**Figure 2.44 | Two-Point Perspective**

Author: Jeffrey LeMieux

Source: Original Work

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depicted, such as a railway track disappearing into the distance directly in front of the spectator. **Two-point perspective** uses a horizon line and two separated vanishing points to present the illusion of a space that recedes in two directions. (Figure 2.44)

**Three-point perspective** incorporates the recession of space in a third, vertical direction above or below the horizon line as well as the two horizontal directions in two-point perspective. As tall buildings recede upward from street level, they also diminish in apparent size in the same way railroad tracks appear to converge in the distance toward the horizon. (Figure 2.45)

Many people make the mistake of thinking that linear perspective gives a completely accurate picture of the world. It does not. Linear perspective is a limited tool for representing how the world looks. It is considered sufficiently “accurate” only within a limited “cone of perception” of about 60 degrees. So while linear perspective is an excellent tool to represent our experience of space, it has limitations that should be recognized.

**Atmospheric perspective** is the way in which the illusion of distance is created on a flat surface through the use of color and focus. In a landscape that extends into the distance, the haze of the intervening air alters the colors and clarity of objects. The further away an object is from the viewer, the more it approaches the color of air, which is a light blue-gray tone. Dark objects become lighter and more blue as they recede from the viewer. Additionally, the contrast between light and dark colored objects and the perception of detail decrease with increasing distance. Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902, Germany, lived USA) used this effect in his painting *The Rocky*

**Figure 2.45 | New York Daily News Building**

Artist: Hugh Ferriss

Author: Dover Publications

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: OASC

*Mountains, Lander's Peak* to give a sense of monumental space. (Figure 2.46)

### 2.5.1.5 Texture

The term **texture** describes the surface quality of an artwork. Texture is an important element of design because it engages the sense of touch as well as vision. Objects can be rough or smooth, wet or dry, sticky or slick, hard or soft, brittle or flexible. The two main approaches to texture are *actual* texture and *implied* or simulated texture. **Actual texture** is primarily—though not exclusively—sculptural, while **implied texture** is primarily used in two-dimensional works of art.

The painters of the Northern Renaissance and the Dutch Golden Age, the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, were very interested in the simulation of a wide variety of textures. One main goal of artists from those periods was to excel at telling the truth about the material world. They worked to capture the full visual range of the sense of touch. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669, Netherlands) is well known for his use of **impasto**, or very thick application of paint, in order to heighten the sense



**Figure 2.47 | *Belshazzar's Feast***

Artist: Rembrandt van Rijn

Source: Wikiart

License: Public Domain



**Figure 2.46 | *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak***

Artist: Albert Bierstadt

Source: Met Museum

License: OASC

of reality in many of his paintings by adding actual texture. This can be seen in his handling of flesh on some of his self-portraits, as well as his rendering of metal and jewelry in his painting of *Belshazzar's Feast*. (Figure 2.47)

### 2.5.1.6 Color

**Color** is the most prominent element of design and is one of the most powerful and yet subjective elements in art. The nineteenth-century American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson noted this subjective quality of color when he wrote, “nature always wears the colors of the spirit.”<sup>1</sup> Ideas about color

1 C. A. Bartol, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Discourse in West Church* (Boston, Mass: A. Williams & Co., 1882), 14.

can be grouped into three broad categories: the history of color, physics of color, and perception of color.

The earliest use of color was limited to what kinds of pigments or coloring agents could be found in the local environment: ochres (yellow-browns) from various colors of earth, blacks and grays from ashes and burned wood or charcoal, reds and yellows from minerals, plants, and insects. Paleolithic cave painters used these materials for their murals. In addition to natural pigments, ancient Egyptians formulated synthetic pigments such as powdered glass to create Egyptian blue, a distinctive hue used on statues, walls, and monuments. In the Roman Empire, a rare form of purple was extracted from a particular kind of snail and, because of its rarity, was used primarily for royal garments. During the Renaissance, a deep blue was made from a finely ground gemstone, lapis lazuli.

Egyptians associated colors with the gods; the god Amon had blue skin, and Osiris had green. The ancient Greeks took a more scientific approach to color. The ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles thought that color fell into four categories: white/light, dark/black, yellow, and red. The ancient Chinese associated color with the five elements taught in traditional physics: water (black), metal (white), wood (green), earth (yellow), and fire (red). In a number of Asian traditions, black is the color of heaven and white is the color of death or mourning. In western culture the opposite is the case.

Modern ideas about color were greatly refined beginning in the fifteenth century by architect and art theorist Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472, Italy). In his treatise *Della pittura (On Painting)*, published in 1435, Alberti stated:

Through the mixing of colors infinite other hues are born, but there are only four true colors from which more and more other kinds of colors may be thus created. Red is the color of fire, blue of the air, green of the water, and grey of the earth . . . white and black are not true colors but are alterations of other colors.<sup>2</sup>

From this early framework, others made further discoveries.

The term “color” describes the sensation caused by variations in the wavelength and intensity of light as it interacts with the human eye. **Visible light** is the small portion of the **electromagnetic spectrum** that can be seen by humans. When the white light of the sun is passed through a prism, it is **refracted** into the colors of the rainbow from red through orange, yellow, green, and blue to violet. (Figure 2.48)



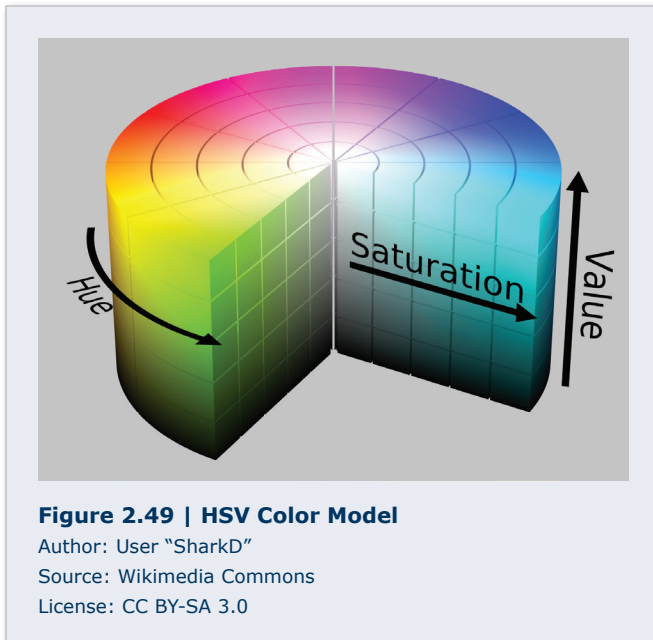
**Figure 2.48 | Prism**

Author: User "D-Kuru"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: CC BY-SA 3.0

<sup>2</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1956), 49-50.

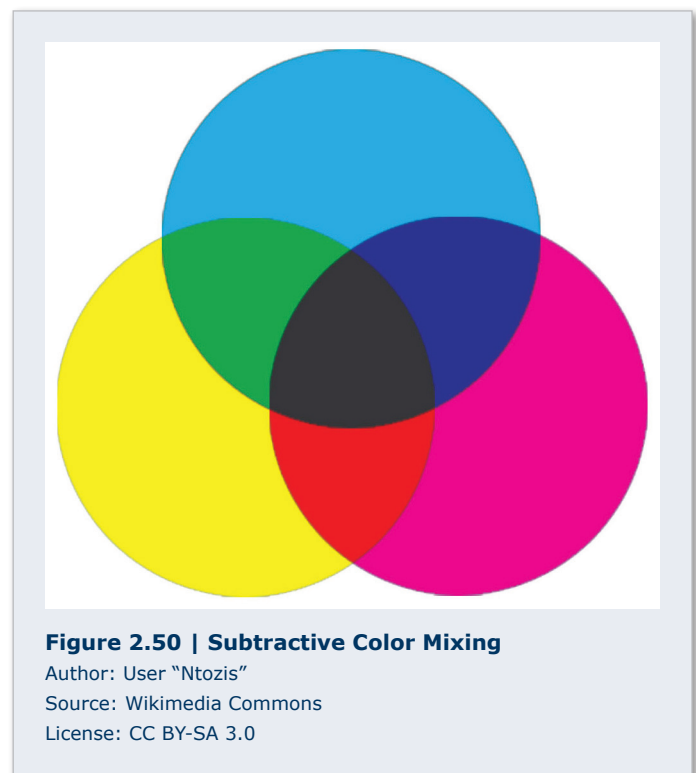


Color as perceived by humans can be broken into three discrete parts: hue, saturation, and brightness. (Figure 2.49) **Hue** is the wavelength of a given color. Longer wavelength colors appear on the red end of the spectrum, while shorter wavelength colors are on the violet end. Hue is the color “name,” e.g., red, yellow, blue, green, etc. Color can be either subtractive or additive. **Saturation** is the purity of a color and ranges from a neutral gray to the pure color while holding brightness as a constant. **Brightness** is the lightness or darkness of a color and ranges from fully illuminated (the pure hue) to fully darkened (black). Each pure hue also has a relative brightness, for example, pure yellow has a greater brightness than pure blue.

**Subtractive color**, or reflective color, occurs when white light is reflected off a surface, and all the colors of the spectrum are absorbed by that surface except for the color that is reflected back to the viewer. Subtractive color mixing starts with the **primary colors** of red, yellow, and blue. When these colors are mixed, the **secondary colors** of green, orange, and purple, are created. Mixing yellow and blue makes green, mixing red and yellow makes orange, and mixing red and blue makes purple.

The English mathematician and physicist Sir Isaac Newton demonstrated in the seventeenth century that white light, when refracted through a prism, could be separated into the visible spectrum. In the nineteenth century, writer and statesmen Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul separately published research that concluded that red, yellow, and blue were primary colors and that all other colors could be mixed from them. At the beginning of the twentieth century, industrial chemists further refined the understanding of printing inks and derived the CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black) subtractive color model: beginning with white, as one adds color, the mixture moves toward black. (Figure 2.50)

With the advent of television, computers and digital imaging, the additive model of RGB (red, green, blue) in which colors are added together and the HSB (hue, saturation,

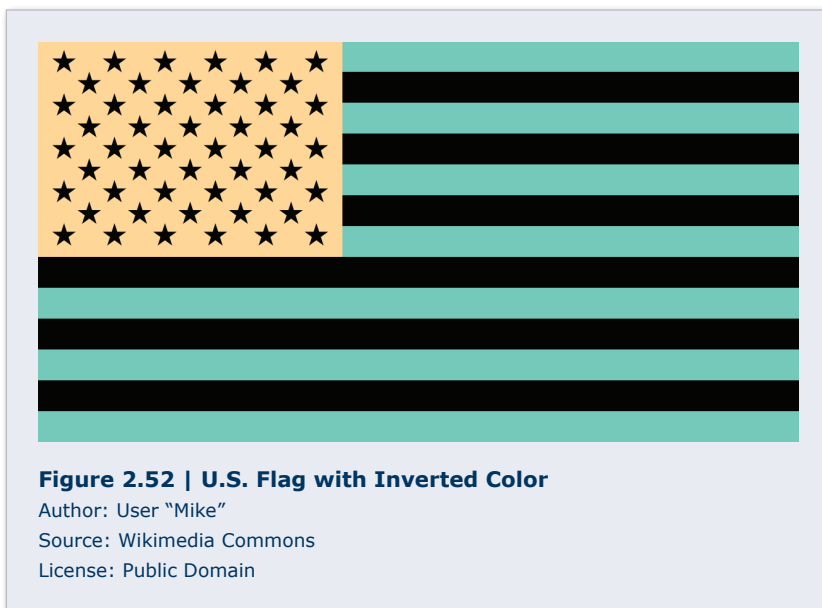
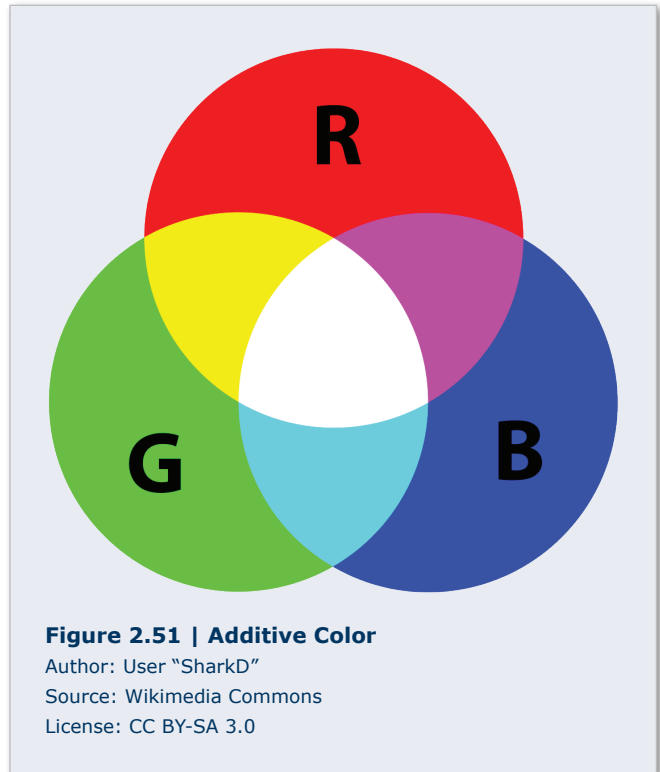


and brightness) color system, based on human perception, have become industry standards. **Additive color**, or transmission color, occurs when light of different colors is projected. The primary hues of additive color are red, green, and blue. This is the RGB color model. (Figure 2.51) When red and green lights overlap, yellow is seen. When red and blue lights overlap, magenta is seen, and when green and blue lights overlap, cyan appears. These are the secondary hues of additive color. When red, green, and blue lights all overlap, white light is seen. Television screens are actually tiny dots, or pixels, of red, green, and blue glowing lights. The colors we see coming off those screens are additive.

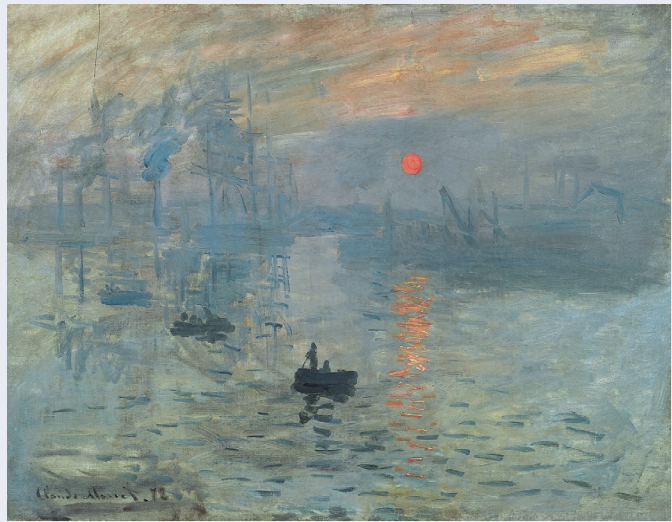
Our RGB model of additive color is directly dependent on how human eyes function. The human retina is a sheet of neurons that coats the inside of the eye. Within this sheet of neurons, there are specialized neurons called rods and cones. Rods are neurons that are sensitive to changes in light intensity, and cones are sensitive to red, green, or blue light. The reason we have RGB computer monitors is because we have RGB eyes.

Artists sometimes intentionally exploit the physiology of human vision. Because human vision is limited by unique biology, certain effects become possible. Neurons store chemical neurotransmitters to send signals. If a neuron must continually “fire” because it is being continuously stimulated, it can deplete its supply of neurotransmitter. There is a slight delay between the depletion and restoration

of this chemical supply within the neuron. In the interim, an **after-image** occurs. Look at the green, orange, and black flag for 10 seconds, then look at a blank wall or empty white space. (Figure 2.52) For a few moments, you will see the **complement**, or opposite, of green (red), the complement of orange (blue), and the complement of black (white) in their correct place on the American flag. The fading of this image indicates that the neurotransmitters in the retina have been replenished.



This effect was regularly used by artists during the Impressionist movement (c. 1870-1886). Consider *Impression Sunrise* by Claude Monet (1840-1926, France), one of the first Impressionist paintings. (Figure 2.53) Looking for more than a moment at the expanse of blue in the painting “exhausts” the sensation of blue and creates a complementary afterimage response, which is orange. Then when we look at the orange of the rising sun, we see not only the orange pigment on the painting itself, we also have the additional effect of “tired blue” in our retina. For this reason, the orange paint of the sun looks brighter than it would if we saw that color by itself. Many Impressionist artists intentionally used this effect, and this is one reason why Impressionist paintings tend to look so vibrantly colored.

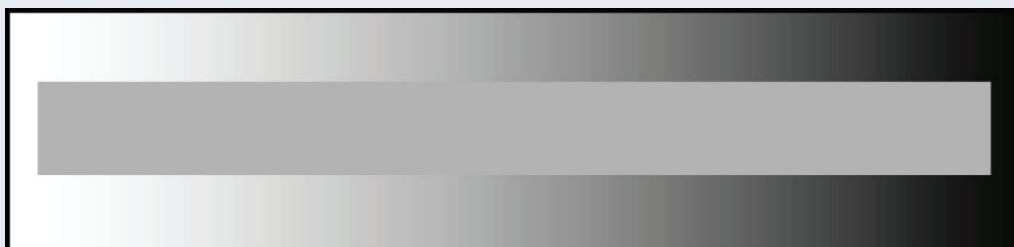


**Figure 2.53 | Impression Sunrise**

Artist: Claude Monet  
 Author: User “Paris 16”  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: Public Domain

In his *Homage to the Square* series of paintings that he began in 1949, the Bauhaus artist Josef Albers (1888-1967, Germany, lived USA) experimented with the relative perception of color. (*Homage to the Square*, Josef Albers: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/20/Josef\\_Albers's\\_painting\\_'Homage\\_to\\_the\\_Square'%2C\\_1965.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/20/Josef_Albers's_painting_'Homage_to_the_Square'%2C_1965.jpg)) His main interest was to demonstrate how a color can be affected by other colors that surround it. His book, *Interaction of Color* (1963), showed that perception of a single color can change depending on context. To demonstrate this, look at the accompanying image. (Figure 2.54) The band of gray in the center is one single color, but it appears to shift when placed on a contrasting background.

Contemporary artists employ specific terms for different uses of color. Natural, or **local color**, describes the body color of a given object. **Observed color**, on the other hand, is how the percep-



**Figure 2.54 | Gradient Illusion**

Author: Jeffrey LeMieux  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: Public Domain

tion of that local color changes as light shifts on an object. In Monet's series of paintings of the Rouen Cathedral, his depictions of different lighting conditions are a good example of the difference between local color and observed color. The color of the stone of the Cathedral is a medium gray. But at different times of day, such as the waning light of sunset, it will reflect the oranges and blues of the lingering sun and the growing shadows. (Figure 2.55)

The Fauves were a group of artists in the early twentieth century who used **intuitive color** as the basis of their approach to making art. They were more interested in the expressive power of color than robotically reporting the local or observed color of their subjects. Consider this portrait by Henri Matisse (1869-1954, France) of his wife, Amélie Matisse. (Figure 2.56) Clearly she did not in reality have a green stripe running down the center of her face. The colors chosen by the artist were meant to express something other than simple visual observation.

Another aspect of color used by artists is **color temperature**. Colors can be either warm or cool. The **warm** end of the spectrum includes red, orange, and yellow. The **cool**

end of the visible spectrum contains green, blue, and purple. That said, even yellow can be cool, and even blue can be warm. Warm and cool colors interact in different ways and artists are trained to notice and use this difference; for example, warm colors seem to “advance” while cool colors “recede” in space and consequently shapes represented in those colors appear to be at different depths.

In organizing ideas about color, artists and art theorists have evolved a series of color schemes, or ordered relations between different colors. A **monochromatic** color scheme uses a single color. *The Old Guitarist* by Picasso is a good example of a monochromatic color scheme. (Figure 2.57) The pose of the figure, the texture of the ragged clothing and hair, and the dominating use of blue work together to create a unified emotional response of weariness and loneliness to the image.

A **complementary** color scheme uses colors opposite to each other on the color wheel. As mentioned ear-



**Figure 2.55 | Rouen Cathedral, Facade (Sunset)**

Artist: Claude Monet

Author: User "Ribberlin"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain



**Figure 2.56 | Portrait of Madame Matisse (The green line)**

Artist: Henri Matisse

Author: User "Sparkit"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain



**Figure 2.57 | *The Old Guitarist***

Artist: Pablo Picasso  
 Author: User "Chimino"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: Public Domain



**Figure 2.58 | *Starry Night***

Artist: Vincent van Gogh  
 Author: User "Dcoetzee"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: Public Domain

lier, Impressionist painters exploited the effect of complementary color schemes to heighten the brilliance of their color palettes. While not an Impressionist, in his painting *The Starry Night*, Van Gogh (1853-1890, Netherlands, lived France) uses the blue of the night sky to charge the orange of his crescent moon. (Figure 2.58)

An **analogous** color scheme uses only one area of the color wheel. If the color green is chosen as the anchor color for the scheme, for example, the artist will use colors that occur between the yellow and blue points on the wheel. *Still Life with a Glass and Oysters* by Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1606-1684, Netherlands, lived Belgium) is a good example of an orange/yellow/green analogous scheme. (Figure 2.59) There are many other color schemes that are used for various applications, but these three suffice to illustrate the idea.

### 2.5.2 Principles of Design

The elements of design are the visual components that artists use to make artworks. The principles of design are



**Figure 2.59 | *Still Life with a Glass and Oysters***

Artist: Jan Davidszoon de Heem  
 Source: Met Museum  
 License: OASC

the various ways in which those elements or components are arranged to produce a desired effect. There are as many ways to approach the arrangement of the elements of art as there are artists. Each work of art is unique in its conception, design, and execution. Recent developments in the visual arts have introduced accidental and irrational approaches to artmaking. In these approaches, the outcome of the work of art is not planned. While these works of art may be said to lack conscious design, sometimes they are successful. It is often possible to attribute the success of irrationally or accidentally produced works of art to one or more operating principles of organization. Becoming aware of the principles of design in a work of art allows the viewer to add depth to the analysis of those works. What follows are five principles of design. The list is not exhaustive but is a good place to start.

### 2.5.2.1 Unity/Variety

Unity is found in similarity, while variety is found in difference. A design that shows **unity** is one in which the elements of the work or relations between the elements are similar or identical. Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* (see Figure 2.7) is considered a breakthrough in Italian Renaissance art because the soft edges of the figure are similar in approach to the soft tones of the muted background, thus unifying the image. A design that shows **variety** is one in which the elements of the work are varied in size, color, shape, or some other attribute. One concern with the overuse of unity in design is visual monotony. Visual unity may occur on a **conceptual** level as well as a physical one. Elements that are chosen based on a theme can display conceptual unity and yet display a variety of form. A work of art that lacks variety may be monotonous and lack interest. Many artists introduce variety into their compositions by making sure that no two intervals are the same. An **interval** is the space between elements, figures, or objects in a work of art.

### 2.5.2.2 Scale/Proportion

The design principle of **scale** and **proportion** is the issue of size of elements both individually and in relation to other elements. A famous example of the subtle use of scale is the relative size of the figures in Michelangelo's *Pietà*. (Figure 2.60) The sculpture is a depiction of Mary holding the body of her son Jesus after His crucifixion. If we measure the bodies of Jesus and Mary from heel to knee, knee to hip, and so on, and then compare them, we find that Mary is larger than Jesus. In addition, the fig-



**Figure 2.60 | Pietà**

Artist: Michelangelo  
 Author: User "Juan M Romero"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: CC BY-SA 4.0

ure of Mary is out of proportion, that is, the sizes of the parts of her body are not in alignment. This unusual use of scale and proportion serves to infantilize Jesus in order to subtly emphasize the mother/child relationship. Another use of scale and proportion is the use of forced perspective. (Figure 2.61) **Forced perspective** is the arrangement of figure and ground that distorts the scale of objects, making small objects appear large or large objects appear small by juxtaposing them with opposites. Forced perspective is most convincing when done photographically.

### 2.5.2.3 Balance

The design principle of **balance** is the issue of visual “weight.” Design elements like lines and shapes can attract our attention in a number of ways. For example, they can be brightly colored, they can be large in relation to other similar shapes, or they can be textured in unusual ways. Compositional balance is achieved when these competing visual weights are roughly equivalent. There are two kinds of compositional balance: symmetrical and asymmetrical.



**Figure 2.61 | The Leaning Tower of Pisa: Forced Perspective**

Author: User “Vin7474”

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain



**Figure 2.62 | The Great Wave off Kanagawa**

Artist: Katsushika Hokusai

Author: User “Durova”

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain

The lines and shapes in a composition that uses the principle of **symmetrical** balance are usually equally arranged around an **axis**, or central line. In *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* by Salvador Dali (1904-1989, Spain), notice the balance of like forms to the left and right of the central figure of Jesus. (*The Sacrament of the Last Supper*, Salvador Dali: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/f/f1/Dali\\_-\\_The\\_Sacrament\\_of\\_the\\_Last\\_Supper\\_-\\_lowres.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/f/f1/Dali_-_The_Sacrament_of_the_Last_Supper_-_lowres.jpg)) Vertical and horizontal axes are generally reserved for very stable compositions, and this strategy is often used in a religious context to imply unchanging truth.

**Asymmetrical** balance is achieved when visual weights do not correspond to one another in shape, size, or placement; they are not distributed equally in a composition. The woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849, Japan) and *Still Life with Apples and a Pot of Primroses* by Paul Cézanne (1839-1906, France) are good examples of asymmetrical compositions. The large space to the right of the Hokusai's *Great Wave* "offsets" the approaching wave in the left half of the composition. (Figure 2.62) In a similar way, the large gray wall to the left in Cézanne's *Still Life with Apples* serves to offset the visually complex flowerpot on the right. (Figure 2.63) In each work, nearly one-third of the composition (the sky and the wall) is unoccupied, so to speak; there are no objects in those areas. Within the two-dimensional space of the work, however, we "read" each blank area as having a visual weight that counterbalances the forms in the remainder of the compositional space.

It is not always necessary for an artwork to be balanced. An obvious imbalance can produce the effect of unsteadiness, disorientation or distress, which can become a useful part of the larger idea within the work of art. The large empty spaces in the painting by Odd Nerdrum (b. 1944, Norway) carry substantial visual weight and imply both physical and psychological isolation. (*Man and Abandoned Landscape*, Odd Nerdrum: <https://s-media-cache-ako.pinimg.com/736x/27/a3/3b/27a33b6c5d3c9e087d20f7cb3c34296a.jpg>)

#### 2.5.2.4 Emphasis/Movement

The design principle of emphasis or movement is the intentional use of directional forces to move the viewer's attention through a work of art. When we see a color shift within a shape, this implies movement. And, when we see a line in a work of art, we are compelled to follow it. For example, arrows of any shape will signify direction and are widely used in advertising to attract and direct the attention of potential customers.

There are more subtle means of moving a viewer's attention through a work of art. *Descent from the Cross* by Rogier van der Weyden (1404-1464, Belgium) uses the positions of the figures' arms, legs, and heads to trace the infinity symbol, which resembles the number 8 laying



**Figure 2.63 | *Still Life with Apples and a Pot of Primroses***

Artist: Paul Cézanne  
Source: Met Museum  
License: OASC

on its side. (Figure 2.64) This subtle reminder of Christ's everlasting life is meant to reassure and give hope to the faithful gazing upon this scene of death and grieving.

### 2.5.2.5 Rhythm/Repetition

The design principle of **rhythm** is the repetition of visual elements to establish a pattern. This pattern can then be used to provide a stage for a special object, or the pattern can be interrupted to direct attention to the change. In his commentary of mass consumer culture, Andy Warhol's use of repetition compels us to notice the small differences between the apparently identical elements of his installation of paintings, *32 Campbell's Soup Cans*. (Figure 2.65)



**Figure 2.64 | Descent from the Cross (Deposition)**

Artist: Rogier van der Weyden

Author: User "Argento"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain



**Figure 2.65 | Campbell's Soup Cans**

Artist: Andy Warhol

Author: User "Gorup de Besanez"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: CC BY-SA 4.0

## 2.6 BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

### Key Concepts

Visual art can be divided into dimensional categories: two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and four-dimensional art. Each category has unique and specific approaches and materials. Two-dimensional art consists of drawing, painting, and printmaking. Three-dimensional art consists of sculpture, including installation, and kinetic art. Four-dimensional or time-based art includes video and performance and depends on the use of technology and the passage of time for its effect. Time-based art has grown today to encompass digital art, computer animation, interactive art, video games, virtual reality, robotics, and 3D printing.

The elements and principles of design are the components and their organization within visual art. Line, shape, mass/volume, perspective, texture, and color are the primary elements of design. Time is a recently recognized additional element of design. Principles of design include unity and variety, scale and proportion, balance, emphasis and movement, and rhythm and repetition.

In this chapter we have also outlined many of the materials and processes used in creating art. In Chapter 3 Significance of Material Used in Art, we will examine the impact and meaning of substances employed to create works of art. In Chapter 4 Describing Art: Formal Analysis, Types and Styles of Art, we will utilize our understanding of materials and processes, and elements and principles of design to describe and explore meaning in art.

### Test Yourself

1. Historically, the term fine art was limited to mean painting, architecture, and sculpture. Today, other approaches to the production of art objects have been discovered and exploited. This process of evolution has had both drawbacks and advantages. Discuss.
2. “\_\_\_\_\_ -dimensional art occurs on flat surfaces, like paper, canvas, or even cave walls.”
3. Art can be broken down into Form and \_\_\_\_\_
4. “To \_\_\_\_\_ an object is to observe its appearance and transfer that observation to a set of marks.”
5. “For the most part, the pigments or coloring agents in paints remain the same. The thing that distinguishes one kind of painting from another is the \_\_\_\_\_.”
6. The difference between open and closed sculptural forms is that closed forms are surrounded by \_\_\_\_\_, while open forms are penetrated by it.
7. Calligraphy is defined as “\_\_\_\_\_ writing.”

8. Perspective in art is the \_\_\_\_\_ of space on a flat surface.
9. The three main cues to the illusion of space on a flat surface are:
10. The five elements of design mentioned in the text are:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
11. The text mentions several principles of design. List and Describe three of them.
 

Principle of Design:	Description:
a. _____	_____
b. _____	_____
c. _____	_____
12. The unique property of Kinetic sculpture is: \_\_\_\_\_
13. “The Fauves were a group of artists in the early twentieth century who used \_\_\_\_\_ **color.**”
14. Suggest one potential reason for the use of a monochromatic color scheme, a complementary color scheme, and an analogous color scheme.
  - a. Monochromatic \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Complementary \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Analogous \_\_\_\_\_

## 2.7 KEY TERMS

- 2-Dimensional Art:** art that is executed on a two dimensional surface that has length and width; a flat (or nearly flat) surface. These include, but are not limited to, paintings, drawings, and prints.
- 3-Dimensional Art:** art that is executed in the three dimensions of length, width, and height. These include, but are not limited to, sculpture, architecture, ceramics, glass, textiles, assembly, and installation.

**4-Dimensional Art:** art that is executed in, and depends upon, both space and time, which is considered the “fourth dimension.” Examples include but are not limited to performance art and video art.

**Abstract Expressionism:** or ABEX; this art historical term is specific to a group of painters working in New York after the Second World War. This group includes Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner, and Helen Frankenthaler. Their primary approach to painting was gestural, and “all over,” a condition in which no single part of the work is visually predominant.

**Acrylic:** a fast drying water-soluble petroleum based painting medium.

**Actual Texture:** the condition in which texture is created, not represented. Actual texture is the opposite of simulated texture or the illusion of texture. Examples include brushstrokes, impasto, collage, and inclusion.

**Additive Color:** color based on projected light.

**Additive:** a sculptural process in which material is added.

**Afterimage:** the optical sensation that occurs after a visual stimulus is removed. The afterimage is a quickly fading complement of the original stimulus.

**Analogous Color:** a color scheme that uses colors adjacent to an initial point on the color wheel. For example, if an artist chose red for the initial color, then an analogous color scheme would employ the color range that occurs between orange, red, and purple.

**Armature:** a wire or wood substructure used to support a clay sculpture while it is being worked.

**Assembly:** a sculptural process in which disparate materials are combined to form the final artwork.

**Asymmetric:** lacking symmetry.

**Atmospheric Perspective:** the use of color to simulate the illusion of space.

**Axis:** an imaginary line around which objects are arranged.

**Balance:** the property of equality in visual weight.

**Binder:** a transparent fluid used to suspend colored pigment and attach it to a support.

**Brush:** tools used to apply paint to a support, usually hair or fiber attached to a wooden or plastic handle.

**Buon Fresco:** literally, “good fresco.” A mural process in which pigment is painted on and absorbed into wet plaster.

**Calligraphy:** beautiful writing.

**Carving:** a sculptural process in which material is removed to reveal the final artwork.

**Casting:** a sculptural process in which material is substituted to form the final artwork.

**Charcoal:** an art medium made from burned wood used to make dark black marks usually on paper.

**Closed Form:** sculptural forms that are not penetrated by exterior space.

**Color Scheme:** an organized or formulaic approach to the selection of color. For example, Monochromatic (one color), Complementary (opposite colors), and Analogous (adjacent colors) color schemes.

**Color Temperature:** in visual art, the sensation of “warm” or “cool” relative to a given color. Warm colors tend toward red/orange, while cool colors tend toward blue/white. Every color, when compared to another can be seen to be either more warm or more cool.

**Color:** the sensation caused by differing qualities of light.

**Complementary Color:** colors that when blended together create a neutral gray. On a color wheel, complementary colors appear opposite to one another. Examples of a complementary color pair would be blue and orange or red and green.

**Composition:** the arrangement of visual elements.

**Conte Crayons:** in drawing, square sticks of compressed charcoal or pigment and wax or clay.

**Conte:** a mixture of pigment and clay used to make colored marks, usually on paper. Traditionally manufactured in black, white, and sanguine (red) colors.

**Contour:** the exterior boundary of a form.

**Contrast:** areas with a high difference in value, color, texture, or other scale.

**Cool Color:** a color that tends toward blue/white in hue. A cool color can be any color that tends toward blue/white when compared to another color. For example, alizarin crimson is a cool red when compared to cadmium red medium.

**Crosshatching:** intersecting marks that create value on a form.

**Description:** the process of enumerating the various elements of an artwork.

**Design:** a plan for the arrangement of visual elements.

**Drawing:** the process of making marks on a support, often but not always representative of an idea or object.

**Edge:** exterior boundary of a shape.

**Edition:** a series of prints made from a single matrix.

**Electromagnetic Spectrum:** continuous range of radioactive energy by wavelength.

**Elements of Design:** the physical components of visual art.

**Emphasis:** the strategy of directing attention with the use of high contrast.

**Encaustic:** a painting process which uses wax as the binder.

**Figure/Ground Relation:** the figure in front of the ground. Used to specify which objects qualify as figures.

**Figure/Ground Reversal:** ambiguous figure ground relation in which figures can be alternately seen as grounds and vice versa.

**Figure:** a shape that appears in front of a background.

**Forced Perspective:** use of perspective to create a distorted or unnatural scale relation.

**Form:** the physical components of visual art.

**Found Objects:** material incorporated into artwork that is not normally considered an artistic medium. Found objects serve the same purpose in sculpture that magazine cutouts serve in collage.

**Freestanding:** sculpture that can be viewed from all angles.

**Fresco Secco:** the process of painting on dry plaster.

**Fresco:** the process of painting on wet or dry plaster.

**Fugitive:** pigments that change color or become transparent with time or weathering.

**Geometric:** a shape with mathematically regular contours.

**Gestalt:** intuitive perception of an artwork as a single whole experience.

**Gesture:** direction interpreted as movement.

**Gicleé:** an Ink-Jet print, usually on acid free paper with archival inks.

**Graphite:** a carbon-based mineral mixed with clay to make pencil leads of varying hardness.

**Ground:** the stage on which a figure resides.

**Gum Arabic:** a water-soluble resin from the Gum tree used as a binder in watercolor.

**Hard-Edged:** a shape with clearly defined boundaries.

**Height:** vertical distance or measurement.

**High Relief:** sculpture that remains attached to a base, but uses undercut. Opposite of low relief.

**Horizon Line:** the visual limit of space where sky and land or water meet. In linear perspective, the vanishing point rotated 360 degrees.

**Hue:** the quality of wavelength in color; the color name.

**Impasto:** thick application of paint.

**Implied Line:** invisible line perceived by alignment of unrelated shapes.

**Impressionism:** a nineteenth century art movement, originating in Paris, in which changing variations of light become a principal subject. Examples include the work of Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, and Mary Cassatt.

**Ink:** a liquid pigment traditionally used with pens of various manufacture.

**Installation:** an art practice that surrounds the viewer in an environment.

**Intaglio:** a printing process in which a metal plate is scratched with a steel point to produce printed images.

**Interactive:** artwork in which the viewer is expected to participate.

**Interval:** the space between elements of an artwork.

**Intuitive Color:** an approach to the selection of color that relies on intuition or other internal state rather than observation of an external condition.

**Kinetic Art:** art that incorporates motion into its design.

**Line:** an infinite series of points with limited length.

**Linear Perspective:** geometrically constructed illusion of the recession of space.

**Linear:** of or pertaining to the quality of line.

**Lithograph:** a printing process that relies on the repulsion between oil-based ink and water. A stone (or aluminum plate) is drawn on and etched. Where the stone is etched will absorb water. Where the stone is not etched (protected by the drawing or image) the stone will remain dry. Water is applied to the stone. Ink is then rolled over the stone. Where the stone is wet, ink is repelled. Where the stone is dry, ink adheres. Paper is then pressed onto the inked stone resulting in a print.

**Local Color:** the color of an object under even illumination.

**Lost Wax:** a casting process in which a wax original is molded, then wax is melted out and replaced with metal.

**Low Relief:** sculpture that remains attached to a base and does not use undercut. Opposite of high relief.

**Mass:** the quality of possessing three dimensions.

**Matrix:** in printmaking, any material used to produce an image. For example, in relief printing, the matrix is usually a carved linoleum or wood block.

**Metalpoint:** drawing using ductile metal such as silver, gold, or pewter as the pigment. Usually on paper or gessoed panel.

**Mixed Media:** the use of unconventional or unusual combinations of materials in a single artwork.

**Mobile:** in sculpture, a kinetic artwork moved by wind or gravity.

**Modeling:** a sculptural process in which material is added to form the final artwork.

**Mold:** a hollow form used to shape a fluid or plastic substance.

**Monochromatic:** of or using a single color.

**Motion:** movement or change in position over time.

**Negative Space:** the absence of mass in space.

**Non-Objective Art:** art that does not have direct pictorial reference to objects seen.

**Observed Color:** the perception of color on an object illuminated by a directional light source. The perceived color of such an object varies as it tends toward highlight or shadow.

**Oil Pastels:** paper covered sticks of solid pigment and oil-based binder originally used to mark livestock.

**Oil:** in painting, a solvent soluble binder that dries slowly, usually linseed oil.

**One-point perspective:** a mathematical drawing system with the intention of making three dimensional objects and space look realistic in appearance as they converge on a single vanishing point.

**Open Form:** sculptural forms that are penetrated by exterior space.

**Organic:** shapes or forms that are loose or undefined.

**Original Print:** a handmade print.

**Orthogonal:** in perspective, lines that recede to the vanishing point.

**Overlap:** a shape or object which obscures or lies over something else.

**Painting:** the process of applying liquid pigment to a surface, or an art object resulting from this process.

**Pastel:** solid sticks of pigment.

**Performance Art:** an approach to art in which the object is an action by participants.

**Performance:** artworks consisting of actions, usually documented photographically.

**Perspective:** in art a system that portrays three dimensions on a flat surface.

**Pigment:** in art, the substance with gives color to a medium.

**Pigment:** the coloring agent in paints, pastels, inks, and other art media.

**Planographic:** a printing process which occurs on a flat surface, originally limestone.

**Point:** in perspective, an object with zero dimension.

**Positive Space:** the area occupied by a solid or filled object.

**Primary Colors:** in art the three basic colors by which all other colors are mixed, i.e., red, yellow, and blue.

**Principles of Design:** the strategies by which the elements of art are arranged to create a desired visual effect.

**Print:** an artwork produced by transferring pigment from a matrix to a support, usually paper. Most often done in a series of identical impressions. See “edition.”

**Printmaking:** the process of producing multiple identical or nearly identical images from a single print matrix or set of matrices.

**Psychic Line:** in art, line that is understood without being seen by the eye.

**Refracted Light:** light that has been separated into distinct colors after having been passed through a prism.

**Relief:** the physical projection of an artwork beyond the support or base.

**Reproduction:** a mechanically produced print.

**Rhythm:** in art, a pattern formed by repeated objects.

**Scale:** the size of an object.

**Sculpture:** the production of artwork that exists in three dimensions. Examples are carving, casting, modelling, or assembly.

**Secondary Colors:** in art, the three colors formed by mixing two primary colors, i.e., green, orange, and purple.

**Shape:** an area of two dimensional space.

**Simulated Texture:** a visual representation of a tactile experience.

**Site Specific:** installations which use their location as part of the intended effect.

**Soft-Edged:** lacking a definite boundary.

**Solvents:** substances usually liquid, which dissolve a given paint binder.

**Stencil:** a printing process in which pigment passes through a mask onto a support.

**Substitutes:** in sculpture, replacing one substance with another. In casting, hot liquid metal is substituted for melted wax.

**Subtractive Color:** sensation of color created by reflection of light off of a surface.

**Subtractive:** a sculptural process in which material is removed.

**Support:** the surface on which an artwork is created.

**Symmetric:** shapes reflected equally about an axis.

**Technological Change:** notable shifts in available technology and science that play a part in the shift of culture and determine the availability of new artistic media.

**Texture:** the tactile quality of a surface.

**Three-Point Perspective:** a system of perspective that uses a third point above or below the horizon line to indicate the recession of space above the viewer.

**Time Arts:** the use of change as an element in art, usually performance art, kinetic art, or video.

**Tughra:** Islamic calligraphic device designating a high status individual.

**Two-Point Perspective:** a system of perspective that uses two points on the horizon to indicate the recession of space on either side of the viewer.

**Undercut:** in sculpture, an overhang created by removing material from underneath an object without detaching it from the base or support.

**Value:** in visual art, the characteristic of lightness or darkness of a color, ranging from near-white to black.

**Vanishing Point:** the point on the horizon where orthogonals meet, representing the viewer's vision extended infinitely in one direction.

**Vector:** the characteristic of having direction.

**Video:** moving images recorded and projected or displayed on a monitor.

**Visible Light:** the portion of the electromagnetic spectrum that can be seen by the human eye.

**Volume:** a bounded three dimensional area.

**Warm Color:** a color that tends toward red/orange in hue. A warm color can be any color that tends toward red/orange when compared to another color. For example, ultramarine is a warm blue when compared to cobalt blue.

**Watercolor:** a water soluble painting medium that uses gum arabic as binder.

**Willow/Vine Charcoal:** a drawing medium made from burned willow twigs, and used primarily for initial layout of paintings as it does not adhere well to drawing surfaces.

# 3

## Significance of Materials Used in Art

*Rita Tekippe and Pamela J. Sachant*

### 3.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the differences among valuation of art materials, especially with regard to intrinsic qualities of raw material versus produced objects
- Discuss the differences between monetary and cultural values for works of art
- Discuss the idea of “borrowed” significance that comes with the re-use of components from previous artworks
- Describe the significance of value added to objects by complex artistic processes or by changing tastes in different eras

### 3.2 INTRODUCTION

Among the aspects of an artwork that evoke response, aid understanding, and contribute meaning will be the material(s) used in its creation. These materials might make it more or less important, more or less valuable, or might bring a variety of associations that are not inherent in the essential form. For example, you might recognize a vase not merely as a vase, but as a Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933, USA) Favrite glass vase. (Figure 3.1) Knowing the creator, material, and special processes involved in the artwork’s creation would add to and might change your perception and appreciation in several important respects. For example, you could



**Figure 3.1 | Bowl**

Artist: Louis Comfort Tiffany  
Source: Met Museum  
License: Public Domain

link it to an important artist, an innovative artistic technique, a significant period in American décor and manufacturing and marketing, a valuation based on its collectability, and numerous other interesting details about its creation and use.

The most apparent choices in this regard are for three-dimensional forms such as sculpture and architecture, where it is more likely that costly and precious materials such as gold, silver, gems, marble, or bronze are used in its creation. The distinction among material choices for drawing and paintings will also have certain effects for their meanings. For example, if a painter applied **gold leaf**, 22K gold pounded into extremely thin sheets, to a painting's surface, the monetary and cultural value of the work increases. (Figure 3.2) The **monetary value** refers to the amount a buyer is willing to pay, which in this case includes the cost of the materials the artist factors into the price of the artwork. The **cultural value** is the perceived quality or merit of the work: what it is worth according to that culture's standards of artistic importance or excellence. If a work of art has high monetary or cultural value, the owner's reputation and status are, in turn, elevated.

Without considering each and every possibility in this regard, we should look at a few pointed examples that will help us know what to consider when we examine artworks with a view to the choices of materials that the artist (or patron) must have made. The techniques for many of these is discussed in greater detail in other parts of the text, so our primary focus here will be on the intrinsic materials, although the ways they are worked, used, and combined are inextricably significant in some of these cases.

### 3.3 UTILITY AND VALUE OF MATERIALS

The earliest drawings, paintings, vessels, and sculptures were made with whatever the artists could find and turn to their use for creating images and objects; such readily-available material includes mud, clay, twigs, straw, minerals, and plants that they could use directly or with slight alteration, such as grinding and mixing minerals with water to apply to cave walls. (Figure 3.3) Experimentation was surely part of the process and, just as surely, much of it is lost to us now, although we have some examples of works, materials, and tools to give us insight into the artistic processes and material choices.



**Figure 3.2 | *Annunciation to the Shepherds*, illumination from the *Book of Pericopes (Lectionary)* of Henry II, fol. 8v, 1002-1012 CE.**

Source: Artstor.org

License: Public Domain



**Figure 3.3 | Reproduction of a bison of the cave of Altamira**

Author: User "Rameessos"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain



**Figure 3.4 | Korean neolithic pot, found in Busan**

Author: User "Good friend100"

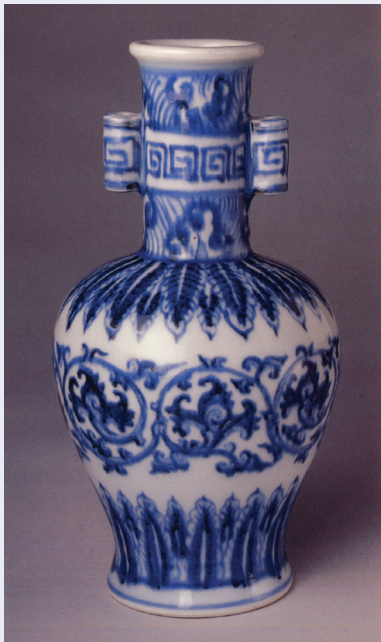
Source: Wikimedia Commons

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For example, in works such as this **earthenware**, or baked clay, vessel, the artist had explored sufficiently to discover that mixing a certain type of earth in certain proportions with water would yield a flexible substance. The resulting clay could be **handbuilt**, generally by wrapping and smoothing coils, into a vessel shaped with a conical bottom that would sit nicely in a coal fire for heating its contents. (Figure 3.4) A twig or string might be used to incise marks in the surface, not only to decorate it, but also to make it easier to hold onto than if it were completely smooth. Dating to c. 3,500 BCE, pots such as this from the late Neolithic era in Korea are known as Jeulmun pottery, meaning "comb-patterned." The clay could be found in different colors, textures, density, potential for adherence, etc. It could be manipulated by hand to make containers to store, transport, cook, or serve all sorts of goods.

The invention of the potter's wheel allowed artists to "throw" the clay on a rotating platform the artist operated by hand or powered with a kicking motion. When and where the potter's wheel first appeared is much debated, but it was widely used in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Southeast Asia before 3,000 BCE. Using a potter's wheel allowed the artist to turn vessels with thinner walls, a greater variety of and more uniform shapes and sizes, and a larger array of painted and incised decorative elements for additional aesthetic appeal. They could, as well, make molds for serial production of commonly used types of pots.

By the time of the Ming Dynasty in China (1368-1644), vases such as this from the Xuande period (1426-1435) painted in imperial (cobalt) blue and white display both the technical innovations and the remarkable degree of refinement achieved. (Figure 3.5) The development of such



**Figure 3.5 | A Ming dynasty Xuande mark and period (1426-1435) imperial blue and white vase**

Author: User "Meliere"  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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mineral resources as kaolin and petuntse allowed ceramicists to create porcelain, one of the most refined and hardest types of pottery, which became known as “china” because of the origins of the materials and processes; chinaware was soon emulated the world over for its beauty and utility as tableware and décor.

Traders from Portugal returned from China with chinaware (porcelain vessels) in the sixteenth century. The semi-translucent material, elegant shapes, and glass-like, intricately decorated surfaces of the pots were unlike anything produced in Europe at that time. The demand for such wares quickly spread throughout Europe, and ceramicists on that continent spent the next two centuries trying to unlock the secret of how to create such smooth, white, and hard pottery. Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus and Johann Friedrich Böttger, both employed for that purpose by Augustus II the Strong, Elector of Saxony (today Germany) and King of Poland (r. 1694-1733), are credited with producing the first European porcelain in 1708. It would become known as Meissen ware because it was produced at the factory set up in the town by Augustus II for that purpose to safeguard the formula and maintain his exclusive control over the creation and sale of European porcelain. (Figure 3.6)

The monopoly held by Augustus II was short-lived, however, as the secret was sold and a competing factory opened in



**Figure 3.6 | Teapot**

Artist: Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur  
Author: Walters Art Museum  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
License: CC BY-SA 3.0



**Figure 3.7 | Pitcher**

Artist: American Porcelain Manufacturing Company  
Source: Met Museum  
License: OASC



**Figure 3.8 | Egyptian tomb wall painting**

Author: British Library

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: CC0 1.0

Vienna, Austria, by 1717. From there, variations of the formula and the production of porcelain spread throughout Europe as demand increased from the privilege of royalty, to the rich and titled, and eventually to all who could afford the status-giving ware. For example, this nineteenth-century commemorative pitcher made by the American Porcelain Manufacturing Company would have been presented to specially mark an occasion. (Figure 3.7) Although it is a distant relative of Chinese imperial porcelain ware and the royal courts of Europe, the techniques and materials used in its creation were still associated with tradition, wealth, and high social standing, elevating the cultural value of this mass-produced vessel to the level of a keepsake or even a family heirloom. Objects such as this are valued beyond their monetary worth or utilitarian purposes, both due to the tactile and aesthetic qualities that come from the physical substance and techniques used and to historical and social associations they hold.

Similarly, drawing and painting, apparently first confined to the rock walls of nature, were areas of exploration for artists who later applied color to the built walls of architecture, and then to portable objects of various types. Ceramic ware was decorated with images from nature, pictorial and narrative motifs, and messages of myth, power, and even everyday life. The same is true of tomb walls of Egypt (Figure 3.8), palace walls in ancient Iraq, (Ashurnasirpal II with Attendants and Soldier: <http://www.museumsyndicate.com/item.php?item=36470>) and Greek vessels used for practical or ritual purposes (Figure 3.9).



**Figure 3.9 | Terracotta krater**

Source: Met Museum

License: OASC

Eventually such vessels, as well as books and other objects, bore written information and pictorial explications of textual content: illustrations. Early textual works were often inscribed on stone tablets to ensure their durability or on relatively fragile materials like papyrus that required laborious preparation to make it suitable for conveying information. In either case, the materials used added to the work's significance. By the time of the development of the **codex** (probably in the Roman era), or manuscript with bound pages, the most common form of modern physical books, the choice material was animal skin, as seen in manuscripts throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, roughly the beginning of the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, in the Western and the Middle Eastern regions of the world. (Figures 3.10 and 3.11) Sheepskin, or parchment, the most commonly used support for written works, was obtained by laborious preparation of the pelts, through scraping and buffing the surface to make it suitable for use



**Figure 3.10 | Historiated Letter L, with illustration of the Tree of Jesse, Capuchin's Bible, f. 7v, c. 1180. BNF**  
 Author: User "Soefrm"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: Public Domain

by scribes and illustrators who added the words and pictures. The most refined book arts

were often presented on **vellum**, or calfskin, prized for its smoother and finer surface. When used for especially important works or those made for royal purposes, it was often dyed purple or dark blue, with script applied in gold or silver ink and illustrations that included areas of gold or silver. (see Figure 3.2) These lustrous images were known as **illuminations**, that is, given light. The viewer would at once recognize the special and distinctive treatment implied by the use of such precious materials and know that the patron had paid well for an elegant and important book.



**Figure 3.11 | Kitab al-Bulhan: Middle Eastern House and Lifting Machine, Arab scientific manuscript leaf. 1. 14th century**  
 Author: User "Peacay"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: Public Domain

### 3.4 PRECIOUS MATERIALS, SPOLIA, AND BORROWED GLORY

Objects made for sacred or royal use were often wrought of such lavish and treasured components as vellum, silk, linen, wool, ivory, gold, silver, gems, and rare stones and minerals. Frequently crafted for further refinement, such works

show their precious properties to advantage. In ancient Rome/Byzantium, there were quarries for **porphyry**, a rich purple marble stone (the basis for the association of the color purple with royalty). Because it was restricted to royal purposes, its very appearance carried connotations of the imperial significance of any work made from it. It was often used for columns and other architectural components that thereby accentuated important structures or parts of them. Once the imperially controlled mines were abandoned in the fifth century CE, new items could not be made of porphyry, so older monuments were sometimes pillaged and re-used, with the royal significance transferred to the plunderers, implying not only the replacement of the old order by the new, but also the superiority of the conquerors.

Porphyry burial containers were especially prized in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Constantina was the eldest daughter of Emperor Constantine the Great (r. 306-337 CE), the Roman ruler who in 313 CE decreed early Christians could practice their faith without persecution and confiscated land should be returned to the Church. Although Constantine considered himself a Christian, he did not abandon the Roman gods and religious rituals. For example, in 321 CE he stated that Christians and pagans alike should observe the day of the sun (later named Sunday); the cult of the sun god had been popularly observed in Roman culture for centuries, and associations of the sun as the source of light, warmth, and life had been adopted by those of the Christian faith. Constantine, according to legend, was baptized a Christian on his deathbed in 337 CE.

When his daughter Constantina died in 354 CE, she was entombed in a porphyry **sarcophagus**, or stone coffin, that was richly carved with motifs from both the pagan Roman and Christian faiths. (Figure 3.12) There are small, winged cupids gathering grapes among garlands of grape vines with peacocks and a ram below on the front and back of the coffin, and cupids treading on grapes on both ends. In Roman mythology, such scenes were associated with Bac-

chus (known to the Greeks as Dionysus), the god of the wine harvest and wine making who as a baby was reborn after having been slaughtered by the Titans. Interpreted as Christian motifs, the cupids, who became known as **putti** or small, winged angels, are seen as preparing the grapes for the **Eucharist**, the sacrament commemorating the Last Supper by consecration of the bread and wine as the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Such re-imagining and re-purposing of motifs and their meanings were frequently seen at this time of transition from paganism to Christianity; further,



**Figure 3.12 | Sarcophagus of Constantina**

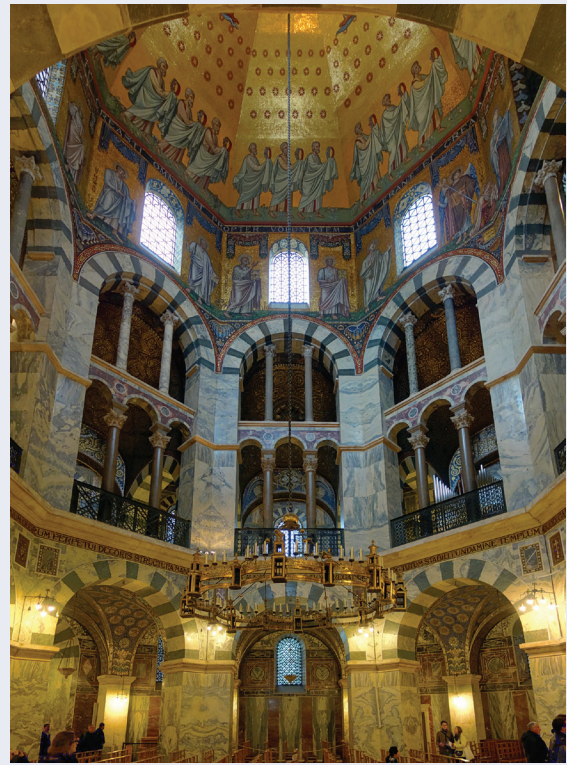
Author: User "Jean-Pol GRANDMONT"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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having been adopted by Constantine and his family, they were associated with imperial power and carried connotations of the Christian conquest of paganism.

Later, in the eighth and ninth centuries CE, Charlemagne (r. 768-814 CE) used pillaged porphyry columns inside arches on the upper level of his imperial chapel, a building intended for his own entombment. (Figure 3.13) The Palatine Chapel (c. 796-798 CE, consecrated 805 CE) was part of the palace complex Charlemagne had built at Aachen, in what is now Germany. The interior of the chapel is an octagon topped by a dome supported by heavy piers with arches on the second level, where the imperial throne is located, with a view to the high **altar** (the ta-

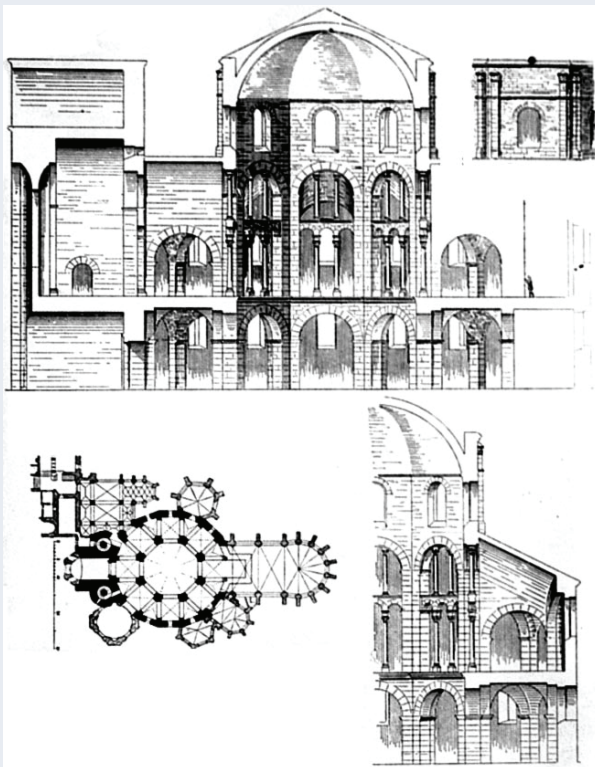


**Figure 3.13 | Aachen, Palace Chapel of Charlemagne. c. 800**

Author: User "Velvet"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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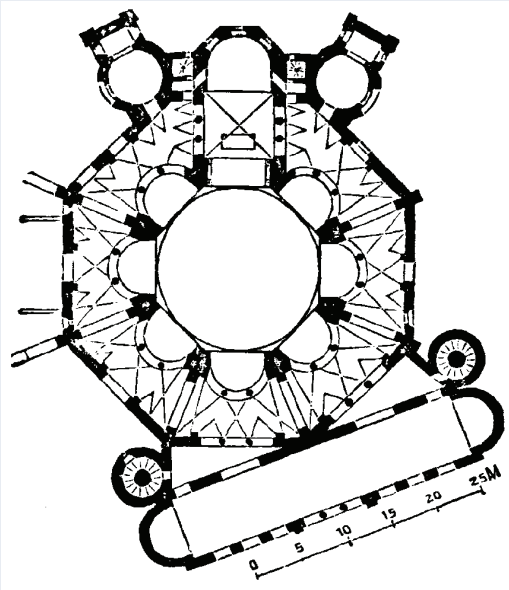
**Figure 3.14 | Cross-sections of the Palace Chapel of Aachen**

Author: User "Sir Gawain"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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ble or other surface where religious rituals are carried out) located across the church on the first floor below. (Figure 3.14) The design of the building is modeled on **mausolea**, or buildings containing tombs, and churches from the late Roman, early Christian, and early Byzantine periods (fourth-seventh centuries), such as San Vitale (526-647 CE) in Ravenna, Italy. (Figure 3.15) Charlemagne, who was not only King of the Franks and King of the Lombards but was also crowned as the first Holy Roman Emperor in 800 CE, used that design and the plundered columns to signify the revival and replacement of the old Roman Empire with his own reign as a Christian world ruler.



**Figure 3.15 | San Vitale, Ravenna**

Author: User "Väsk"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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Among others, Holy Roman Emperor Henry (or Heinrich) II (r. 973-1024) similarly borrowed and supplanted Charlemagne's glory by adopting his palace complex at Aachen and adding to its structure and furnishings with his own statements of imperial power. Henry II commissioned a lavish pulpit for the chapel that was completed in 1014. (Figure 3.16) The semi-circular pulpit has a smaller semi-circle to either side, a shape known as a **trefoil**. The center is made up of nine rectangular panels covered with **chased** gilt copper that has been formed by hammering into low relief images of the Four Evangelists. The panels are adorned with gemstones and embellished with **enamel**, powdered glass fused to the surface by heat, and **filigree**, beads or threads of gold or silver arranged in designs on a metal surface. The three ivory panels on each of the smaller semi-circles depict pagan mythological figures; the panels were made in Egypt in the sixth century CE. Re-used parts such as the porphyry columns, gemstones, and ivory panels are known as **spolia**, remnants that had been taken from older art and architecture and incorporated into new art objects and places with the implications of conquest, superiority, and heritage for the new patrons.



**Figure 3.16 | Ambon (11th-century) of Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor. Aachen Cathedral, Germany.**

Author: User "HOWI"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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**Figure 3.17 | The Barbarossa chandelier**

Author: User "Lokilech"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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**Figure 3.18 | Shrine of Charlemagne, Interior of palatine chapel in Aachen Cathedral, Germany.**

Author: User "ACBahn"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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**Figure 3.19 | Shrine of Charlemagne**

Author: User "HOWI"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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**Figure 3.20 | Cross of Lothair**

Author: CEphoto, Uwe Aranas

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Another, later Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick I (r. 1155-1190), and his wife, Beatrice, commissioned a chandelier to hang below the octagonal dome in the chapel. (Figure 3.17) This was called the Barbarossa chandelier, reflecting the emperor's nickname after his red beard; it was installed between 1165 and 1170 in honor of the Virgin Mary and as a tribute to Charlemagne. The chandelier's forty-eight candles cast a tremendous spread of light in an age when artificial illumination was costly, emphasizing its association with earthly wealth and heavenly light.

As a continuation of the work undertaken by his grandfather Frederick I, which also included exhuming Charlemagne's bones, Frederick II (r. 1220-1250), following the plans Barbarossa had made, completed the creation of a lavish, new jeweled and gilded shrine for the remains of Charlemagne, seeking to elevate him to the rank of sainthood. These statements in rich material forms, imply the surpassing glory of their imperial predecessor, shared by those who followed in his lineage. Moreover, the associations of royalty and honor for earthly rulers was often intertwined in very pointed ways to artwork associated with the Christian God and saints. Notable in this regard



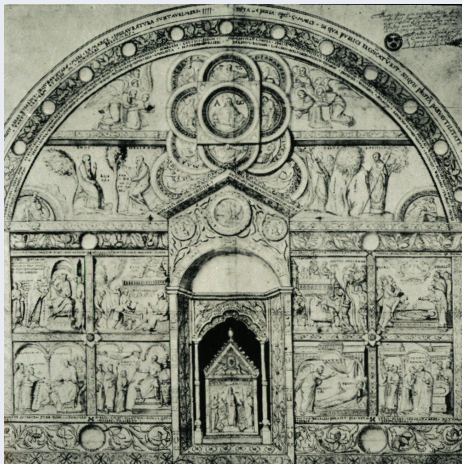
**Figure 3.21 | Augustus cameo**

Author: User "Absalypson2"  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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is the shrine for Charlemagne—clearly a statement of imperial power—made of rich materials that reflect popular Christian notions of the Heavenly Jerusalem, where these saintly rulers were thought to act as intercessors for the believer. (Figures 3.18 and 3.19) Often such imperial works actually featured objects or significant decorative details from imperial Roman works, such as the antique cameo of the Roman Emperor Augustus that was applied to the *Cross of the Emperor Lothair II*. (Figures 3.20 and 3.21) The gilded cross, dated to c. 1000, is covered with 102 gemstones and thirty-two pearls and has a rock crystal seal near its base bearing a portrait of Lothair II (r. 835-869). Including the portraits of earlier emperors further emphasized the wealth

and power of the ruler who had it made, believed to be Otto III (r. 983-1002). In addition, gemstones on such devotional works were selected for their qualities associated with healing, good fortune, the ability to ward off evil, and their mystical translucence, that fostered spiritual illumination.

### 3.5 LIQUIDATION OF TREASURES

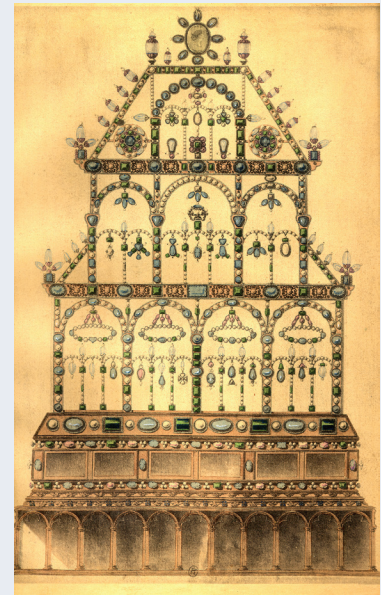


**Figure 3.23 | The mid-12th-century silver altar piece surrounding the shrine of Saint Remaclus**

Author: User "Kleon3"  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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Works such as these often implied the storing of riches as heavenly treasure and also represented a means of storing material wealth that could be used for mundane purposes in

time of need. We have records of a number of extravagant shrines and **liturgical** (relating to worship) furnishings that have not survived because they were taken apart and sold to feed a famine-stricken community or to provide for a new building project or an updated expression of devotion. Such works as the sumptuous Screen of Charlemagne (Figure 3.22) and the enormous Stavelot Altarpiece (Figure 3.23) are known to us only from drawings and small fragments that remain from the original objects. The disappearances of such works



**Figure 3.22 | Screen of Charlemagne**

Artist: Piersac  
Source: www.medart.pitt.edu  
License: Public Domain

indicate that their rich material components, while once intrinsic to their great spiritual implications, at some point came to be seen as an important source of wealth that could be put to other use.

### 3.6 WOOD, INLAY, AND LACQUER

Sculptures, objects, and architectural components of wood were also fashioned with a view to their monetary and cultural value. Some varieties of wood are more rare, others have qualities that make them easier to work in certain types of process, and there have been waves of “fashion” in wood choices at many eras. For example, lindenwood and limewood are associated with the Middle Ages, mahogany with eighteenth-century England and Scotland, oak with the Arts and Crafts work of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, and delicately lacquered wooden goods with Yuan Dynasty China.

Wooden sculpture was a far more predominant art form than painting in northern Europe during the Romanesque (c. 1000-1200) and Gothic periods (c. 1200-1500) in that region. The material favored was lindenwood or limewood due to the fineness of the wood’s grain, which allowed the sculptor to carve intricate detail. Generally, the sculpture was then **polychromed**, or painted, to increase the lifelike quality of the figure. Suggesting that spark of life was important in works such as *The Throne of Wisdom* because Mary, the compassionate and merciful Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, was believed to have the power to intercede with her Son, the infant Christ, on behalf of the faithful. (Figure 3.24)



**Figure 3.24 | Throne of Wisdom**

Author: User "Okapi07"  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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Mahogany was discovered as a marketable wood by European explorers and traders in the Caribbean islands, Central America, and South America by the seventeenth century. The naturally reddish-brown wood was prized for its beauty and strength and, throughout the 1700s, was frequently used in England and Scotland to create fine furniture for the market there and in the American colonies. A table such as this was a status symbol indicating the owner’s wealth and taste, which was further enhanced by its use: this was not a utilitarian piece but a display table for chinaware. (Figure 3.25)

The Arts and Crafts movement began in England in the middle of the nineteenth century, but quickly spread throughout Europe and to the United States. In a time of growing industrialization, with an ever greater number of people moving to urban areas, working in factories, and consuming machine-made goods, some felt the need to reclaim the handmade. With romantic associations of simpler times, greater authenticity, and individ-

ual labor, furniture and decorative objects made as part of the Arts and Crafts movement were prized for their workmanship, design based on forms from nature, and respect for the natural materials used. For example, this cabinet is thought to have been made by Daniel Pabst (1826-1910, Germany, lived United States), one of the leading furniture makers of his day. It features elaborately carved surfaces and **inlay**, where one material is cut and fit into another in complex patterns. (Figures 3.26 and 3.27) Although the types of wood used—walnut, maple, and white pine—are not exotic or rare, the mastery with which they have been painstakingly cut and applied conveys a sense of preciousness. Inlay techniques were often used to provide visual contrast and to emphasize both the distinctive and diverse qualities among the materials brought together and the refined craftsmanship involved. A piece of furniture made with such skill was prized for its singularity and for the intricacy of the craft involved in its creation.



**Figure 3.25 | China table**

Source: Met Museum

License: OASC



**Figure 3.26 | Cabinet**

Artist: Daniel Pabst

Source: Met Museum

License: OASC



**Figure 3.27 | Detail of Cabinet**

Artist: Daniel Pabst

Source: Met Museum

License: OASC

Lacquer has been used in art throughout Asia since Neolithic times, but carved lacquer is created in China only. **Lacquer** is resin from trees found in continental Asia that hardens to a natural plastic when exposed to the air; it is resistant to water and durable. The base of a lacquered object is wood, to which the liquid resin is applied in up to 200 layers. This tray was made in the fourteenth century, during the Yuan Dynasty,

when lacquer was most often tinted red by adding cinnabar, powdered mercury sulfide. (Figure 3.28) Once hardened, the lacquer was carved away to create detailed scenes of court life, such as we see here, floral motifs, nature scenes, dragons or abstracted patterns. While the resin itself is of little monetary value, the laborious process and high level of skill required for such delicate carving meant the completed objects had, and still have, significant cultural value.

### 3.7 INTRINSIC VALUES AND ENHANCED WORTH OF METALS

Some of the materials prized by artists and patrons become more valuable because of these artistic uses; others are valuable for their intrinsic worth as raw substance. From the earliest times, metals such as gold, silver, iron, and copper

were used and traded in their natural states, as they came from the earth. They were mixed

with other materials to create alloys, used for minting coins and forming sculptural objects. Among the most prominent metal materials first used for art were iron and bronze; forging and casting them were among the earliest complex artistic processes devised. Brass (copper alloyed with tin, lead, and/or other metals) and the harder, more durable bronze have been widely used for grand public monuments that have fine detail, weather well, and can be hollow cast to reduce the amount of metal used. (Figures 3.29 and 3.30). Because forging and casting are complex and highly skilled processes, a viewer should know that an object made of this material was a significant statement for the artist or patron to make, one involving considerable planning and staging to accomplish the work.



**Figure 3.29 | Bronze statue of Buddha**

Author: User "Dirk Beyer"  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
License: CC BY-SA 3.0



**Figure 3.28 | Tray with women and boys on a garden terrace**

Source: Met Museum  
License: OASC

### 3.8 RARE MATERIALS AND PROHIBITED USES

The economic and ecological factors involved in some materials have sometimes moved consideration of their use far beyond the discussion of artistic

production. An example is work in ivory, especially that obtained from elephants, although it was also taken to use for sculpture from their kin, the extinct mammoth, as well as from walruses and other mammals. Its rarity and workability led to its valuation for finely carved works, often for aristocratic patrons and very special purposes, such as the devotional objects (*The Virgin and Child*, Unknown: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O166591/the-virgin-and-child-polyptych-unknown/>) and personal toilet articles (*Attack on the Castle of Love*, Unknown: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O88416/attack-on-the-castle-of-mirror-back-unknown/>) that were popular among the court ladies of the late Middle Ages. Its exploitation has led to scarcity and, ultimately, now threatens the very existence of elephants, since they have been savagely hunted and their herds decimated in the interest of profit. Consequently, both the sale and purchase of ivory objects, even those considered antiques and historical treasures, are now widely boycotted in the interest of preservation of the species.



**Figure 3.30 | The Minute Man**

Artist: Daniel Chester French

Author: User "Flying Jazz"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain

### 3.9 MATERIAL CONNOTATIONS OF CLASS OR STATION

Other more mundane materials and appropriated components might also have strong political connotations that intensify the meaning of the artwork. Korean artist Do Ho Su chose and assembled military dog tags to create a larger-than-life figural impression of an imperialistic robe with a hollow core. It carries connotations of the political strength of his native land being built upon such things as the dehumanizing mandatory military service he had performed, and the relationships between individuals and the collectives they form. (*Some/One*, Do Ho Suh: <https://2yhr3j6imaw4e4zzg38k38ar-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/suh-inst-002.jpg>; *Some/One* detail, Do Ho Suh: <https://2yhr3j6imaw4e4zzg38k38ar-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/suh-inst-001.540.jpg>)

### 3.10 BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

#### Key Concepts

One of the basic artistic choices for any creation is the material from which it will be made and so should be an area for careful attention in our analysis of any artwork. Deliberate choices can also involve the pointed spurning of rich resources in favor of humbler stuff, as in the robe created

by Do Ho Su, and less refined surfaces, such as cardboard or burlap for paintings; things that are only more recently available than those traditionally used, like plastics for sculpture, titanium for architecture; and the technologically evolved media that move into the realms of the physically immaterial. Choices and implications have expanded exponentially, and our examination of them should be broad, deep, and careful.

### Test Yourself

1. Discuss the differences between materials that are intrinsically precious, and those that are made more valuable by the processes or creative ideas in works of art, by considering specific examples.
2. Consider the use of *spolia* in at least three specific examples and discuss how they changed the significance of the art work to which they were applied.
3. Review and describe a specific process for creating artwork that involved procedures for combining diverse materials into the product.
4. Considering such common materials as clay or wood, discuss the ways in which an artist might use it for making an object of much greater value than the inherent worth, and what factors, other than the creation process, might lead people to value it highly.

## 3.11 KEY TERMS

**Codex:** the book form in which pages (or leaves) of material such as parchment, vellum, or paper, are gathered into bundles and bound together—initially by sewing, now usually by glueing—and then provided with a cover to protect the sheets. Its ancestor was the scroll, in which the sheets were joined into a long continuous roll that was opened out from one side, rolled up at the other, for viewing the contents.

**Cultural value:** the perceived quality or merit of the work: what it is worth according to that culture's standards of artistic importance or excellence.

**Earthenware,** or objects made from clay: such as vessels that are formed for specific uses and hardened either by drying in the air or by baking in high heat. Often, earthenware goods are distinguished from more refined clay-based objects that are creating with additional processing of the material or different/more complex firing methods. See **porcelain**

**Gold leaf:** 22K gold pounded into extremely thin sheets, to be applied selectively to areas of 2-d or 3-d objects.

**Handbuilt:** clay objects that are shaped by hand, often by wrapping and smoothing coils of clay into the desired form. These are distinguished from **wheel-thrown** or mold-made goods.

**Illumination:** literally, given light, specifically through the use of gold or silver for letting of illustrative touches in a manuscript. The term is also sometime used to describe manuscripts that have images added to them, as opposed to simply including lettered text

**Manuscript:** literally, hand-written presentation of script and/or images. The form was supplanted by books produced with a printing press, although the term is still used for a singular copy of a written work.

**Mausolea**, plural of **mausoleum:** a building designed to house one or more tombs, usually for an important person. These were most often centrally-planned, with a design that pivoted around the burial site. In Christian usage, these were sometimes attached to a larger, congregational structure, but sometimes stood alone. They might house more than one tomb.

**Monetary value:** the worth of materials or objects, in terms of “market value.” This might be determined by the value of the materials use or of the finished art object, considered differently from the cost of the materials.

**Parchment:** sheepskin, prepared for use in manuscripts—less refined than **vellum**, used for finer and more expensive works.

**Polychrome:** painted in several colors.

**Porcelain:** highly refined ceramic ware, initially produced in China, with select materials like petuntse and kaolin, to create semi-translucent material, with elegant shapes, and glass-like, intricately decorated surfaces, and high-temp fired for hardened finishes.

**Potter’s wheel, wheel-thrown:** pottery made with the use of a potter’s wheel, a device for turning the clay body on a rotating platform for a more uniform shape. These were first turned by hand, knee, or pedal motion, later electrified.

**Putti** plural of *putto*: a small winged baby angel, a cherub.

**Spolia:** bounty taken from and original context, as in the “spoils of war.” Often, items of spolia were re-used in later works to imply the conquest (and superiority) of the new owner over the original.

**Vellum:** calfskin, prepared for use in luxury manuscripts, more highly prized than the rougher, less expensive **parchment**.

# 4

## Describing Art

### Formal Analysis, Types, and Styles of Art

*Jeffrey LeMieux, Rita Tekippe, and Pamela J. Sachant*

#### 4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Employ a vocabulary of art specific terms and critical approaches to conduct a formal analysis of works of art.
- Identify different types of art based on the degree of representation or non-representation a work displays.
- Distinguish between variations of representational qualities within a work of art.
- Identify characteristics that relate an individual or group of works to a cultural style, stylistic movement or period, or an individual artist's style.

#### 4.2 INTRODUCTION

Developing the ability to examine and understand works of art makes sense for many good reasons. For one, art is powerful. In subtle but real ways, we are influenced by the visual culture that surrounds us.

In Chapter Two: The Structure of Art—Form and Design, we identified, defined, and discussed the elements and principles of design. Now, we will focus on the analysis of art. **Formal** or **critical analysis** is an examination of the elements and principles of design present in an artwork and the process of deriving meaning from how those elements and principles are used by visual artists to communicate a concept, idea, or emotion.

How and what is communicated in a work of art is linked to the type or category in which it falls: representational or non-representational. Within the broad category of **representation**, that is, a visual reference to the experiential world, we can further characterize the work of art using terms such as naturalistic, idealized, or abstract. Art that does not attempt to present an aspect of the recognizable world is **non-objective** or **non-representational**. In such work meaning is communicated through shapes, colors, and textures.

**Style** can refer to the general appearance of a work or a group of works that were created in accordance with a specific set of principles about form or appearance. Style can refer to the art as a whole that was made during a particular era and within a certain culture. More specifically, we can consider whether the artwork belongs to a stylistic movement such as the Italian Renaissance, Realism, or Abstract Expressionism. Style can also refer to how elements and principles of design are employed by an individual artist: the visual characteristics of that artist's work.

## 4.3 FORMAL OR CRITICAL ANALYSIS

While restricting our attention only to a description of the formal elements of an artwork may at first seem limited or even tedious, a careful and methodical examination of the physical components of an artwork is an important first step in “decoding” its meaning. It is useful, therefore, to begin at the beginning. There are four aspects of a formal analysis: **description**, **analysis**, **interpretation**, and **evaluation**. In addition to defining these terms, we will look at examples.

### 4.3.1 Description

What can we notice at first glance about a work of art? Is it two-dimensional or three-dimensional? What is the medium? What kinds of actions were required in its production? How big is the work? What are the elements of design used within it?

Starting with line: is it soft or hard, jagged or straight, expressive or mechanical? How is line being used to describe space?

Considering shape: are the shapes large or small, hard-edged or soft? What is the relationship between shapes? Do they compete with one another for prominence? What shapes are in front? Which ones fade into the background?

Indicating mass and volume: if two-dimensional, what means if any are used to give the illusion that the presented forms have weight and occupy space? If three-dimensional, what space is occupied or filled by the work? What is the mass of the work?

Organizing space: does the artist use perspective? If so, what kind? If the work uses linear perspective, where are the horizon line and vanishing point(s) located?

On texture: how is texture being used? Is it actual or implied texture?

In terms of color: what kinds of colors are used? Is there a color scheme? Is the image overall light, medium, or dark?

### 4.3.2 Analysis

Once the elements of the artwork have been identified, next come questions of how these elements are related. How are the elements arranged? In other words, how have principles of design been employed?

What elements in the work were used to create unity and provide variety? How have the elements been used to do so?

What is the scale of the work? Is it larger or smaller than what it represents (if it does depict someone or something)? Are the elements within the work in proportion to one another?

Is the work symmetrically or asymmetrically balanced?

What is used within the artwork to create emphasis? Where are the areas of emphasis? How has movement been conveyed in the work, for example, through line or placement of figures?

Are there any elements within the work that create rhythm? Are any shapes or colors repeated?

### 4.3.3 Interpretation

Interpretation comes as much from the individual viewer as it does from the artwork. It derives from the intersection of what an object symbolizes to the artist and what it means to the viewer. It also often records how the meaning of objects has been changed by time and culture. Interpretation, then, is a process of unfolding. A work that may seem to mean one thing on first inspection may come to mean something more when studied further. Just as when re-reading a favorite book or re-watching a favorite movie, we often notice things not seen on the first viewing; interpretations of art objects can also reveal themselves slowly. Claims about meaning can be made but are better when they are backed up with supporting evidence. Interpretations can also change and some interpretations are better than others.

### 4.3.4 Evaluation

All this work of description, analysis, and interpretation, is done with one goal in mind: to make an evaluation about a work of art. Just as interpretations vary, so do evaluations. Your evaluation includes what you have discovered about the work during your examination as well as what you have learned, about the work, yourself, and others in the process. Your reaction to the artwork is an important component of your evaluation: what do you feel when you look at it? And, do you like the work? How and why do you find it visually pleasing, in some way disturbing, emotionally engaging?

Evaluating and judging contemporary works of art is more difficult than works that are hundreds or thousands of years old because the verdict of history has not yet been passed on them. Museums are full of paintings by contemporary artists who were considered the next Michelangelo but who have since faded from the cultural forefront.

The best art of a culture and period is that work which exemplifies the thought of the age from which it derives. What we think about our own culture is probably not what will be thought of it a century from now. The art that we believe best embodies our time may or may not last. As time moves on, our evaluations and judgments of our own time may not prove to be the most accurate ones. We live in a world full of art, and it is almost impossible to avoid making evaluations—possibly mistaken—about its value. Nonetheless, informed evaluations are still possible and useful even in the short term.

### 4.3.5 Examples of Formal Analysis

#### *Snow Storm—Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* by J. M. W. Turner



**Figure 4.1 | *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth***

Artist: J. M. W. Turner

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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*Snow Storm—Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851, England) is a chaotic, atmospheric oil on canvas painting. (Figure 4.1) First, on the level of description, the dark structure of the foundering steamboat is hinted at in the center of the work, while heavy smoke from the vessel, pitching waves, and swirling snow surround it. The brown and gray curving lines are created with long strokes of heavily applied paint that expand to the edges of the composition. Second, on the level of analysis, we note that the paint application, heavy, with long strokes, adds dramatic movement to the image. We see that the design principle of scale and proportion is being used in the small size of the steamboat in relation to the overall canvas. Now

let us interpret these elements and their relation: The artist has emphasized the maelstrom of sea, snow, and wind. A glimpse of blue sky through the smoke and snow above the vessel is the only indication of space beyond this gripping scene of danger, and provides the only place for the viewer's eyes to rest from the tumult. This scene is of humanity's struggle for survival against powerful forces of nature. And finally, we are ready to evaluate this work. Is it powerfully effective in reminding us of the transitory nature of our own limited existence, a memento morii, perhaps? Or is it a wise caution of the limits of our human power to control our destiny? Does the work have sufficient power and value to be accepted by us as significant? The verdict of history tells us it is. J.M.W. Turner is considered a significant artist of his time, and this work is one that is thought to support that verdict. In the end, however, each of us can accept or reject this historical verdict for our own reasons. We may fear the sea. We may reject the use of technology as valiantly heroic. We may see the British colonial period as one of oppression and tyranny and this work as an illustration of the hubris of that time. Whatever we conclude, this work of art stands as a catalyst for this important dialogue.

Another example of formal analysis. Consider *Lady at the Tea Table* by Mary Cassatt

### ***Lady at the Tea Table* by Mary Cassatt**



**Figure 4.2 | *Lady at the Tea Table***

Artist: Mary Cassatt

Source: Met Museum

License: OASC

Mary Cassatt (1844-1925, USA, lived France) is best known for her paintings, drawings, and prints of mothers and children. In those works, she focused on the bond between them as well as the strength and dignity of women within the predominantly domestic and maternal roles they played in the nineteenth century.

*Lady at the Tea Table* is a depiction of a woman in a later period of her life, and captures the sense of calm power a matriarch held within the home. (Figure 4.2) First, a description of the elements being used in this work: The white of the wall behind the woman and the tablecloth before her provide a strong contrast to the black of her clothing and the blue of the tea set. The gold frame of the artwork on the wall, the gold rings on her fingers, and the gold bands on the china link those three main elements of the painting. Analysis shows the organizing principle of variety is employed in the rectangles behind the woman's head and the multiple circles and arcs of the individual pieces of the tea set. The composition is a stable triangle formed by the woman's head and body, and extending to the pieces of china that span the foreground from one edge of the composition to the other. Let us interpret these observations. There is little evidence of movement in the work other than the suggestion that the woman's hand, resting on the handle of the teapot, may soon move. Her gaze, directed away from the viewer and out of the picture frame, implies she is in the midst of pouring tea, but her stillness suggests she is lost in thought. How to evaluate this work? The artist expresses a restrained but powerful strength of character in her treatment of this subject. Is the lack of obvious movement in the work a comment on the emergence of women's roles in society, a hope or a demand for change? Or is it a monument to the quiet dignity of the domestic life of Victorian era Paris? The gold of the frame, the rings, and the china dishes appear to unify three disparate objects into one statement of value. Do they symbolize art, fidelity, and service? Is this a comment on the restrictions of French domestic society, or a claim to its strength? One indication of the quality of a work of art is its power to evoke multiple interpretations. This open and poetic richness is one reason why the work of Mary Cassatt is considered to be important. The above examples are only one of many ways in which we can interpret and evaluate works of art. We will examine a few more approaches to analysis and critique. The point of this exercise is to equip the interested student with tools to become more fully aware of the dynamics and content of works of art, not only in museums and textbooks, but in the world of images that continually surrounds us today.

## 4.4 TYPES OF ART

### 4.4.1 Representation and Abstraction

The most basic point of style, perhaps, is type or category, whether a work is **representational** or **abstract**. In the broadest terms, if the work has visual reference to the phenomenal world, we consider it to be representational. That definition suffers from over generality, though, since any physical or visual expression that has some reference to the physical world includes some aspect that we see as reflecting the physical world. And, to some extent, all works are also

**abstract**, in that they might remind us of what we see in the phenomenal world by only reflecting some physical feature(s) rather than detailing the object, place, or person itself. Having said that, we can proceed to see art in terms of its relative representation or relative abstraction of the original form.

It may help to start here by examining a number of works; each is based on the artist's observations of cows but is distinctive in what the artist elected to convey in their artwork about cows on the continuum from representation to abstraction. The first of these works is by Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899, France), who depicted a variety of animals in great detail with regard to their anatomy and physiognomy, and took great care to render her illustrations with fidelity to the appearance to the actual animals she had observed. (Figure 4.3) Artistically gifted and thoroughly trained, she went on to deepen her own knowledge and to hone her skills by visiting farms, veterinarian dissections, and slaughterhouses in order to develop extensive knowledge of her preferred subject matter, with which she created imagery of animals and other features of rural farm life. Her cows would be correctly described as very **naturalistic** in appearance—their forms are quite similar in appearance to actual cows.



**Figure 4.3 | *Ploughing the Nevers***

Artist: Rosa Bonheur

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain

In comparison, if we examine the renditions by folk artist Edward Hicks (1780-1849, USA), we see cows that are much less rigorous in their resemblance, most likely the result of his not having had exacting training and practice in precise replication. (Figure 4.4) A Quaker minister,

Hicks treated his painting at first as a supplemental avocation, then as his primary means of supporting his family. He used it to express themes of spiritual and historical community events that interested him, generally in simplified landscape settings that emphasized narrative and symbolic messages rather than exact proportions and details.

In some works, though, the difference in correspondence to natural appearance can be due to the artist's very different purpose for the work. *The Yellow Cow* by Franz Marc (1880-1916, Germany) clearly does not slavishly reproduce natural appearances but instead seeks to convey through abstraction a sense of light-hearted lyrical expres-

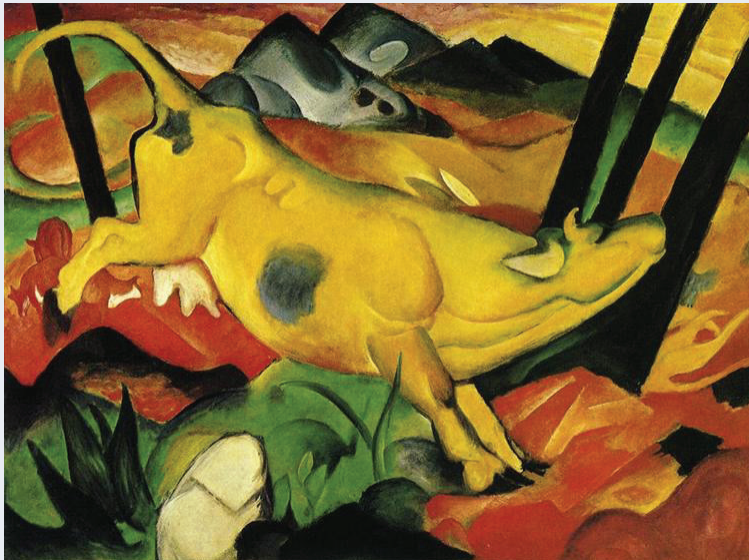


**Figure 4.4 | *The Residence of David Twining***

Artist: Edward Hicks

Source: Wikimedia Commons

License: Public Domain



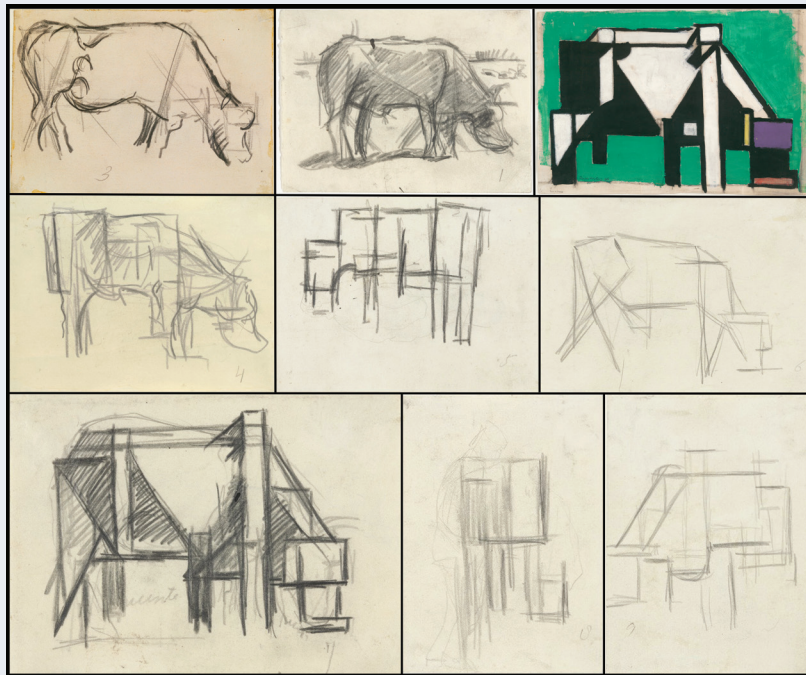
**Figure 4.5 | *The Yellow Cow***

Artist: Franz Marc

Source: Wikiart

License: Public Domain

sion for the animal. (Figure 4.5) To achieve this end, Marc took great liberty in creating an image that went far beyond what he saw, to make an expression that carries messages of what he thought and felt about his subject. Marc created a great many images of animals in nature that were metaphorical reflections of his views of mankind and the human spirit. Such a movement towards abstraction often derives from the artist's wish to express an emotional or intellectual commentary on the subject, or to use the subject as a starting place to diverge from visual appearances of the purely



**Figure 4.6 | Composition (The Cow)**

Artist: Theo van Doesburg

Source: MoMA

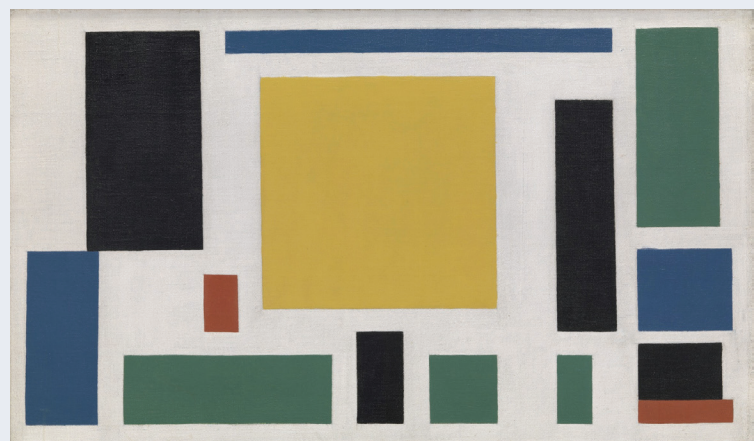
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physical phenomenal world in order to create a statement of some other ideas.

Another artist bearing investigation in this regard is Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931, Netherlands), who used his own philosophical probing to frame a systematic path from naturalism in his renditions of the cow to an abstraction that is visually quite far removed from what most of us see in the phenomenal world. (Figure 4.6) Beginning with a series of exploratory sketches, he sought to reduce the linear forces of a cow's form to the three he thought were essential components of the physical and metaphysical world, that is,

vertical, horizontal, and diagonal, while reducing the three dimensions of the cow's form to the painting's two-dimensional surface. At the same time, he tried to simplify the forms and volumes, progressively creating a strongly abstracted picture that few of us would likely recognize as of a cow if we were not led through the process by which he developed the image. Indeed, we have evidence of the process and its result in *Composition VIII (The Cow)*, a fully developed instruction that provides us with great insight into Van Doesburg's train of thought and work, as well as his process of abstraction. (Figure 4.7)

Representation, then, shows us some broad vision of what we see in the original, be it a person, landscape, interior, event, or such, with some level of detail. To one degree or another, all art is ab-



**Figure 4.7 | Composition VIII (The Cow)**

Artist: Theo van Doesburg

Source: MoMA

License: Public Domain

stract in that it is not the original form but instead the artist's response to the original form rendered in artistic terms—although, clearly, not all of it is so strongly abstracted that we lose the plainer references to the physical world.

#### 4.4.2 Idealization

Sometimes artists create an **idealized** version of a natural form rather than truly reflecting its actual appearance. This was the norm, for example, in depictions of royal figures in ancient Egypt. There was a **canon**, or set of principles and norms, for the representation of royals that was very specific about just how they must look, including norms for the proportions of the different parts of the body to one another, their stance, and other details. The canon also set standards for their garments, headgear, the false beard, the arm and fist positions, and other details. The canon was remarkably conservative and unchanging, altering very little over the many centuries that ancient Egypt existed.

The figures of the Pharaoh Menkaure (r. c. 2530–c. 2510 BCE) and his Queen Khamerernebt II are shown as being well proportioned, physically fit, and in young adulthood. (Figure 4.8) Because the king was regularly assessed with regard to his favor with the gods and fitness to rule, he was required to be in top physical condition—or so he must appear in any official imagery. This necessity resulted in the **idealization** of the natural physical form. So, while it is a representational image of the royal body, the need to depict him as a fit and worthy ruler meant that he was generally shown as being in the prime of life, with a trim and perfectly proportioned physique, and with no apparent hint of weakness or vulnerability. By contrast, the image of an Egyptian state official, Ka-Aper, who was not of royal rank, was created with a different idea. (Statue of Ka'aper: <http://www.museumsyndicate.com/item.php?item=27334>) As a commoner, he is shown with a very different physique—rather pudgy and more relaxed, certainly not governed by the rules for the royal imagery. It is more naturalistic, not idealized like the royal works.

To study idealization further, we will explore the evolution of nude male sculptural forms in ancient Greece. We know Greek sculptors began with ideas they gleaned from the Egyptian forms

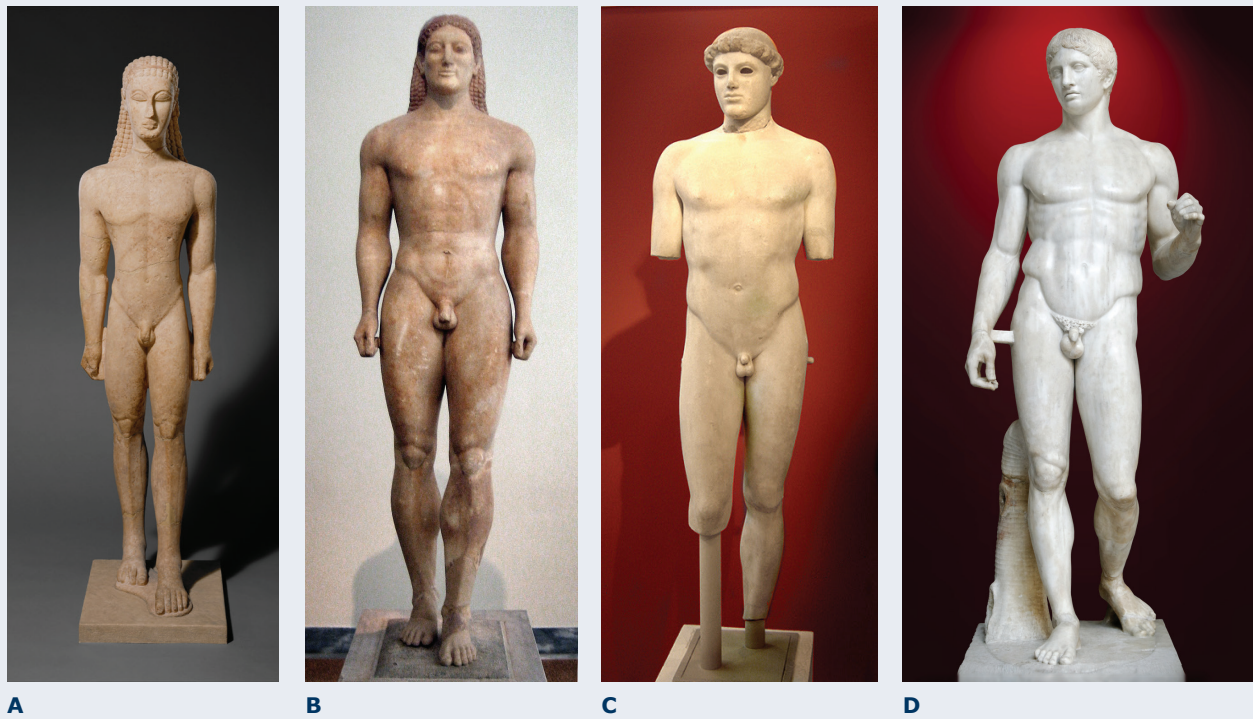


**Figure 4.8 | Statue of Menkaura and Queen Khamerernebt II**

Author: Keith Schengili-Roberts

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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**Figure 4.9 | Sculptures of the human form demonstrating anatomical accuracy**

**Photo A | Marble statue of a kouros**

Source: Met Museum  
License: OASC

**Photo B | The Kroisos Kouros**

Author: User "Mountain"  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
License: Public Domain

**Photo C | Kritios Boy**

Author: User "Tetraktys"  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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**Photo D | Doryphoros from Pompeii**

Artist: Polykleitos  
Author: User "Tetraktys"  
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they knew but then altered them in some very significant ways that reflected their own distinctive culture. They presented the forms in the nude (only sculptures of males were nude at first, female sculpture remained clothed until the fourth century BCE) and, over time, they increasingly sought to capture more accurate physical details and the principles of movement in the body, rather than the static sense of permanence the Egyptians had favored.

From early on, Greek artists had the opportunity to observe the Olympic contests, athletic competitions that were held every four years in honor of Zeus, the ruler of their gods. The Olympics featured nude male athletes in a great many physical activities and diverse exercises, games, and sports. Over time, Greek artists developed a keen understanding of human physiology, how various movements and feats were achieved, and how bones, muscles, and tendons coordinated and functioned. They increasingly rendered the human form with great anatomical accuracy. When we look at the sculptures in Figure 4.9, we can see the evolution of depiction from the two figures dating to the Archaic period (800-480 BCE), when kinship with Egyptian work is apparent, to the Early Classical (c. 480-450 BCE), and then the High Classical period (c. 450-400 BCE), considered to be the epitome of naturalism in artistic depiction of the male physique.

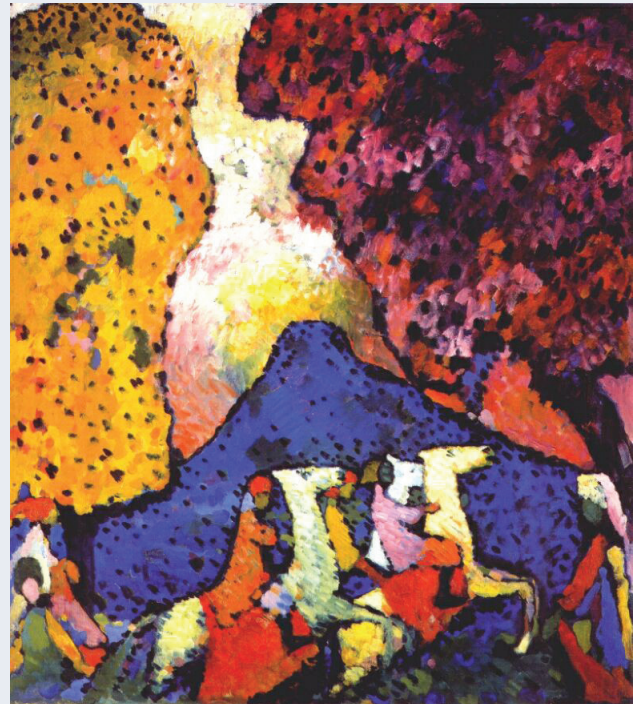
The turning point in this evolution—the moment when the achievement of naturalism was pronounced—was with the creation of the *Kritios Boy*, c. 480 BCE. (Figure 4.9c) At that point, the beginning of the Classical period in Greece, sculptors captured the potential for naturalistic movement and the *contrapposto* or weight shift of the knees and hips that occurs when standing with one leg at ease or walking. This soon gave way, however, to a canon of art for the refined form. So, again, true naturalism gave way to a notion of the “perfect” or idealized form.

### 4.4.3 Non-Representational or Non-Objective

One further note is needed in consideration of the relationship of type to response to the phenomenal world. Recurrent strains of abstraction appear throughout the history of art, when artists elected to streamline, suppress, or de-emphasize reference to the phenomenal world. In the twentieth century, though, this approach took on different character in some instances, with a stated rejection of the art as related to the natural world and concerned instead with the art itself, to the processes by which it was made, and with the product as referring to these processes and artistic qualities rather than to some outside phenomenon: the observed world.

Still, the art is never completely independent of some reference: the viewer might respond to the color, painterly effect, line quality, or some other aspect that is not necessarily associated with recognition of a particular physical object or “thing” but that relates to the qualities of the art in some way, that is, to some recognition of reference—although this recognition may be ephemeral and may be nameless. The response might be quite visceral or intellectual, nonetheless. The development of this idea was perhaps an inevitable phase of the abstraction and explorations of the formal means that had been conducted by various movements that evolved in nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Stories abound about the era in art and the push from abstraction to non-representation, with several artists claiming to have led the breakthrough. The first artist to use the term **non-objective art**, however, seems to have been Aleksandr Rodchenko (1890-1956, Russia), (*Spatial Construction no. 12*, Aleksandr Rodchenko: [http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1998/rodchenko/texts/spatial\\_construct\\_jpg.html](http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1998/rodchenko/texts/spatial_construct_jpg.html); *Assembling for a Demonstration*,



**Figure 4.10 | Blue Mountain**

Artist: Wassily Kandinsky

Source: Wikiart

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**Figure 4.11 | *Angel of the Last Judgment***

Artist: Wassily Kandinsky  
 Source: Wikiart  
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**Figure 4.12 | *Red Spot II***

Artist: Wassily Kandinsky  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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Aleksandr Rodchenko: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/45090?locale=en>) and its most active early theorist and writer was probably Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944, Russia, lived Germany and France). (Figures 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12)

The artistic climate fostered widespread experimentation, and the synergistic atmosphere was a seedbed for new ideas and modes of working. Rodchenko sought to affirm the independence of artistic process and the “constructive” approach to creating artworks that were self-referential, and he explored the possibilities in painting, drawing, photography, sculpture and graphic arts. Kandinsky, also Russian but working in Germany, wrote an important treatise entitled *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912) that was widely popular and soon translated from the original German into many languages. He explored color theory in relationship to music, logic, human emotion, and the spiritual underpinnings of the abstractions that for centuries had been viewed and absorbed through religious icons and popular folk prints in his native Russia.

## 4.5 STYLES OF ART

In addition to looking at where along the spectrum from representation to non-representation a work of art may fall, we can examine the style of the work. Style can encompass the principles about form and appearance shared within a certain culture or era. Style can refer to a movement or group of artists and their work, where the commonalities can range from employing like elements and principles of design, to using certain materials or processes, to following a set of religious, political, or ideological beliefs. Style also indicates the visual characteristics of an individual artist’s work. We conduct a stylistic analysis by examining the artistic elements and considering how they have used, and how they relate to other works by that artist, group of artists, or in a certain time frame, culture, or region.

In general, artistic styles tend to fall into three broad categories: Period, Regional, and Formal styles. Period styles are groups of art in which the works derive their characteristic structure from the culture prevalent during a particular time period. A good example of a period style would be Gothic Art or Ming dynasty Art. Regional styles are groups of art in which the works derive their structure from the culture prevalent in a particular place. A good example of a regional style would be Dutch Art or Latin American Art. Formal styles are groups of art in which the works derive their structure from principles that are not characteristic of either one place or one time. A good example of a Formal style would be Surrealism, Impressionism, or Modernism. Formal styles tend to be the “isms.”

From the earliest times, we can see that some artists sought to make their depictions conform closely to what they saw in the world around them, but that for various reasons they often chose to emphasize certain aspects at the expense of great naturalism. It is a mistake, however, to assume that the degree of naturalism that you see in the artwork is necessarily and primarily related to the skill level of the artist.

Artistic and stylistic change is generally a matter of evolution, and often rather reactionary. The artistic choices about style (and other matters) made at any particular point are influenced by what other works of art look like at that moment. So the artist will likely try to create an expression that goes further in one direction, or changes directions in some way. Thus, art might become more naturalistic, as we have seen, or it might become less so, because the artist thinks the art might express the idea better by using a slightly different style or a radically different idea. The divergence is related to current “thinking” within the culture and other more specific circumstances.

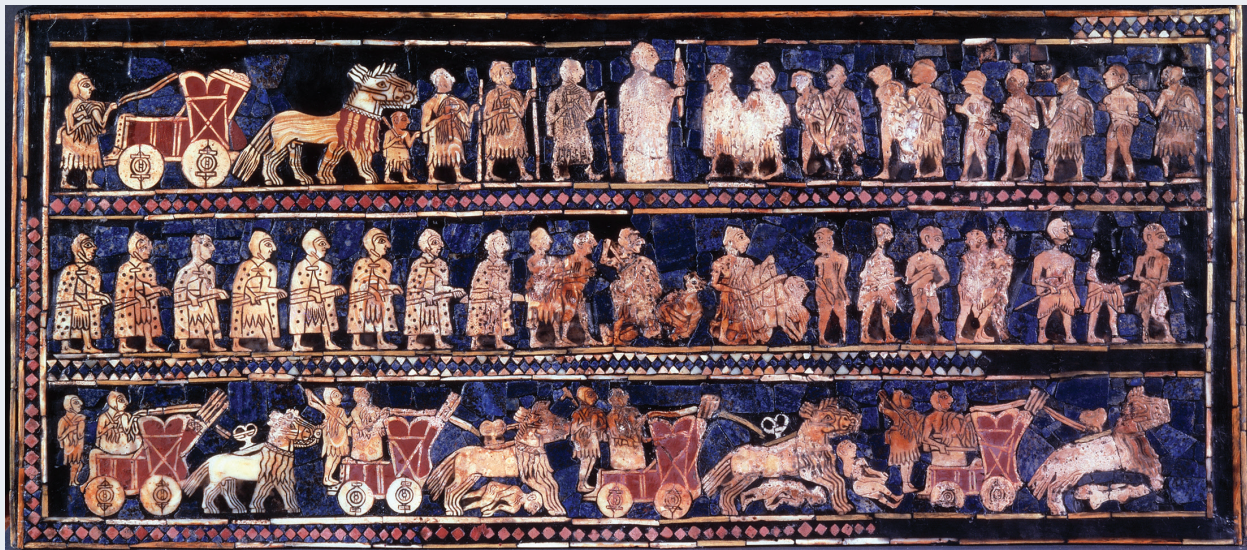
### 4.5.1 Cultural Style

There are artistic choices with regard to style in every work. While these choices are generally made at the discretion of the individual artist today, for much of history style has been a reflection of the broader cultural currents that influence so much of life in any time and place. These cultural factors have often led to the general approaches to representation that art historians call “conventions of representation.” To acquaint ourselves with these conventions and how they pertain to a cultural style, we will look at a few examples.

#### 4.5.1.1 Ancient Near East

These conventions are evident to us when we examine a broad selection of works from those created in the ancient Near Eastern cultures during several centuries. Look at the way figures are depicted in a detail from the Standard of Ur (c. 2600-2400 BCE) from ancient Mesopotamia, today Iraq, a wooden box with scenes of war and peace made from inlaid pieces of iridescent shell, red limestone, and blue lapis lazuli. (Figure 4.13) We see the figures have sufficient naturalism to allow us to easily recognize the human body. But we also see that they include a range of naturalistic detail.

The figures appear static, even when they are shown to be moving through space. They are shown in a **composite view**, that is, with portions of the body shown in profile and others in frontal view



**Figure 4.13 | Standard of Ur, 26th century BCE, "War" panel**

Author: User "Dbachmann"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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**Figure 4.14 | Music Stele**

Author: User "Jastrow"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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so the artist can provide details that would not be visible in a strict profile. They turn the body in space so that the viewer sees the hips and shoulders, along with a twisted torso, turned slightly towards the viewer. For warriors and leaders, this is a heroic stance, showing power and command. The composite view is completed by giving a frontal view of the eye on the profile of the face and head shown.

This approach to figural forms continues in additional ancient Near Eastern works. The *Stele of Music* (c. 2120 BCE), depicting Gudea with attendants in one register and musicians below, shows the king ceremonially preparing to lay out a temple in the city of Girsu while accompanied by music and chanting. (Figure 4.14) In the relief of Sargon II, an Assyrian king who ruled 722-705 BCE, created approximately 1,400 years later, we see the use of these devices again, along with more variations of costume and headgear. (Figure 4.15)

These instances drawn from across many centuries but from the same geographical region that is today Iraq, show the persistence of a set of conventions of representation shared by the related cultural groups. We can also observe here that, when there is more emphasis on naturalism of the

human body, it is at the service of conveying a sense of power, usually to give more detail to musculature—especially in the chest and shoulders. This slight abstraction or deviation from absolute naturalism is also used to create a sense of greater physical stature and presence, a manipulation of actual sizes known as **hierarchical proportion**, meant to show the figures' relative importance. These conventions of representation serve to convey dignity and significance within the broad cultural style shared by these associated groups.

As noted, **abstraction** is not a modern method of art, but has been used purposefully in many eras. Abstraction, simplification of naturalistic forms, appears in the conventions of representation in the ancient Near East; unlike most later instances of abstraction, however, these conventions did not follow upon and show a reactionary counter-movement to a naturalistic approach, nor were they a stage that further amplified certain features for purposes of expression or emotional exaggeration.

#### 4.5.1.2 Ancient Greece and Rome

We earlier discussed the progression of cultural style in ancient Greece from the Archaic period to the High Classical period. The latter was also the era when the Parthenon temple and the other structures on the Acropolis in Athens were rebuilt or renovated as a statement of the power of that city-state. (Figure 4.16) The work of this era of artistic pinnacle is called **classical**.

By extension, the ancient Roman work that was created to emulate the Greek Classical style is sometimes defined, as well, as classical art. Careful distinctions, though, need to be made amongst the strictly classical, the imitative, and the revival of classical form in later eras. Examining these styles further, let us first look at what happened after the Greek High Classical era. Art in Greece,



**Figure 4.15 | Sargon II and dignitary**

Author: User "Jastrow"

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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**Figure 4.16 | Acropolis of Athens**

Author: User "A.Savin"

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**Figure 4.17 | Apollo Sauroctonus**

Artist: Praxiteles  
 Author: User "Baldiri"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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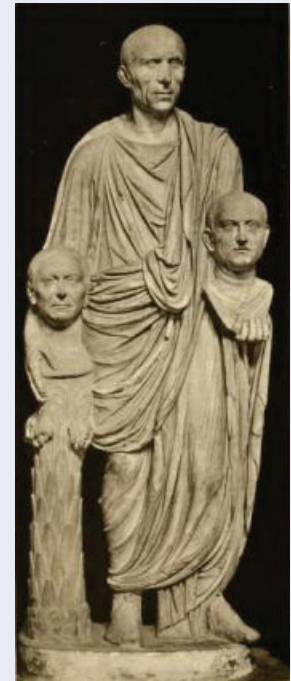
**Figure 4.18 | Hercules Farnese**

Artist: Glycon of Athens  
 Author: User "Marie-Lan Nguyen"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
 License: CC BY 2.5

in what are called the Late Classical (400-323 BCE) and Hellenistic (323-31 BCE) periods, shows changes that move away from the High Classical norms in becoming variously more dynamic, more expressive, more emotional, more dramatic. (Figures 4.17 and 4.18) That is, they are exaggerated in some way from the calm composure of the Classical style that had expressed the cultural value of complete balance achieved by "a sound mind in a sound body," a rather sober and self-contained ideal.

In later Greek culture, we can see changes in an expansive political spirit, the influx of foreign cultural forces, the development of drama in theater, increasing materialism, and other factors that change the artistic and aesthetic spirit, consequently requiring different modes of artistic expression. The Romans, although deeply admiring the classical Greek art, held different cultural ideas and ideals, so Roman art, unless directly copying the Greek, would express their different views of life and the world. These included especially Roman worldliness, their boundless interest in expansion (which brought in a great variety of additional influences), their great ingenuity and inventiveness in such arenas as engineering and architecture, and their stress on individualism.

The Roman Republican period (509-27 BCE) overlaps the Greek late Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods. During the Republican period, Romans favored an anti-idealized approach to portrayal of people that went beyond simple naturalism to a very frank and unvarnished study of individuals, with a measure of veneration for the more mature citizens as models of an accomplished life. (Figure 4.19) The Romans honored their ancestors and kept their venerable images as portrait heads, which they carried in funeral processions and kept in their homes; they valued the accomplishments of old age, so their views on aging and the aged were often expressed through **veristic** or truthful renditions of their likenesses.



**Figure 4.19 | Togatus Barberini**

Author: A. Hekler  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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**Figure 4.20 | Augustus of Prima Porta**

Author: User "Till Niermann"  
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However, the use of these unidealized depictions varied from one phase to another throughout ancient Roman history. It is especially noted that in the Early Imperial era (27 BCE-197 CE), with the rise of Augustus to Emperor, the practice of idealization in portraiture was again favored for the imperial likenesses, often seen clearly as part of the political propaganda used to promote the positive perception of the emperor and the promotion of his political goals and programs. The portrayal of the man Augustus, regardless of his age at the time of the creation of a portrait, was made to be the image of a powerful young man, heroic in stature, fit and fine. (Figure 4.20) Ensuing emperors varied their choices in this regard, some opting for a return to the age prior to the Imperial Age and notions of Republican virtue and the value of age and experience, others using the idealizing and propagandistic approach, to some degree.

In the late Roman Empire (284-476 CE), though, we see suppression and streamlining of natural detail in art that followed and was a reaction to that long period of naturalistic representations of

the human figure. Scholars interpret this abstraction as a means of stressing other-than-natural features that are ideological, spiritual, or philosophical in character. For example, in the *Portrait of the Four Tetrarchs* from c. 300 CE, we see that the *idea* of the **tetrarchs**, or four co-ruling emperors, working together to rule the four divisions of the vast Roman Empire is more important than the *representation of likeness* of any one of these co-rulers as an individual. (Figure 4.21)

Naturalism has given way to uniformity, with nearly identical figures of men in the same costume, crown, armor, and stance, as they embrace one another to show their joint office and efforts in the service of the Roman citizenry. Even though there is considerable detail in their clothing that links their joint rule to Roman traditions of military rulers and leaders, the suppression of distinctive, individual physical characteristics is used convey the concept of how they will function as one.

A few years later, when the Roman Empire briefly returned to a singular rule under Constantine the Great, the



**Figure 4.21 | The Tetrarchs**

Author: User "Nino Barbieri"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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new Emperor opted for an even more abstracted and simplified portrait representation. (Figure 4.22) He thus removed himself even further from the tradition of imperial portraits that had each varied in its extent of naturalism and idealization—even though the head emulates some in being clean-shaven, with a fringed cap of hair, and having an air of imperial hauteur. But it is far less personal and less intimate in its address to the viewer, both in large part to its marked suppression of detail, than depictions of earlier rulers. Further, Constantine appears to be focused on the heavens above, towards which his gaze is directed. The portrayal has been read as being more spiritual, linking him to the emerging Christian faith. Thus, the portrait is associated with a societal and cultural turn from worldly to spiritual matters, and that is likely reflected in this change in artistic interpretation.

#### 4.5.1.3 Indian Subcontinent

Strictly speaking, Greece and Rome were the classical civilizations of antiquity in the West, and some would even limit the use of the term “classical” in art to the High Classical period in Greece. The same principles and conventions of representation, however, include numerous works from other times and places. The revival of characteristics associated with the cultural styles associated with ancient Greece and Rome recur repeatedly throughout history in the West, and also appear sometimes in non-Western cultures. Becoming familiar with a few examples will make more apparent the variations of a naturalistic style, whether subtle or quite pronounced, that can be further investigated with regard for the cultural and individual values that are influential at the moment of the work’s creation and use.

In India, naturalism was not usually as restrained as those of the classical ideal we have been exploring. The Emperor Ashoka (r. 268-232 BCE), who reigned over most of the Indian subcontinent, oversaw the construction of 84,000 **stupas**, dome-shaped shrines, to house Buddhist relics. In this **Yakshi**, or female nature figure, guarding one of the four gates at the Great Stupa at Sanchi, the emphasis is on fleshy form, voluptuous and prosperous, indicating a robust healthy physique with connotations of earthly blessing and prosperity. (Figure 4.23)

During Ashoka’s reign and in the succeeding centuries, influenced by increasing contact with Western cultures and artistic styles that came with both friendly trade and aggressive military incursions by Greeks and Romans, many changes occurred in Indian art. A notable example is the Buddhist sculpture of Maitreya from Gandhara (today Pakistan), dating to the third or fourth



**Figure 4.22 | Marble portrait head of the Emperor Constantine I**

Source: Met Museum

License: OASC

century CE. (Figure 4.24) Maitreya, derived from the Sanskrit word for “friend,” is a **bodhisattva**—a person who is able to reach nirvana but compassionately chooses to help others out of their human suffering. Maitreya, a successor to the current Buddha, will appear in the future.



**Figure 4.24 | Standing Bodhisattva Maitreya**

Source: Met Museum  
License: OASC



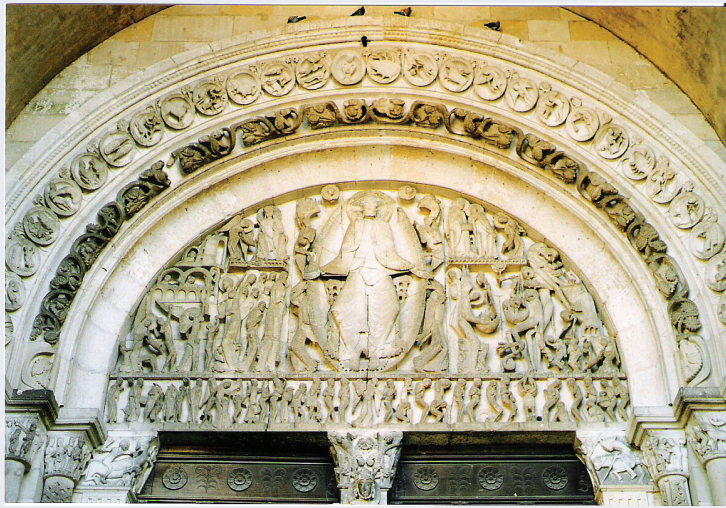
**Figure 4.23 | Elephants on North Torana, Sanchi, India**

Author: User “Bernard Gagnon”  
Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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The influence of Greek and Roman art can be seen in the treatment of drapery and the physical form. Although the figure is somewhat fleshier than Western counterparts, retaining the Indian penchant for more full-bodied physique, it is somewhat less substantial and certainly more concealed by the envelopment of abundant cloth than what had earlier been the norm for figural interpretation in India.

#### 4.5.1.4 Romanesque and Gothic Eras in Europe

Returning to Europe, Romanesque art of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is noteworthy with regard to the idea of expressing a prevalent preoccupation among Christians about the ends of their lives and the end of time. For spiritual purposes, they often made a choice for greater abstraction and distortion, rather than the emphasis on a naturalistic depiction of the human form as seen in ancient Greek and Roman art. Their forms are not only simplified with suppression of naturalistic features in some ways, but are also twisted and turned in space, while their garments have a lot of linear detail that does not correspond well to the physical forms of the bodies they adorn. The effect is to remove their meaning from a focus on worldly phenomena, redirecting it to a sense of spiritual agitation.



**Figure 4.25 | Last Judgement**

Artist: Gislebertus  
 Author: User "Lametrie"  
 Source: Wikimedia Commons  
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Many of the depicted scenes relate to the Christian expectations of the event of the Last Judgment, reflecting warnings to the devout that their lives and deeds now will be assessed at that point in the future. At Autun Cathedral (1120-1132) in France, we see a graphic array of elongated figures in the Last Judgment within the **tympanum**, the space above the **portals**, or doors. (Figure 4.25) The scene and surrounding decorative reliefs, created by the sculptor Gislebertus (active c. 1115-c. 1135, France) between 1130 and 1135, are centered on the flattened figure of the judging Christ. He presides over the resurrection of

the dead and the ensuing assignment to a heavenly welcome or a grotesque greeting by the denizens of Hell. Despite the lack of naturalism, the messages are clear in reference to human experience and prevalent beliefs of the era.

Following the Romanesque style in Europe was the Gothic era, which spanned the twelfth to fourteenth centuries in Italy and continued into the sixteenth century in northern Europe. The Gothic style included a return to greater naturalism, as focus shifted back to the natural world in many ways. (Figure 4.26) Figural forms began to reflect the observation of physical facts, and a phase of artistic evolution began that would eventually culminate in the intense naturalism of the Renaissance, especially in Italy from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

Along the way, however, conventions of representation in Italy and in northern Europe diverged, producing increasing different cultural styles. For example, the "Court Style" was prevalent in the royal works of the Late Gothic era (late fourteenth to sixteenth centuries), particularly in France, and lingered into the early Renaissance of the late fifteenth century in northern Europe. The approach reflected the prominence of aristocratic tastes and the



**Figure 4.26 | Saints Martin, Jerome, and Gregory**

Author: User "Jedhunsaker"  
 Source: Wikipedia  
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