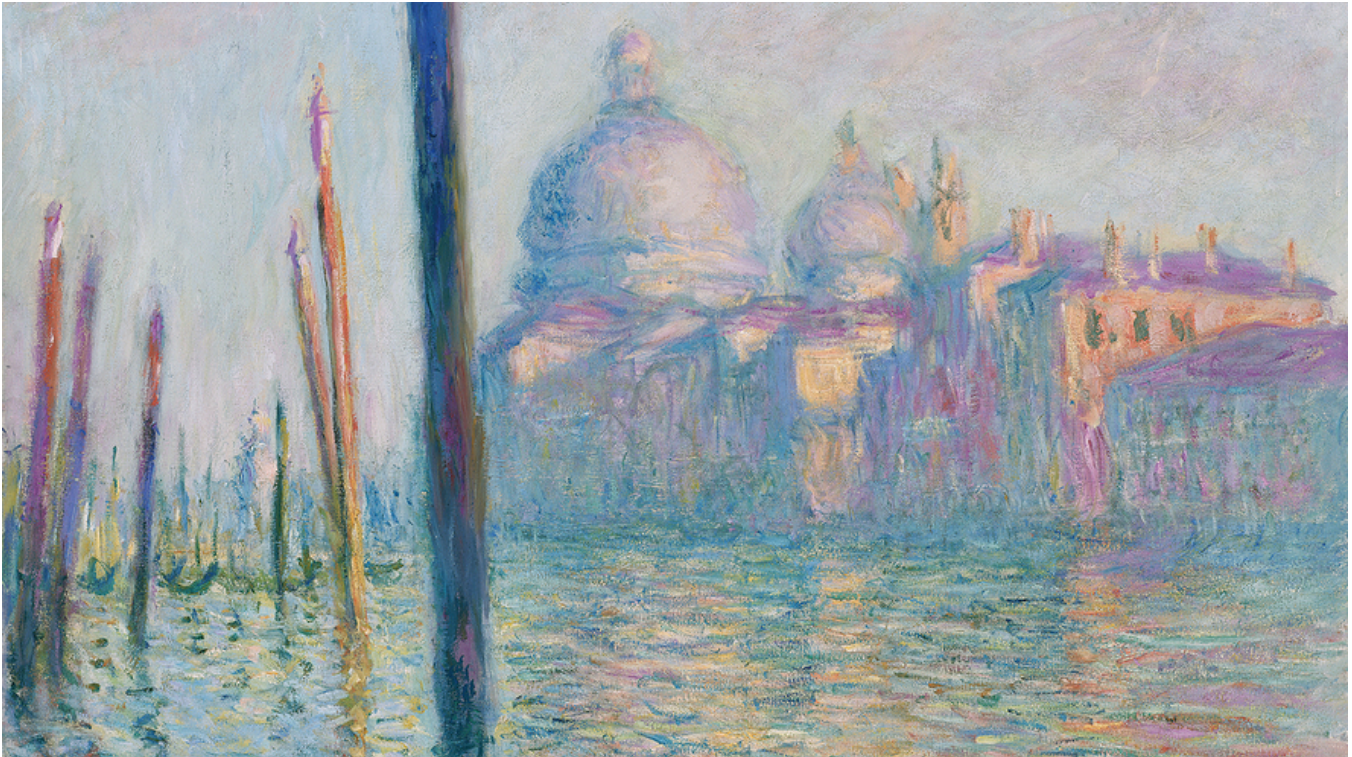


All About Art: A short history of painting

By Encyclopaedia Britannica, adapted by Newsela staff on 05.02.17

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"The Grand Canal," by Impressionist painter Claude Monet. Impressionism is a style of painting that got its name because of a Monet painting called "Impression, Sunrise." He is known for using quick, short brushstrokes to create an image. As a result, he is often considered one of the fathers of Impressionism. Photo from: Wikimedia Commons.

The art of creating pictures using colors, tones, shapes, lines and textures is called painting. Museums and galleries show the paintings of professional artists. But painting is also a popular form of entertainment and creative expression.

Subjects

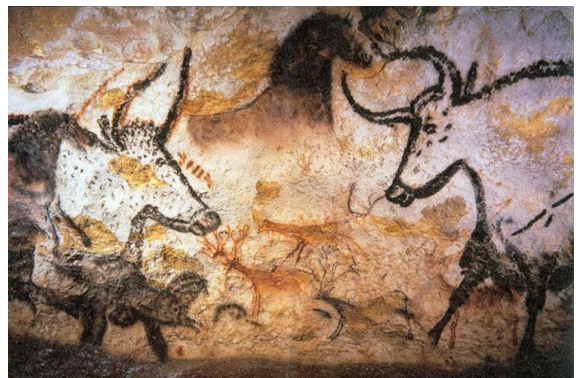
Painters can use their art to express devotion to a religion, to tell a story, to express feelings and ideas or simply to present a pleasing image. Religious paintings often portray a god or a scene from a sacred text. Other common subjects have been famous legends and events in history, as well as scenes from

daily life. Artists also paint portraits, or pictures of people. Sometimes artists make portraits of themselves, which are called self-portraits. All of these types of paintings portray the human figure in some way.

Some kinds of painting do not focus on people. In landscape painting the focus is on scenes from nature. Artists also paint motionless objects such as fruits and vegetables. These works are called still-life paintings. Some artists communicate their ideas through compositions that do not represent any realistic person, place or object. These works are called abstract paintings.

History

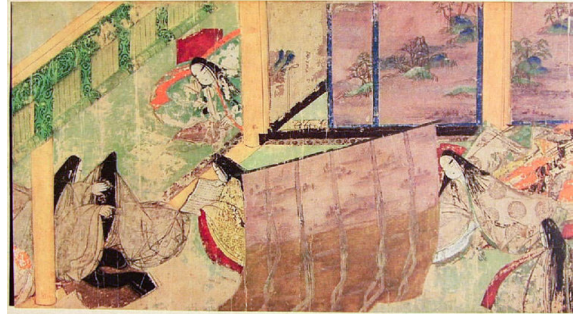
Humans have been making paintings for thousands of years. Paintings dating back 15,000 years have been found on the walls of caves in France and Spain. Cave paintings generally show animals that early humans hunted. Samples of painted pottery from at least 5,000 years ago have been found in China and Iran. The ancient Egyptians decorated their tombs and temples with elaborate paintings. People in ancient Greece painted decorative objects such as vases in addition to the walls of temples.



Painting In The Middle Ages

In many places, including ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and China, artists created miniature paintings to illustrate written texts. These texts are known as illuminated manuscripts. Miniature painting was long an important art form in India and parts of the Middle East. In Europe, many illustrated handwritten Bibles and other special books were made during the Middle Ages (A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500).

Meanwhile the Chinese and Japanese began a long tradition of creating watercolor and ink paintings on long scrolls of paper or silk. Many of the Chinese scrolls were landscapes. Japanese scrolls often told a story by mixing text with pictures.



The Renaissance

Great developments in European art occurred during a period called the Renaissance (mid-1300s to 1500s). Renaissance artists began to paint more realistic pictures than those of the Middle Ages. To do this, they carefully observed the world around them. They also developed many painting techniques to create the illusion of a three-dimensional world on a flat painting.

In Florence and Rome (in Italy), artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo introduced bold ideas. Leonardo in particular experimented with ways to create more natural shades of color and light. Later, the Italian painters Titian and Tintoretto made Venice a major center of art. The Italian Renaissance influenced many artists in other parts of Europe.

Romanticism And Realism

Some artists of the 1800s wanted to express their imagination and emotions in very personal paintings. They were part of a movement called Romanticism. Many of these painters also had a strong appreciation for nature. For example, the English painter J.M.W. Turner used light and color with great freedom in his landscapes.

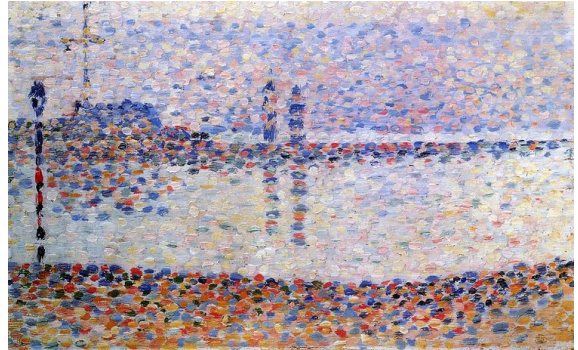


Other artists of the 1800s painted in a style called Realism. Instead of focusing on historical themes or grand ideas, they were interested in showing everyday life and its problems. Some believed that paintings should inspire social change.

Impressionism And Beyond

In the late 1800s, a group of French artists tried to capture the fleeting effects of light on colors in nature. Some tried to reproduce the effect of reflected light by putting thick touches of bright, contrasting color side by side. This style of painting came to be known as Impressionism. Some of the greatest Impressionists were Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet and Edgar Degas.

Artists known as Post-Impressionists carried the movement further, with their own approaches to colors, shapes and subject matter. Georges Seurat, of France, developed a style in which he painted entirely by using dots of color. This style was called Pointillism. The Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh expressed powerful emotions by using rich colors and strong brushstrokes.



Modern Painting

The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists paved the way for modern forms of painting. Many modern painters have created abstract art, which does not represent anything from a realistic world, or may not represent anything at all. Instead of showing recognizable people, places or objects, these paintings focus on shapes, lines, colors and textures.



Pablo Picasso, a major painter of the 1900s, helped create a partly abstract style of painting called Cubism. In Cubism, forms were broken apart into simple, flat shapes. Often more than one side of a person or object was shown at the same time. For example, the side of a person's nose might show along with the front of both eyes.

In the 1920s, artists such as Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró, of Spain, combined images from fantasy and reality in a style called Surrealism. Surrealist painters sometimes showed ordinary objects in unexpected settings — for instance, a train emerging above a fireplace or a clock melting over an edge.

In the United States, there had been a strong tradition of Realism. Some U.S. painters of the 1900s continued in that tradition. Others, such as Georgia O'Keeffe, were influenced by newer styles. O'Keeffe is known for her partially abstract paintings of animal bones, flowers and rocks.

In the 1950s, a movement known as Pop art began. Artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol used objects from popular (or pop) culture such as soup cans, street signs, advertisements and comic strips in their work.

Artists continued to explore new ways of painting into the 21st century. They experimented with new materials and sometimes caused controversy by portraying religious and historical subjects in startling ways.

Quiz

- 1 Read the section "Modern Painting." Select the paragraph that suggests some paintings do NOT stand for anything.

- 2 Which section supports the idea that watercolor painting was made popular by Chinese and Japanese artists?
 - (A) "Painting In The Middle Ages"
 - (B) "The Renaissance"
 - (C) "Romanticism And Realism"
 - (D) "Impressionism And Beyond"

- 3 Fill in the blank in the sentence below. In the opening paragraph, the author _____.
 - (A) lists various types of painting styles featured in the article
 - (B) introduces different forms of art, including painting
 - (C) provides the reader with an explanation of painting
 - (D) describes the types of places people visit to view paintings

- 4 How does the section "The Renaissance" relate to the section "Romanticism And Realism"?
 - (A) Both describe techniques where painters drew inspiration from the world around them.
 - (B) Both explain how painters were influenced by the strong desire to change the world around them.
 - (C) Both provide examples of painters who used ideas and themes from nature to influence their art.
 - (D) Both explain how Venice, Italy and other parts of Europe became major centers of art for the world.