5. Still life

HONESTY IN ART

That brings us to this painting by Manet.

You must already recognize this pose.

So if we were looking at the similarities between this painting and the one by Titian we might say:

1. Female reclining nude
2. On a bed
3. Attendants or servants in background.
4. Looking at the viewer
5. Similar pose

It is clear that Manet was referencing the earlier Renaissance painting by Titian.

What concerns us now is the differences—



TITIAN, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538

ÉDOUARD MANET, *Olympia*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 3". Musée d'Orsay,

HONESTY IN ART

What do you think?

Look at the two paintings and ask yourself:

1. What is the expression on each of the woman's face? How is she 'gazing' at the viewer?
2. What is the style? Titian was celebrated for his ability to render form in color. What about Manet?
3. What are the attendants doing in each painting?
4. What do the titles mean?

When we look at these four concepts we can begin to see how Manet's painting is ushering in a new way of thinking about art. And why people were horrified by it at the time.



TITIAN, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538

ÉDOUARD MANET, *Olympia*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 3". Musée d'Orsay,

HONESTY IN ART

Manet was considered a 'Realist' painter. That meant he believed artists should paint real subjects in a real way. Not idealized, not mythology, but real.

His painting, which depicts a well known prostitute, mocks the tradition of returning to classical themes and styles and instead paints a real woman of the time.

He abandoned the painting techniques so admired in Renaissance art for a flatter, more painterly brushwork.

Attempting to acknowledge the flatness of the canvas, he also rejected the Renaissance style that attempted to create the illusion of real space and form.



TITIAN, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538

ÉDOUARD MANET, *Olympia*, 1865. Oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 3". Musée d'Orsay,

HONESTY IN ART

Petrine Archer stated that “Manet’s painting collapsed the distance between the viewer and the model previously respected in classical painting. Victorine’s engaging stare brought many viewers too uncomfortably close to reality.

Manet's Olympia is also significant for black imagery because of the many roles the black servant Laura plays in the painting. From a purely pictorial point of view, this French-Caribbean maid acts as a point of contrast to Victorine. Like the cat, flowers, and wooden panelling of this room she is a background feature employed to demonstrate Manet's deft handling of a darker palette. As a servant, she reinforces the status and the theme of Olympia.



Finally, as a black servant she underlines Victorine's sexuality and her prostitution.

All three roles were familiar to the 19th century audience, and they were consistent with how non-Europeans, especially black people, had been represented historically. “

[Petrine Archer.com](http://PetrineArcher.com)

HONESTY IN ART

By the way— the painting that won the grand prize at the Royal Academy that same year was this painting by Alexandre Cabanel, *The Birth of Venus*.



It's at the MET

So even as some artists were pushing for new themes and styles, it took a bit longer for the Academy and patrons to change.

Why do you think people continued to value paintings like this?

THE “PRIMITIVE” In Modernism

Primitivism is a cultural attitude that informed many aspects of Modern Art. It refers to art that suggests or contains stylistic elements of tribal and other non-Western art forms.

It has roots in earlier fascination with foreign civilizations and distant lands, particularly those considered naïve and less-developed culturally .

As a result of the Industrialization of Europe it was also part of a myth of paradise lost.

Many European artists appropriated themes or styles of non-Western cultures in an attempt to create art that was not ‘tainted’ by civilization.



Matisse's, Portrait of Madame Matisse, 1913 compared to a Gabon Mask.

THE “PRIMITIVE”

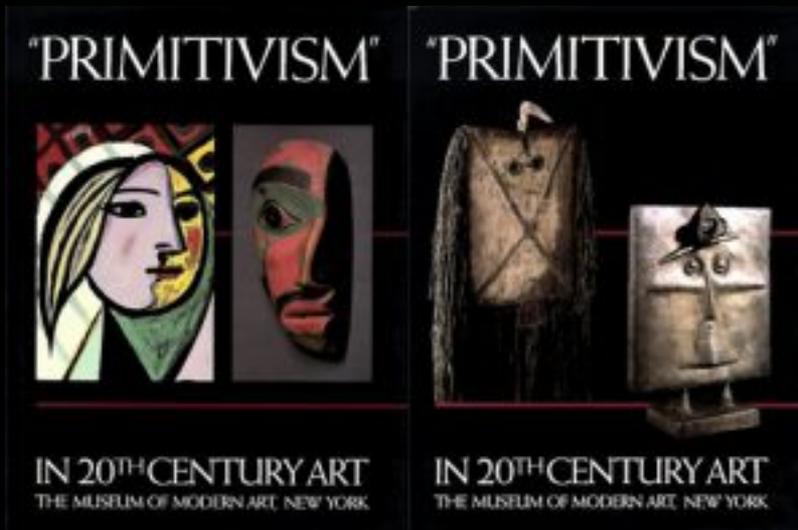
The formal impact of ritual objects on the art of many Modern Artists is clear but because of ethnocentrism are also seen as suspect.

In addition, the usage of the word “primitive” to describe cultures and creations outside of the European tradition can be seen to be degrading.



Paul Gauguin went to live in Tahiti in 1891, eventually moving there and painting images of Tahitian life.

He continued to send paintings back to France that depicted the Tahitian people as ‘noble primitives.’ Even as he was attempting to ennoble them, the paintings served as examples of their ‘different’ from Europeans.

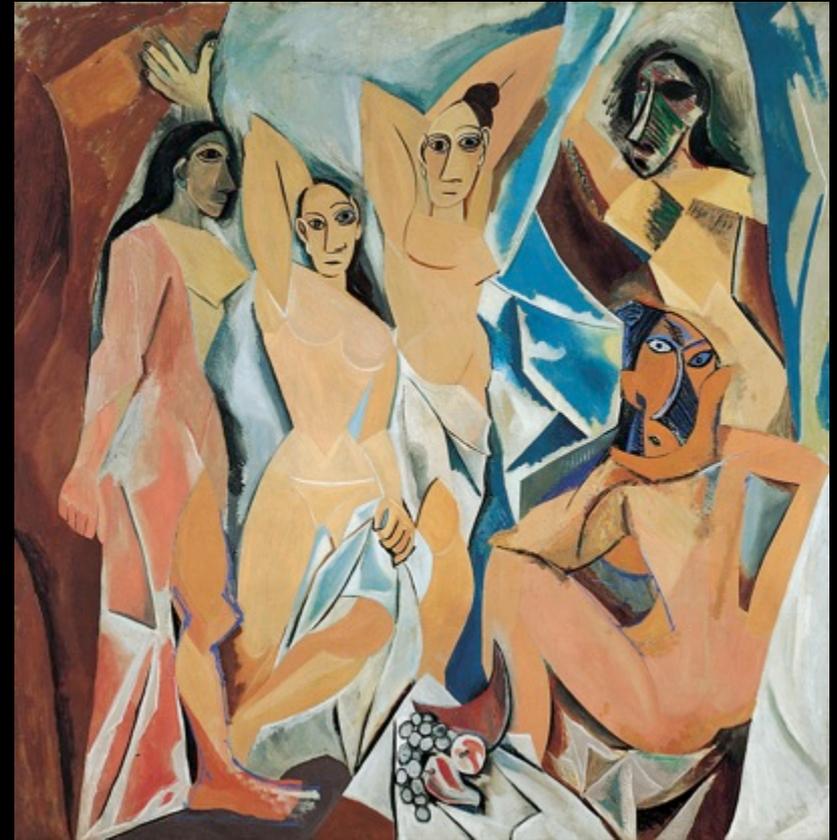


This is a detail from “*Where Do We Come From? What are We? Where Are We Going?* 1897

THE “PRIMITIVE”

Pablo Picasso is one of the Modernist artists highly influenced by African art.

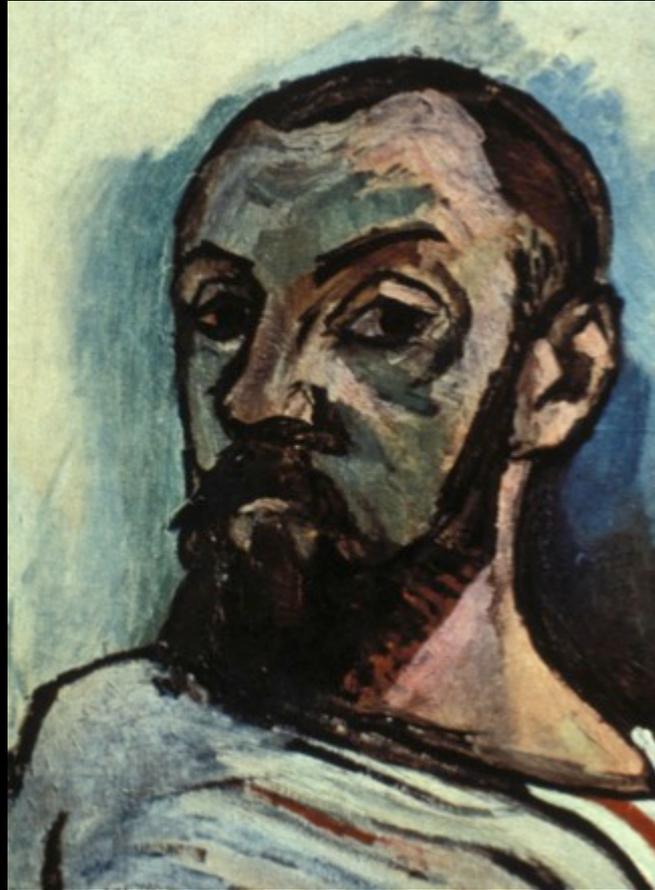
Because African sculpture had developed a highly sophisticated approach to the abstraction of the human figure, European artists such as Picasso, looked to African Art for ways to avoid the ‘decorative’ in art.



PABLO PICASSO, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, June–July 1907. Oil on canvas, 8' x 7' 8". Museum of Modern Art, New York
This painting at MOMA is considered a breakthrough in art, ushering in Cubism.

Two African sculptures , Ivory Coast and Gabon

THE "PRIMITIVE"



Here we see a 19th century sculpture from Benin (Nigeria), a self-portrait by Henri Matisse and one by Pablo Picasso.

Both Matisse and Picasso were looking at African Art for ways to move away from Renaissance styles to ones they believed were more honest.

WOMEN ARTISTS

It was extremely difficult for women to become serious artists in the late 19th century.

Unlike men, they were restricted in art training as they were denied free lessons at the Ecole des Beaux Arts until 1897.

Their option, expensive private academies. Unfortunately, the French academic system placed mastery of the human form through study of the nude model central to success. These classes were denied to women as they were deemed 'inappropriate' or even 'dangerous' to the mores of proper young ladies.

Women were also excluded from state commissions and participation in competitions.



Berthe Morisot, *The Cradle*, 1872

WOMEN ARTISTS

Attitudes toward class and gender roles were also inhibiting women as artists.

While amateur talents in drawing and watercolor were encouraged as part of a good bourgeois education, professional careers was considered detrimental and would divert women from their roles as wives and mothers.

Social pressure was so great that many women artists felt they had to choose between career and marriage.

Also restricted to movement within the social sphere, many female artists became genre painters.

They painted interior scenes of other woman and children.



Mary Cassatt, Mother and Child (The Oval Mirror), 1899

WOMEN ARTISTS

Also restricted to movement within the social sphere, many female artists became genre painters.

Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot were very involved in the Impressionist movement.

Berthe Morisot, *The Summer Day*



Mary Cassatt, *The Boating Party*, 1899

Mary Cassatt, *Little Girl in a Blue Chair*, 1878



WOMEN ARTISTS

Rosa Bonheur lived for 40 years with a woman she called her 'wife.'
Known for her paintings of livestock, she was a celebrated painter in her time.

Bonheur cut her hair short and wore men's clothes, claiming her masculine appearance was necessary for her work in livestock markets.
She is often cited as the first lesbian artist.



Rosa Bonheur, *The Horse Fair*, 1852-55

this painting is at the MET

WOMEN ARTISTS

Other women emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century art movements.

Not as famous as their male counterparts, women continued to make art about social issues and domestic ones.

Kathe Kollwitz established herself in an art world dominated by men. Her subjects focused on women and the working class.

Creating many works that show compassion for those less fortunate, she depicts the stark reality of war, poverty and its victims.



Kathe Kollwitz, Mother with Dead Child,

SEXUALITY- LGBTQ IN 19TH CENTURY ART

Contemporary notions of sexuality were invented in the 19th Century.

Similarly to other assumptions of difference like “primitive” or “degenerate,” the word “homosexuality” was a term used to create distance between the historian (always white, male and European) and the “other.”

In this way, histories of homosexuality in art are generally discussed within the context of difference. Because many art historians were reluctant to discuss artwork in these terms, we are only beginning to analyze the breadth of the work.



William Lindsay Windus,

SEXUALITY- LGBTQ IN 19TH CENTURY ART

Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene is a sensitive image of female love.

It is inspired by fragmented poems written by a woman named Sappho in the 4th Century BCE. In the poems Sappho is pleading with Aphrodite to help her in her same-sex relationship.

The term 'lesbian' comes from her homeland, the Greek island of Lesbos.

This painting by Simeon Solomon, a gay man, is thought of as a way to depict his own same-sex desire, by masking the subject.

An image of two men kissing would have been completely taboo.



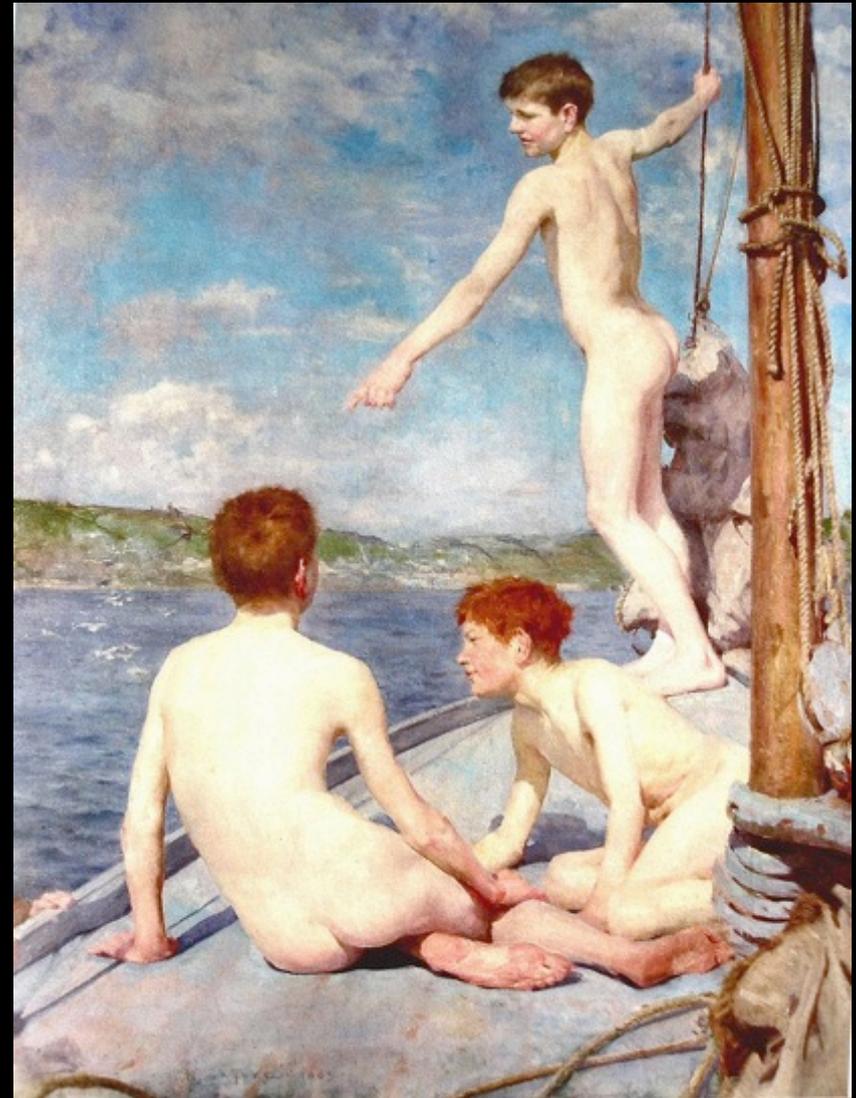
Simeon Solomon, *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene*, 1864

At the time Solomon painted this work, homosexuality was punishable by death.

SEXUALITY- LGBTQ IN 19TH CENTURY ART

Henry Scott Tuke, a British Artist, did many paintings of young boys and men in an impressionist style.

In his early paintings he placed his subjects in a mythological context but later they were presented as scenes of everyday life.



Henry Scott Tuke, *The Bathers*, 1888
And *The Critics*, 1927

SEXUALITY- LGBTQ IN 19TH CENTURY ART

Michel Foucault set forth the notion that homosexuality was invented in the late 19th century.

He emphasized the creation of this identity (homosexual) by medical professionals and scientists who were working to explain behavior by categorizing human types.

Many medical typologies of criminalized or non-normative behavior (kleptomania, hysteria, prostitution, etc.) were established to discover causes and signs for them.

The history of homosexuality emerges in this context.



Duncan Grant, *Bathing*, 1911

SEXUALITY- LGBTQ IN THE 20th CENTURY

Homosexuality existed, even as it was outlawed, and by the early 20th century was somewhat of an 'open secret.'

From the 1920s celebrities like the American pianist Liberace and plays of Noel Coward, exemplified this open secret.

Advertising and fashion too, generated imagery that represented innovative, stylish and provocative men and women.

JC Leyendecker, did many illustrations for the Arrow Shirt Company that suggested a more intimate connection between the men, under the guise of admiring each others shirts.



JC Leyendecker, *Advertising Illustration for Arrow Shirt*, 1911 (above)
1912 (below)



SEXUALITY- LGBTQ IN THE 20th CENTURY

The Arrow Collar Man was invented by JC Leyendecker in 1905. Based on his partner of 50 years, this fictional character, both desiring and desirable, was embraced so completely that he received up to 17,000 fan letters every month in the 1920s.

In this advertisement two men gaze at each other, while the subliminal suggestion of phallic golf clubs, placed strategically, reinforce the erotic intent.

Their attraction supposedly inspired by the shirt collars.

As advertising grew the power of visual imagery, symbols, subtle forms of persuasion, all became tools used to sell products. At the same time, the ads existed in popular culture and influenced as much as reflected cultural ideas.



JC Leyendecker, *Advertising Illustration for Arrow Shirt*, 1910

REVIEW

This lecture set forth some ideas and terms you will need to consider as we move forward.

Ideas of 'the other' and how difference is established and reinforced.

The emergence of various styles in art. Style refers to how the work is made, what it looks like, brushwork, illusion. Here are some styles:

Renaissance— idealized, smooth brushwork, linear perspective, Idealized illusion of real world.

Impressionist and expressionist— loose brushwork, expressive use of color, abstraction of form.

There are many styles in art. These are just a few.

Next Week we are heading to the United States to look at images from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Slavery began in the US in 1619, legalized in 1640. The Union victory in the Civil War freed 4 million slaves. However, the legacy of slavery continued to influence American history and art.