

Key Ideas

- Early modern art often was “subversive and intellectually demanding” as well as “visually, socially, and politically radical.” In the early 20th century, change occurred rapidly in Western nations, in science and industry, politics, economics, and psychology. Art reflects these tensions and cultural changes, as well as the ultimate military conflict of WWI. (Stokstad, 1018-1019)
- The early 20th century is marked by an explosion of avant-garde movements, developing in tandem (e.g., Cubism and Expressionism), with artists often moving between various styles in their work. The break with past traditions in the fine arts also occurs in design, music, dance, theater, and literature.
- Paris remains the center of the art world (until the mid-20th century). Cross-pollination occurs between artists; no one is creating art in a vacuum.
- From the work of Cézanne, artists develop Cubism, further breaking down pictorial representation. Cubism, in turn, inspires more explorations, pushing artists towards total non-representational art before the advent of WWI.
- Euro-American artists seek and incorporate new influences in their work, looking to African art and other non-Western artistic traditions as they move away from figural representation.
- The years surrounding WWI have an enormous impact on European artists. Art movements develop that seek social change within a fractured world. World War I: 65,038,810 people mobilized. 8,528,831 killed; 21,189,154 wounded; 7,750,919 prisoners and missing.

Terms and Names

Primitivism: Tendency of early Modern artists to appropriate visual culture from non-Western cultures (including African and Oceanic art).

Cubism: A visual language of geometric planes and compressed space that rejected the conventions of perspective and representation. Founded by Picasso and Braque. (MOMA)

- Analytic Cubism
- Synthetic Cubism

Purism: A style derived from Cubism, focused on clear, ordered forms that express the “clarity of the machine age.” (Stokstad, 1033)

Futurism: Italian movement founded in 1909, with the ultimate goal to modernize Italy, using propaganda of design and art with themes of speed, violence, and modern industry.

- F. T. Marinetti (founder), Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Gino Severini

Cubo-Futurism: Melding of Cubist-inspired compositions with the movement and modern energy associated with Futurism.

Suprematism (also influences Constructivism): Russian movement that used simple geometric motifs to reach complete non-representational art. Malevich wished to “free art from the burden of the object.”

- Kasimir Malevich (founder), El Lissitzky

Neo-Plasticism (out of which grows De Stijl): Dutch movement, “Aesthetically purified” art using only horizontal and vertical lines and primary colors.

- Piet Mondrian (founder), Gerrit Rietveld

Cubism and its Derivatives

Works listed are in Mia's collection (on view)

Georges Braque

**Viaduct at l'Estaque*, 1907, 82.22

Albert Gleizes

**The Village*, 1913, 71.26

Félix Del Marle

**Study for the Portrait of P. Jean-Dupré*, 1913, 2016.54

Fernand Léger

**Table and Fruit*, 1909, 47.8

**Three Women*, 1919, 76.5

* *La Fin du monde, filmée par L'Ange N.-D. (The End of the World, Filmed by the Angel of Notre Dame)*, 1919, 2009.20

Roger de la Fresnaye

**Married Life*, 1912, 52.1

Jacques Lipchitz

**Toreador*, 1914-1915, 52.21

Juan Gris

**Still Life*, 1917, 51.20

**Seated Harlequin*, about 1920, 58.33

Joan Miró

**The Spanish Playing Cards*, 1920, 62.73.2

Pablo Picasso

**Woman by the Sea*, 1922, 61.36.24

**Woman in an Armchair*, 1927, 63.2

* *Dream and Lie of Franco*, Plate 2, January 8 and 9, June 7, 1937, P.79.58.3

Sir Jacob Epstein

**Female Figure*, 1913, 67.29

Elie Nadelman

**Standing Female Nude*, 1908, 96.125

Constantin Brancusi

**Golden Bird*, c. 1919, 55.39

Amedeo Modigliani

**Head*, 1911-1912, 62.73.1

**Little Servant Girl*, 1916, 59.30

Robert Delaunay [row BARE duh-low-NAY]

**Saint-Severin No. 2*, 1909, 47.7

Lyonel Feininger

**Grosse-Kronsdorf I*, 1915, 61.36.4

**Hopfgarten*, 1920, 55.2

Christopher Nevinson

**Returning to the Trenches*, 1916, P.92.22 (Drypoint)

Alexandra Exter

**Italian Town by the Sea*, c. 1917, 2008.83

Ivan Vasilievich Kliun

**The Clockmaker*, c. 1914, 2007.85

El Lissitzky

***About Two Squares: A Suprematist Tale in Six Constructions**, 1922, B89.3

Nikolai Lapschin

**Suprematist plate*, 1909 (decorated c. 1923), 88.21

Piet Mondrian

**Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black*, 1922, 65.5

Quotes:

Braque: "One must not imitate what one wants to create." And "Art is made to disturb, science reassures."

<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-braque-georges.htm>

Picasso, "Statement to Marius De Zayas," on Cubism, 1923:

Cubism is no different from any other school of painting. The same principles and the same elements are common to all. The fact that for a long time cubism has not been understood and that even today there are people who cannot see anything in it, means nothing. I do not read English, an English book is a blank book to me. This does not mean that the English language does not exist, and why should I blame anybody else but myself if I cannot understand what I know nothing about?"

http://www.learn.columbia.edu/monographs/picmon/pdf/art_hum_reading_49.pdf

Fernand Léger recognized how the accelerated pace of life affected art:

"If pictorial expression has changed, it is because modern life has necessitated it. . . . The view through the door of the railroad car or the automobile windshield, in combination with the speed, has altered the habitual look of things. A modern man registers a hundred times more sensory impressions than an eighteenth-century artist. . . . The compression of the modern picture, its variety, its breaking up of forms, are the result of all this. "

–Fernand Léger, 1914

<http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/766.html?page=2>

Jacob Epstein: "I felt the necessity to give expression to the profoundly elemental in motherhood. . . my feminine would be the eternal primeval female, the mother of the race. The figure, from the base upward. . . seems to rise from the earth itself. From that the broad thighs and buttocks ascend, base solid and permanent for her who is to be the bearer of man. She feels within herself the child moving, her hand instinctively and soothingly placed where it can feel his enclosed new life. . . expression of the head is one of calm, mindless wonder." (Autobiography, p.139, quote from Tate Gallery label)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/epstein-female-figure-in-flenite-t01691>

Elie Nadelman:

"I employ no other line than the curve, which possesses freshness and force. I compose these curves to bring them in accord or opposition to one another...."

The sculpture of Elie Nadelman by Lincoln Kirstein, 1948, pp. 14, 16

Constantin Brancusi:

"All my life, I have sought to render the essence of flight."

<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/modernwing/artwork/91194>

Lyonel Feininger, writing about his exposure to the Cubism exhibition in Paris of 1911:

"In that Spring I had gone to Paris for two weeks and found the art world agog with Cubism – a thing I had never heard even mentioned before, but which I had already, entirely intuitively, striven after for years."

<https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/collection/2004-21>

Piet Mondrian:

"The emotion of beauty is always obscured by the appearance of the object. Therefore, the object must be eliminated from the picture."

<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-mondrian-piet.htm>

Resources:

For great general information on modern art (artists and various movements), check out The Art Story: <http://www.theartstory.org/>

Online resource, from MOMA: Cubism, Explore how Cubist artists shattered conventions of representation and perspective:

https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/cubism#

An exploration of the Manifesto of Futurism:

<https://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/249/1144>

Information on the Degenerate Art Exhibition, 1937:

<https://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/collections-highlights/julien-bryan/nazi-germany-1937/1937-munich-exhibition-of-degenerate-art>

and

https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/14/arts/design/degenerate-art-at-neue-galerie-recalls-nazi-censorship.html?_r=0

Mia stories on Modigliani:

<https://new.artsmia.org/stories/red-and-hot-the-many-loves-of-modigliani/>

<https://new.artsmia.org/stories/once-at-mia-a-masterwork-at-home/>

<https://new.artsmia.org/stories/art-secrets-the-starfish-in-her-face/>