



**accademia
di belle
arti
catania**

TRIENNIO A.A 2021-2022

PROF.SSA G. ARCIDIACONO

“INGLESE PER LA COMUNICAZIONE ARTISTICA”

READING LIST

**MODULO A: PITTURA, NUOVI LINGUAGGI DELLA PITTURA,
DECORAZIONE DESIGN ARTE AMBIENTE, DECORAZIONE PRODUCT
DESIGN**

- 1. COLOUR THEORY**
- 2. EVOLUTION OF PAINTING IN 25 STEPS**
- 3. BRIEF HISTORY OF SCULPTURE**

Colour Theory

- **Overview**
- **Basic Colour Theory**
- **The Colour Wheel**
- **Colour Harmony**
- **Colour Context**

➤ Overview

Isaac Newton created the colour wheel in 1666. The three primary colours, *red, yellow, and blue*, cannot be created from mixing other colours. The secondary colours, purple, green, and orange, are created by mixing the primary colours.

Tertiary colours are created by mixing the primary and secondary colours. The warm colours are red, yellow, and orange. The cool colours are blue, green, and purple. The neutral colours, black, white, and gray, while not on the colour wheel, are used to tint and shade the colours of the colour wheel. Tinting means to add white to a colour, while shading means to add black to a colour.

➤ Basic Colour Theory

There are three basic categories of colour theory that are logical and useful: The *colour wheel*, *colour harmony*, and *the context* of how colours are used.

Colour theories create a logical structure for colour. For example, if we have an assortment of fruits and vegetables, we can organize them by colour and place them on a circle that shows the colours in relation to each other.

➤ The Colour Wheel

A colour circle, based on red, yellow and blue, is traditional in the field of art. Sir Isaac Newton developed the first circular diagram of colours in 1666. Since then, scientists and artists have studied and designed numerous variations of this concept. In reality, any colour circle or colour wheel which presents a logically arranged sequence of pure hues has merit.

There are also Definitions (or *Categories*) of Colours based on the colour wheel:

- Primary Colours: Red, yellow and blue. In traditional colour theory (used in paint and pigments), primary colours are the 3 pigment colours that cannot be mixed or formed by any combination of other colours. All other colours are derived from these 3 hues.
- Secondary Colours: Green, orange and purple, formed by mixing the primary colours.
- Tertiary Colours: Yellow-orange, red-orange, red-purple, blue-purple, blue-green & yellow-green formed by mixing a primary and a secondary colour.

➤ Colour Harmony

Harmony can be defined as a pleasing arrangement of parts, whether it be music, poetry, colour, or even an ice cream sundae. In visual experiences, harmony is something that is pleasing to the eye.

It engages the viewer and it creates an inner sense of order, a balance in the visual experience. Colour harmony delivers visual interest and a sense of order.

There are many theories for harmony. The following illustrations and descriptions present some basic formulas:

1. A colour scheme based on analogous colours: Analogous colours are any three colours which are side by side on a 12-part colour wheel, such as yellow-green, yellow, and yellow-orange. Usually one of the three colours predominates.

2. A colour scheme based on complementary colours: Complementary colours are any two colours which are directly opposite each other, such as red and green and red-purple and yellow-green. These opposing colours create maximum contrast and maximum stability.

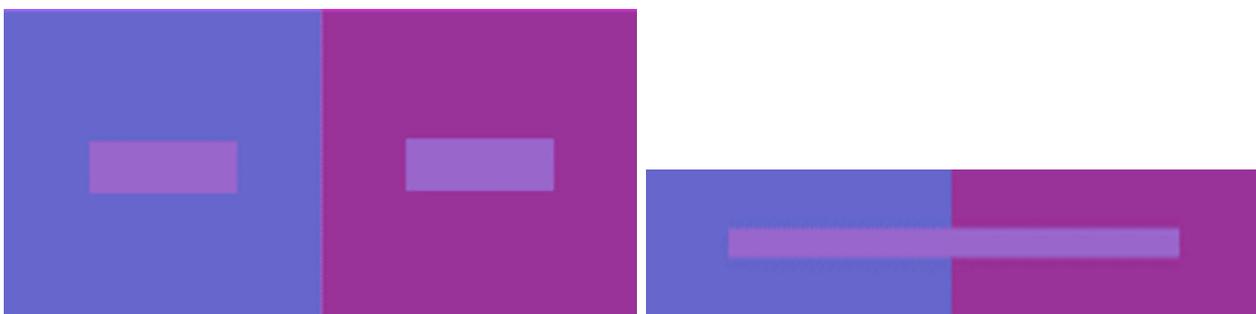
3. A colour scheme based on nature: Nature provides a perfect departure point for colour harmony. In the illustration above, red yellow and green create a harmonious design, regardless of whether this combination fits into a technical formula for colour harmony.

➤ Colour Context

How colour behaves in relation to other colours and shapes is a complex area of colour theory. Compare the contrast effects of different colour backgrounds¹ for the same red square.

Red appears more brilliant against a black background and somewhat duller against the white background. In contrast with orange, the red appears lifeless; in contrast with blue-green, it exhibits brilliance. Notice that the red square appears larger on black than on other background colours².

If your computer has sufficient colour stability and gamma correction, you will see that the small purple rectangle on the left appears to have a red-purple tinge when compared to the small purple rectangle on the right. They are both the same colour as seen in the illustration below. This demonstrates how three colours can be perceived as four colours.



EVOLUTION OF PAINTING IN 25 STEPS

- **Western Art Movements and Their Impact**
- **Prehistoric Art (40,000–4,000 B.C.)**
- **Ancient Art (4,000 B.C.–A.D. 400)**
- **Medieval Art (500–1400)**
- **Renaissance Art (1400–1600)**
- **Mannerism (1527–1580)**
- **Baroque (1600–1750)**
- **Rococo (1699–1780)**
- **Neoclassicism (1750–1850)**
- **Romanticism (1780–1850)**
- **The Pre-Raphaelites (1848-1900ca.)**
- **Realism (1848–1900)**
- **Art Nouveau (1890–1910)**
- **Impressionism (1865–1885)**
- **Post-Impressionism (1885–1910)**
- **Fauvism (1900–1935)**
- **Expressionism (1905–1920)**
- **Cubism (1907–1914)**
- **Surrealism (1916–1950)**
- **Abstract Expressionism (1940s–'50s)**
- **Op Art (1950s–1960s)**
- **Pop Art (1950s–1960s)**
- **Arte Povera (1960s)**
- **Minimalism (1960s–1970s)**
- **Conceptual Art (1960s–1970s)**
- **Contemporary Art (1970–present)**

Western Art Movements and Their Impact

The foundation of art history can be traced back tens of thousands of years to when ancient civilizations used available techniques and media to depict culturally significant subject matter. Since these early examples, several art movements have followed, each bearing their own distinct styles and characteristics that reflect the political and social influences of the period from which they emerged.

1. Prehistoric Art (40,000–4,000 B.C.)

The origins of art history can be traced back to the Prehistoric era. The earliest artifacts come from the Paleolithic era, or the Old Stone Age, in the form of rock carvings, engravings, pictorial imagery, sculptures, and stone arrangements.

Art from this period relied on the use of natural pigments and stone carvings to create representations of objects, animals, and rituals that governed a civilization's existence. One of the most famous examples is that of the Paleolithic cave paintings found in the complex caves of Lascaux in France. Though discovered in 1940, they're estimated to be up to 20,000 years old and depict large animals and vegetation from the area.

Theories suggest that cave paintings may have been a way of communicating with others, or for a religious or ceremonial purpose. It is widely believed that the paintings are the work of respected elders or shamans.

The most common themes in cave paintings are large wild animals, tracings of human hands, and abstract patterns. Drawings of humans are rare compared to the more naturalistic animal subjects.

2. Ancient Art (4,000 B.C.–A.D. 400)

Ancient art was produced by advanced civilizations with an established written language. These civilizations included Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and those of the Americas.

The medium of a work of art from this period varies depending on the civilization that produced it, but most art served similar purposes: to tell stories, decorate utilitarian objects like bowls and weapons, display religious and symbolic imagery, and demonstrate social status. Many works depict stories of rulers, gods, and goddesses.

One of the most famous works from ancient Mesopotamia is the Code of Hammurabi. Created around 1792 B.C., the piece bears a Babylonian set of laws carved in stone, adorned by an image of King Hammurabi—the sixth King of Babylonia—and the Mesopotamian god, Shabash.

3. Medieval Art (500–1400)

The Middle Ages, often referred to as the “Dark Ages,” marked a period of economic and cultural decline following the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D. Much of the artwork produced in the early years of the period reflects that darkness, characterized by grotesque imagery and brutal scenery. Art produced during this time was centered around the Church.

As the first millennium passed, more sophisticated and decorated churches emerged; windows and silhouettes were adorned with biblical subjects and scenes from classical mythology. This period was also responsible for the emergence of the illuminated manuscript and Gothic architecture style.

Definitive examples of influential art from this period include the catacombs in Rome, Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the Lindisfarne Gospels, one of the best-known examples of the illuminated manuscript, and Notre Dame, a Parisian cathedral and prominent example of Gothic architecture.

4. Renaissance Art (1400–1600)

This style of painting, sculpture, and decorative art was characterized by a focus on nature and individualism, the thought of man as independent and self-reliant. Though these ideals were present in the late Medieval period, they flourished in the 15th and 16th centuries, paralleling social and economic changes.

The Renaissance reached its height in Florence, due in large part to the Medici, a wealthy merchant family who supported the arts and humanism, a variety of beliefs and philosophies that places emphasis on the human realm. Italian designer Filippo Brunelleschi and sculptor Donatello were key innovators during this period.

The High Renaissance, which lasted from 1490 to 1527, produced influential artists such as da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael, each of whom brought creative power and of emotional expression.

Artwork throughout the Renaissance was characterized by realism, attention to detail, and precise study of human anatomy. Artists used linear perspective and created depth through intense lighting and shading.

5. Mannerism (1527–1580)

Mannerist artists emerged from the ideals of Michelangelo, Raphael, and other Late Renaissance artists, but their focus on style and technique outweighed the meaning of the subject matter. Often, figures had graceful, elongated limbs, small heads, stylized features and exaggerated details. This produced more complex, stylized compositions compared to the classical ideals of harmonious composition and linear perspective used by their Renaissance predecessors.

Some of the most celebrated Mannerist artists include Giorgio Vasari, Francesco Salviati, Domenico Beccafumi, and Bronzino, who is widely considered to be the most important Mannerist painter in Florence during his time.

6. Baroque (1600–1750)

The Baroque period that followed Mannerism was characterized by ornate, excessive visual arts and architecture, magnificence and richness, punctuated by an interest in broadening human intellect and global discovery. Baroque artists were stylistically complex.

Baroque paintings expressed drama, as seen in the iconic works of Italian painter Caravaggio and Dutch painter Rembrandt. Painters used an intense 'contrast between light and dark and had energetic compositions matched by rich color palettes.

7. Rococo (1699–1780)

Rococo originated in Paris, incorporating decorative art, painting, architecture, and sculpture. It offered a softer style of decorative art compared to Baroque's exuberance. Rococo is characterized by lightness and elegance, focusing on the use of natural forms, asymmetrical design, and subtle colors.

Painters like Antoine Watteau and Francois Boucher used lighthearted treatments, rich brushwork, and fresh colors. The Rococo style also easily translated to silver, porcelain, and French furniture that featured curving forms, floral designs, and an expressive use of gilt.

8. Neoclassicism (1750–1850)

As its name suggests, the Neoclassical period drew upon elements from classical antiquity. Archaeological ruins of ancient civilizations in Athens and Naples revived a passion for all things past, and artists tried to recreate the great works of ancient art. This translated to a renewed interest in classical ideals of harmony, simplicity, and proportion.

Neoclassical artists were influenced by classical elements; in particular, a focus on idealism. Inevitably, they also included modern, historically relevant depictions in their works. For example, Italian sculptor Antonio Canova drew upon classical elements in his marble sculptures, but avoided the cold artificiality that was represented in many of these early creations.

9. Romanticism (1780–1850)

Romanticism embodies a broad range of disciplines, from painting to music to literature. The ideals present in each of these art forms reject order, harmony, and rationality, which were embraced in both classical art and Neoclassicism.

Instead, Romantic artists emphasized the individual and imagination. Another defining Romantic ideal was an appreciation for nature, with many turning to *plein air* painting, which brought artists out of dark interiors and enabled them to paint outside. Artists also focused on passion, emotion, and sensation over intellect and reason.

Prominent Romantic painters include Henry Fuseli, who created strange, macabre paintings that explored the dark sides of human psychology, and William Blake, whose mysterious poems and images conveyed mystical visions and his disappointment in societal constraints.

10. The Pre-Raphaelites (1848-1900ca.)

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, group of young British painters born in reaction against what they conceived to be the unimaginative and artificial historical painting of the Royal Academy. They were inspired by Italian art of the 14th and 15th centuries, and their adoption of the name Pre-Raphaelite expressed their admiration for what they saw as the direct and uncomplicated depiction of nature typical of Italian painting before the High Renaissance and, particularly, before the time of Raphael.

The Brotherhood's influence on painting in Britain, and ultimately on the 'decorative arts and interior design, was profound. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed in 1848 by three Royal Academy students: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who was a gifted poet as well as a painter, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais, all under 25 years of age.

The painter James Collinson, the painter and critic F.G. Stephens, the sculptor Thomas Woolner, and the critic William Michael Rossetti (Dante Gabriel's brother) joined them by invitation. The painters William Dyce and Ford Madox Brown, who acted in part as mentors to the younger men, came to adapt their own work to the Pre-Raphaelite style.

Millais's image of the tragic death of Ophelia, as she falls into the stream and drowns, is one of the best-known scenes from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Millais uses soft curves, sprinkles of flowers and the water to give an unfocused feeling to the scene. The light shows his central figure.

11. Realism (1848–1900)

Possibly the first modern art movement, Realism, began in France in the 1840s. Realism was a result of multiple events: the anti-Romantic movement in Germany, the rise of journalism, and the advent of photography. Each inspired new interest in accurately capturing everyday life. This attention to accuracy is evident in art produced during the movement, which featured detailed, life-like depictions of subject matter.

One of the most influential leaders of the Realist movement is Gustave Courbet, a French artist committed to painting only what he could physically see.

12. Art Nouveau (1890–1910)

Art Nouveau, which translates to "New Art," attempted to create an entirely authentic movement free from any imitation of styles that preceded it. This movement heavily influenced applied arts, graphics, and illustration. It focused on the natural world, characterized by long, sinuous lines and curves.

Influential Art Nouveau artists worked in a variety of media, including architecture, graphic and interior design, jewelry-making, and painting. Czechoslovakian graphic designer Alphonse Mucha is

best-known for his theatrical posters of French actress Sarah Bernhardt. Spanish architect and sculptor Antoni Gaudí went beyond focusing on lines to create curving, brightly-colored constructions like that of the Basilica de la Sagrada Família in Barcelona.

13. Impressionism (1865–1885)

Impressionist painters tried to capture the immediate impression of a particular moment. This was characterized by short, quick brushstrokes and an unfinished, sketch-like feel. Impressionist artists used modern life as their subject matter, painting situations like dance halls and sailboat regattas rather than historical and mythological events.

Claude Monet, a French artist who spread the idea of expressing one's perceptions before nature, is virtually synonymous with the Impressionist movement. His notable works include *The Water Lily Pond* (1899), *Woman with a Parasol* (1875), and *Impression, Sunrise* (1872), from which the name of the movement itself is derived.

14. Post-Impressionism (1885–1910)

Post-Impressionist painters worked independently rather than as a group, but each influential Post-Impressionist painter had similar ideals. They concentrated on subjective visions and symbolic, personal meanings rather than observations of the outside world. This was often achieved through abstract forms.

Post-Impressionist painters include Georges Seurat, noted for his pointillism technique that used small, distinct dots to form an image. Vincent van Gogh is also considered a Post-Impressionist painter, searching for personal expression through his art, often through rugged brushstrokes and dark tones.

15. Fauvism (1900–1935)

/ˈfəʊvɪzəm/

Led by Henri Matisse, Fauvism was influenced by Vincent van Gogh and George Seurat. As the first avant-garde, 20th-century movement, this style was characterized by expressive use of intense color, line, and brushwork, a bold sense of surface design, and flat composition.

As seen in many of the works of Matisse himself, the separation of color from its descriptive, representational purpose was one of the core elements that shaped this movement. Fauvism was an important precursor of Cubism and Expressionism.

16. Expressionism (1905–1920)

/ɪk'spreʃ.ən.i.zəm/

Expressionism emerged as a response to increasingly conflicted world views and the loss of spirituality.

Expressionist art tried to draw from within the artist, using a distortion of form and strong colors to display anxieties and raw emotions.

Expressionist painters, searching for authenticity, looked for inspiration beyond that of Western art and frequented ethnographic museums to revisit native folk traditions and tribal art.

17. Cubism (1907–1914)

Cubism was established by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who rejected the concept that art should copy nature. They moved away from traditional techniques and perspectives; instead, they created radically fragmented objects through abstraction.

Many Cubist painters' works are marked by flat, two-dimensional surfaces, geometric forms or "cubes" of objects, and multiple vantage points. Often, their subjects weren't even discernible.

The painting on the right is by Pablo Picasso's *The Three Musicians* (1921). As a member of the Synthetic Cubist style, Picasso wanted to portray life in terms of geometrical forms. Picasso's players form an intricate jigsaw-puzzle.

The rectangular figure on the left hand side of the work is dressed like Pierrot and plays the clarinet. To the right, a singing monk holds sheet music and in the center is Harlequin with a guitar, and between his feet a whimsical dog.

Picasso uses flat planes of unshaded colour to emphasise the cutout geometric shapes. Overlapping geometric shapes create a complex centre. An aura of darkness surrounds the centre of Picasso's work to emphasise the bright colours in the centre. In this way, the artist creates a feeling of gravity and a mysterious unreal atmosphere in each work.

18. Surrealism (1916–1950)

Surrealism emerged from the Dada art movement in 1916, showcasing works of art that defied reason. Surrealists denounced the rationalist mindset. They blamed this thought process on events like World War I and believed it to repress imaginative thoughts. Surrealists were influenced by Karl Marx and theories developed by Sigmund Freud, who explored psychoanalysis and the power of imagination.

Influential Surrealist artists like Salvador Dalí relied on the unconscious mind to depict revelations found on the street and in everyday life. Dalí's paintings in particular pair vivid and bizarre dreams with historical accuracy.

19. Abstract Expressionism (1940s–1950s)

This is often referred to as the New York School or action painting. After WWII, these painters and abstract sculptors broke away from what was considered conventional, and instead used spontaneity and improvisation to create abstract works of art. This included colossally-scaled works whose size could no longer be accommodated by an easel. Instead, canvases would be placed directly upon the floor.

Celebrated Abstract Expressionist painters include Jackson Pollock, known for his unique style of drip painting, and American Mark Rothko, whose paintings employed large blocks of color to convey a sense of spirituality.

20. Op Art (1950s–1960s)

Heightened by advances in science and technology as well as an interest in optical effects and illusions, artists active in this style used shapes, colors, and patterns to create images that appeared to be moving or blurring, often produced in black and white for maximum contrast. These abstract patterns were meant to both confuse and excite the eye.

English artist Bridget Riley is one of the most prominent Op Art practitioners. Her 1964 artwork *Blaze* features zigzag black and white lines that create the illusion of a circular loop.

21. Pop Art (1950s–1960s)

Pop art is one of the most recognizable artistic developments of the 20th century. The movement moved away from methods used in Abstract Expressionism, and instead used every day, mundane objects to create innovative works of art that challenged consumerism and mass media. This introduction to identifiable imagery was a shift from the direction of modernism.

Pop artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein sought to establish the idea that art can draw from any source and there is no hierarchy of culture to interrupt that. Perhaps, the most famous pop culture work of art is Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* production.

22. Arte Povera (1960s)

Translating literally to “poor art,” Arte Povera challenged modernist, contemporary systems by infusing commonplace materials into creations. Artists used soil, rocks, paper, rope, and other earthen elements to evoke a pre-industrial sentiment. As a result, many of the notable works during this movement are sculptural.

Italian artists Mario Merz, Giovanni Anselmo and Alighiero Boetti, created anti-elitist works by drawing upon materials from everyday life. His 1968 *Giap's Igloo* focused on his occupations with the necessities of life: shelter, warmth, and food.

23. Minimalism (1960s–1970s)

The Minimalist movement emerged in New York. Minimalist art focused on anonymity, calling attention to the materiality of works. Artists urged viewers to focus on precisely what was in front of them, rather than draw parallels to outside realities and emotive thoughts through the use of purified forms, order, simplicity, and harmony.

American artist Frank Stella was one of the earliest adopters of Minimalism, producing nonrepresentational paintings, as seen in his *Black Paintings* completed between 1958 and 1960. Each features a pattern of rectilinear stripes of uniform width printed in metallic black ink.

24. Conceptual Art (1960s–1970s)

Conceptual art completely rejected previous art movements, and artists preferred ideas over visual components, creating art in the form of performances, ephemera, and other forms.

American artist Joseph Kosuth explored the production and role of language within art, as seen in his 1965, *One and Three Chairs*. In it, he represents one chair in three different ways to characterize different meanings of the same object. Because this type of art focused on ideas and concepts, there was no distinct style or form.

25. Contemporary Art (1970–present)

The 1970s marked the beginning of contemporary art, which extends through present day. This period is dominated by various schools and smaller movements that emerged.

- *Postmodernism*: In reaction against modernism, artists created works that reflected skepticism, irony, and philosophical critiques.
- *Feminist art*: This movement arose in an attempt to transform stereotypes and break the model of a male-dominated art history.
- *Neo Expressionism*: Artists sought to revive original aspects of Expressionism and create highly textural, expressive, large works.
- *Street art*: Artists such as Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Barry McGee, Banksy, and more created graffiti-like art on surfaces in public places like sidewalks, buildings, and overpasses.
- *The Pictures Generation*: Artists Cindy Sherman, Louise Lawler, Gary Simmons, and others who were influenced by Conceptual and Pop art experimented with recognizable imagery to explore images shaped our perceptions of the world.
- *Young British Artists (YBA)*: This group of London artists were notorious for their willingness to shock audiences through their imagery, and a willingness to push beyond limits of decency. They are also known for their dynamic, entrepreneurial spirit.

A Brief History of Sculpture

- *Prehistoric*
- *Egypt*
- *Greece*
- *The Rise Of Christianity*
- *Early Medieval*
- *Gothic*
- *Renaissance*
- *Baroque And Rococo*
- *The 19th And 20th Centuries*
- *Modernism*
- *Contemporary Sculpture*

➤ Prehistoric

This piece of ochre, found in a cave in the Republic of South Africa shows engraving marks made by an artist 77,000 – 75,000 years ago. It shows an artistic interest in design and manipulation of objects for an aesthetic purpose.

The design on the piece may be a way to store information and the systematic pattern suggests that the markings on the plaque represented information *rather than* just decoration.

One of the oldest sculptures discovered to date is an ivory statuette, dating approximately 30,000 BCE from a cave in Germany. Called the lion human, it depicts a human figure with a feline face. This period of art history is referred to as the Paleolithic (or *Old Stone Age*) period.

A lot of sculptures during the Paleolithic time were made from stone, clay, and bone. Rocks were used as carving tools. With controlled movements, the artist would hit the sculpture with sharp or rough rocks to remove stone and form the sculpture. Metal chisels and hammers replaced stone eventually. Today, pneumatic chisels are powered by air compressors, making the work much faster and easier on the sculptor's hands.

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➤ Greece

The early Greeks followed the Egyptian format very closely, carving very stiff and blocky figures from stone. It was not until the Early Classical period that sculptors began to break away from this rigid mode of portraiture and into more realism.

The Kritios Boy is one of the most important works of Greek sculpture. No longer standing with both feet facing forward (a very unnatural way to stand), the figure is now seen in a more relaxed and realistic position, with his weight resting on one leg and the other is bent. This position is called *contrapposto*—Italian for “counterpose.”

This type of sculpture is continued and perfected by probably the most copied Greek statue—Doryphoros (*Spear Bearer*) by Polykleitos. The original is lost, but there is a copy.

His *contrapposto* is more pronounced than with Kritios boy. The way Polykleitos has counterbalanced the whole statue is genius—the rigid supporting leg is echoed in the straight, hanging arm, providing the figure's right side with the columnar stability. He is asymmetrical, adding harmony to the work and giving life to the sculpture.

➤ **The Rise of Christianity**

Prior to 325 CE, the majority of the Roman Empire was Pagan. Sculptures were made to honour the Gods, as funerary items, to display the perfection of the nude body, and as political propaganda—showing the greatness of Emperors and Pharaohs.

Aphrodite is the Greek goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation. Her Roman equivalent is *Venus*. In Greek mythology, Nike is the goddess of victory (Roman equivalent is *Victoria*).

➤ **Early Medieval**

After that Constantine has brought Christianity into Europe, people need Bibles so they can study the gospels. However, not all of Europe is literate at this time, so Biblical stories had to be illustrated so that anyone could reach the Holy Text without having to actually read anything. Ivory was a prized material for its beauty and also because of its exotic origin. The elephant tusks were costly imports and only highly skilled artisans could work with it because it was so hard and of irregular shapes.

This type of sculpture is called relief, meaning that the scene is carved into a flat block, making the scene stand out from the background. The back side is still flat, making it a good choice for books, doors, and friezes.

Low Relief and High Relief

High relief is when the figures or scene come off the background a lot—some pieces may even be completely detached from the background, as seen here. Low relief means that the scene or figure is carved from the flat piece but in very shallow depth. A very common example you may come across every day are coins.

Another place where medieval artists could spread the word of the gospels was in churches themselves. Church doors, like these in Germany, were crafted from bronze using a lost wax technique.

➤ **Gothic**

The Gothic era expanded on the religious sculptures of the early medieval period and the figures on churches became more elaborate. Prominent Biblical figures were liberated from their backgrounds and more churches were decorated in very high relief sculptures, with the figures almost in the round (i.e. free standing). Smaller works of art were also created for the common consumer.

A popular item during the Gothic era up through the 17th century was the memento mori (Latin, “remember that you will die.”). These very small, handheld objects were generally created with a portrait of the commissioner on one side and a skull on the other as a reminder to be a good person because, eventually, you would be judged and either go to Heaven or Hell.

Another popular Gothic figurine was the Virgin, often given to young girls as engagement presents. Since the Virgin represents chastity and motherhood, the figurines were probably seen as a symbol of good luck and reminder of the importance of virtue.

➤ Renaissance

In the Renaissance, artists started becoming more interested in reviving Classical works of art from ancient Rome and Greece, focusing more on classical myths than Biblical narratives. In the 14th and 15th centuries, people—artists specifically—broaden their horizons by studying the humanities—art, writing, moral philosophy, and history (frequently including women).

Donatello was an Italian sculptor who worked in Florence in the early to mid 1400's. This is the first piece Cosimo de' Medici commissioned from Donatello. At the time it was made, it was the first free standing nude sculpture since ancient times. Pretty revolutionary.

The second undisputed king of Renaissance sculpture, Michelangelo. Born in 1475, he started sculpting at an early age and one of his first pieces was this relief of *the Madonna and Child*, completed when he was 16. In 1497, he was commissioned to carve a Pietà—a sculpture showing the Virgin Mary grieving over the body of her deceased son. One of Michelangelo's most famous works, it was completed when he was only 24 years old.

➤ Baroque and Rococo

Sculptors now are taking the ideas of the Renaissance artists and running wild with them. The resulting works of art are almost exclusively in the round (not relief), very dramatic and dynamic. Gian Lorenzo Bernini was pretty much the undisputed master of Baroque sculpture.

Rococo sculptures were a little more polite and small, focusing on porcelain as a medium rather than marble. The Rococo period was one of wealth (*think of Marie Antoinette*) and porcelain had just been imported to Europe from China. Its extreme delicacy made it a luxury item for the aristocracy.

➤ The 19th and 20th Centuries

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the art world was going through some massive shifts. Painters turned towards impressionism and so did sculptors. Instead of focusing on perfect anatomy, details, and story telling, they paid more attention to personal expression, stylization, and interest in surface texture.

Perhaps one of the most famous sculptors of the early 20th century is Auguste Rodin. *The Thinker* is anatomically well rendered, the texture on the skin is a little rougher than we have previously seen in sculpture. Rodin is really doing something very different that no one has done before by leaving this rough texture on his model.

Another artist, Edgar Degas, was primarily a painter, but he also made sculpture. This mixed media ballerina he created shocked a lot of people, and many found it awful when he originally showed it in 1881. Originally, the ballerina was sculpted of wax using a lead pipe armature. The bodice, ballet slippers, and tutu are all real items of clothing, and her hair was originally a wig of horsehair.

Everything except for the tutu and the ribbon in her hair were covered by wax. After Degas' death, his siblings decided to have copies made in bronze and other mixed media, so you may see the sculpture in multiple locations.

➤ **Modernism**

A lot of different movements happened in sculpture during the modernist movement, some of which are cubism, Dadaism, surrealism, pop art, minimalism, and futurism.

Marcel Duchamp was part of the Dada movement, which was basically anti-everything that art already was. Probably Duchamp's most famous (or infamous) piece is *Fountain*, originally produced in 1917.

Duchamp entered this piece into a show that promised to show the works of all artists who paid the fee. Duchamp paid the fee, but his piece wasn't put on display—everyone thought it was vulgar and not art, which is pretty much exactly what he was getting at.

Constantin Brâncuși was a Romanian futurist sculptor and one of his most famous pieces is *Bird in Space*. Instead of sculpting an actual bird in flight, the artist was more concerned with capturing the movement of the bird. The wings have been eliminated and the body and beak elongated and stylized. There are 16 of these sculptures, with seven made of marble and the other nine of polished bronze.

Pablo Picasso also did sculpture. He was really influential in the beginning of the 20th century because of his mixed media sculptures (kind of like Degas). He used cardboard, bike seats, plywood, tree branches—pretty much anything he could get his hands on—to make sculptures unlike anything anyone had ever seen before.

Louise Nevelson is an artist from Russia, who emigrated to the US with her family in the early part of the 20th century. Her wood constructions are often very intricate, with small puzzle-like pieces painted in monochromatic black, white, or occasionally gold.

Nevelson's work got a lot of praise until people found out she was a woman. A lot of critics were shocked that a woman artist was making such large, "manly" objects. Nevelson was really influential in challenging the set notions of what women "should make" and what men "should make."

➤ **Contemporary Sculpture**

Husband and wife team, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, work together to create environmental art. They work on massive pieces that generally include wrapping something with fabric, like this island in Florida in 1983.

If you've ever driven on San Francisco's *Embarcadero*, you've probably seen the *Cupid's Span* arrow (2002). *Cupid's Span* is an outdoor sculpture by married artists Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, installed along the Embarcadero in San Francisco, California, in the United States.