



THE
HANDY
ART
HISTORY
ANSWER
BOOK



Madelynn Dickerson



About the Author



Madelynn Dickerson is an art writer and educator with a degree in literature from U.C. Santa Cruz and an M.Sc. from the University of Edinburgh in History of Art: History, Theory and Display. Her wide ranging interests have led to opportunities to study Renaissance art in Italy and Scotland, to research abstract expressionism and surrealism, and to teach Western art, world art, and literature at the American Academy of Art in Chicago. She lives with her husband in Southern California.

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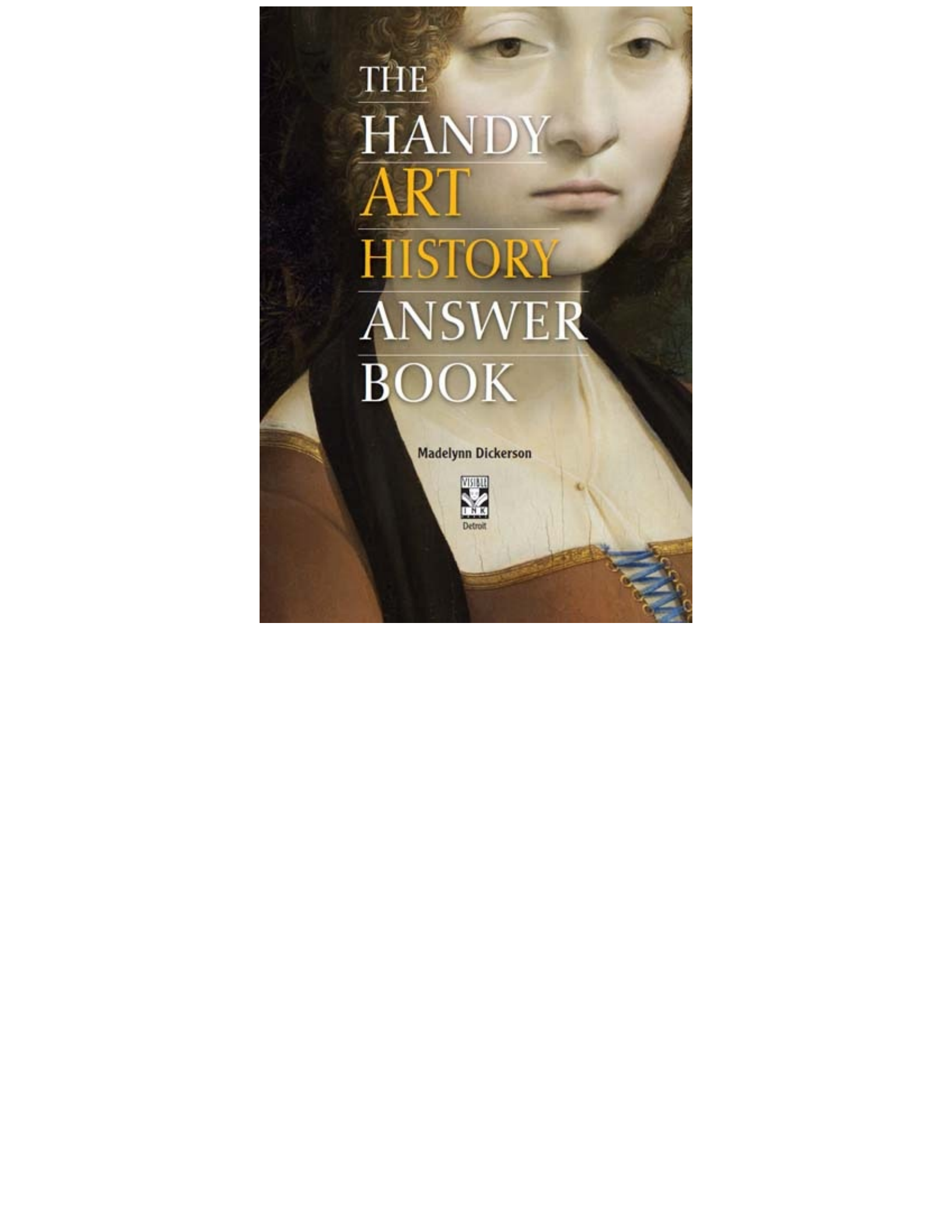
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Timeline of Major Art Historical Periods

This timeline is not inclusive of every period or movement of art history, but it should provide good general context for major periods of art history across the globe. All dates should be considered approximate.

Prehistoric Art

Paleolithic Art	c. 35000–8000 B.C.E.
Neolithic Art	c. 8000–2000 B.C.E.

Ancient Art

Ancient Near Eastern Art	c. 3000–600 B.C.E.
Ancient Egyptian Art	c. 3000–30 B.C.E.
Indus Valley Art	c. 3000–1000 B.C.E.
Ancient Aegean Art	c. 3000–700 B.C.E.
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Indian Art of the Gupta Period	c. 320–550 c.E.

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Art of the Classic Period in Mesoamerica	c. 250 B.C.E.–900 C.E.
Art of the Kofun and Asuka Periods in Japan Early Byzantine Art	c. 300 B.C.E.–646 C.E. 476 B.C.E.–1453 C.E.
Art of the Nara Period in Japan	c. 646–794 C.E.
Medieval Art in India	c. 650–1530
Art of the Islamic Empire	c. 700–1500
Medieval Art in Europe	c. 700–1400
Art of the Heian Period in Japan	c. 794–1185
Art of the Post-classic Period in Mesoamerica	c. 900–1500
Art from Great Zimbabwe	c. 1000–1500
Art of the Kamakura Period in Japan	c. 1185–1392
Art of the Yuan Dynasty in China	c. 1280–1368
Art of the Ming Dynasty in China	c. 1368–1644
Art of the Muromachi Period in Japan	c. 1392–1568
Renaissance Art in Europe	c. 1400–1600
Art of the Benin Empire in Nigeria	c. 1440–1900
Mughal Art in India	c. 1530–1900
Baroque Art	c. 1600–1750
Art of the Edo Period in Japan	c. 1600–1868
Art of the Qing Dynasty in China	c. 1644–1911

Rajput Art of India	c. 1700–1800
Rococo Art	c. 1750–1850
Neoclassical Art	c. 1750–1850
Romantic Art	c. 1750–1850
Art of the Modern World	
Realism	c. 1850–1900
Impressionism	c. 1860–c. 1890
Post-Impressionism	c. 1890–1910
Modernism	
Fauvism	c. 1900–1930
Expressionism	c. 1900–1940
Cubism	c. 1900–1920
Futurism	c. 1900–1930
<i>De Stijl</i>	c. 1900–1930
Art in the Modern Period in China	c. 1911–present
Constructivism and Suprematism	c. 1915–1930
Dada and Surrealism	c. 1917–c. 1950
Abstract Expressionism	c. 1940–1960
Pop Art Begins	c. 1960
Minimalism Begins	c. 1960
Postmodernism	c. 1970-

Introduction

We are all naturally drawn to art—it can be beautiful, mysterious, and even shocking. Art and visual images surround us in our everyday lives and impact our understanding of history and of other cultures. Every culture on the planet devotes time and energy to creating and caring for works of art. Whether a ceramic vase, a painted portrait, or a video installation, a work of art can stimulate us, engage us, and even anger us.

This book, part of the successful “Handy Answer Book” series, explores the meaning and history of art from around the world by rethinking the history of art as a series of accessible questions. Questions range from broad to specific in order to provide insights into the fundamentals of art, cultural context, and details about specific works. Explanations of key terms and the inclusion of a glossary will help the reader to expand his or her art vocabulary and engage more deeply in art history discourse.

Each chapter is filled with helpful charts, spotlight questions, and of course, high-quality color images of the art discussed. The eight main chapters are divided into smaller sub-sections so as to place works of art and associated movements into broad context. For example, “From the Industrial Revolution to World War I, c. 1850–1914” discusses the ways in which art changed during the nineteenth century, compares and contrasts major movements such as Realism and Impressionism, explores the emerging role of photography, and explains the role of important non-Western art movements on the art of that period.

Many traditional art history books focus solely on the art of the Western world; however, when writing *The Handy Art History Answer Book*, the goal was to present art traditions from around the world. The art of every inhabited continent is covered here, presented chronologically along with the art of Europe and the United States, making this an inclusive and wide-reaching book.

Art, and the history of art, inspire the passions of both the artist and the viewer. When we visit galleries and museums, come into contact with public art, or look at the images in books, art can amaze, soothe, and also confound us. It is my sincere hope that *The Handy Art History Answer Book* not only provides useful, thorough, and engaging information on the history of art, but also stirs your passions and encourages you to continue reading, learning, and exploring the diverse and enigmatic world of art.

ART PRINCIPLES AND HISTORY



What is **art**?

Since this is a book about the history of art, one might assume a definition of art itself would be straightforward—it is not. In a way, art is whatever a society identifies as such, a status often given to finely crafted works of beauty, works of religious and historic significance, and even theoretical significance. Works of art can include paintings, drawings, sculpture, and architecture, but can also include furniture, textiles, dance, performance, video, and installation pieces, among other forms.

The definition of art can change quite dramatically over time, from culture to culture, and even between individuals. A painted Greek vase, for example, was not considered valuable art by ancient Greek society. Today, however, ancient Greek pottery can fetch millions of dollars and prized examples are housed in top museums around the world. Two friends might visit a contemporary art gallery and completely disagree about the “art” contained within. The artist Marcel Duchamp shocked the art world when he submitted a porcelain urinal to an exhibition by the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. While the work, titled *Fountain*, was rejected, it is considered to be a masterpiece of the avant-garde movement and represents a monumental shift in thinking about art in the twentieth century.



Marcel Duchamp's work is a bold statement. An upside-down urinal signed "R. Mutt 1917" that emphasizes the beauty of everyday objects.

Who is an **artist**?

At the risk of being facetious, an artist is a person who makes art; however, just as the definition of “art” has changed over time, so have our definitions and expectations of artists. Traditionally, artists were craftsmen, or artisans. Medieval European sculptors, for example, were considered to be manual laborers. It was only after the Renaissance when cultural perceptions of artists began to change. Great masters such as Leonardo da Vinci and Diego Velázquez made a point of promoting the idea that an artist was much more than a manual laborer. They wanted to be acknowledged for their genius and special talent. The idea of artist-as-genius continues to this day.

What is **art history**?

Art history is the academic study of visual art. Scholars of art history, often professors, writers, and museum or gallery professionals, are interested in the historical significance of art objects, as well as the meaning of both specific works, and the art produced by a particular culture or artist.

Art history is traditionally presented as a “survey,” which is Western in focus and explains art history in a narrative form, with a beginning, middle, and end. Canonical art history texts such as E.H. Gombrich’s *The Story of Art* and Janson’s *History of Art* carry on this long-standing tradition. While still greatly valued, this narrative presentation of art history is coming under increasing scholarly scrutiny. Some colleges and universities no longer teach art history, and now offer programs in “Visual Studies” or “Visual Culture” with the goal of offering insights into the visual arts less constrained by the limitations of the Western-focused survey.

What is the **difference** between an **art historian** and an **art critic**?

While art historians are interested in the meaning of a work of art and its cultural and historical context, the job of the art critic is to evaluate—to decide whether or not a particular piece of art is “good” or “successful.” Generally, critics view art at galleries and museums, or in private collections, and they write their personal opinions about the art they see. Like the definition of art itself, however, the definition of art criticism is murky at times, and James Elkins, a well-respected critic and scholar, raises questions about how the two are differentiated, noting that art historians, along with their art critic colleagues, are known to share their personal opinions as well.

What makes art “**good**” or “**bad**”?

If you’ve gone to see a movie with a friend and argued about whether the film you both just saw was either good or bad, you are familiar with the foundations of art criticism. Your friend might believe *The Matrix* is a ground-breaking film with profound themes and solid acting, while you might completely disagree. When the arguing has continued for hours after the closing credits, it will perhaps become apparent that nothing you can say about the awkward romance or flashy graphics will convince your friend of your opinion. In the end, you agree to disagree. The same is true when evaluating a work of art. When writing, critics think about the skill of the artist, technique, form, and meaning of a work, but in the end, everything is debatable. Duchamp’s urinal, *Fountain*, is not inherently good art or bad art. Some critics believe it is profound while others write it off as a stunt. Arguing about whether it is good or

bad is not only part of the fun of art appreciation, but is an integral part of art historical scholarship.

Why is art so expensive?

This is essentially a question about the value of art as well as taste, which are not fixed. Artists and styles of art fall in and out of favor regularly, affecting a work's price and status. Paintings by Renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli were not always held in particularly high regard. From his death in the early sixteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, Botticelli's art was for the most part ignored by collectors and forgotten. As the nineteenth century art-buying elite rediscovered his work, its value went up dramatically. Botticelli's paintings are now amongst the most prized examples of Italian Renaissance art. In another example, Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh only achieved critical success after his death at age thirty-seven. Van Gogh's highly sought-after work now sells for millions of dollars.

But why pay millions of dollars for something that arguably serves no purpose? How can a slab of stone or a stretched canvas slathered in paint cost so much? First, art is not only cultural object but also a commodity and is therefore affected by economic factors, such as supply and demand. (This might account for the fact that the price of art often rises once the artist has passed away.) Second, art is very much a luxury item and therefore a status symbol. The owner of Damien Hirst's \$12 million preserved shark (officially titled *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*) publicly demonstrates a great deal of wealth. It is perhaps the very fact that art serves no practical purpose that drives up the price.

What is beauty?

Humans are undoubtedly attracted to beautiful things. Beauty can be recognized in a golden sunset, a youthful face, or in any pleasing arrangement of forms and colors. However, the philosopher David Hume said, "Beauty is no quality in things themselves. It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them." Not only does this idea evoke the cliché, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" but it also suggests that beauty doesn't necessarily serve a purpose. We humans are interested in beauty for its own sake.

Art historians and philosophers are greatly interested in aesthetics, the study of art and beauty, which covers such questions as, "Why is this work of art beautiful?" and even the previously asked, "What is a work of art?" Art scholars are interested in understanding the way beauty relates to logic, morality, and the order of the universe. A question like "what is beauty" lies at the heart of the philosophy of art.

What is a patron?

A patron is somebody (an individual or a group, or even a company or a museum) who pays an artist for a work of art, or otherwise supports an artist financially. Understanding patronage is an important part of the study of art history, as understanding the needs and desires of the patron can reveal insights into the meaning or purpose of a work of art. One of the most famous art patrons was the Medici family, a rich and powerful family that dominated the Italian city of Florence during the Renaissance. Cosimo de' Medici commissioned works by sixteenth-century artists Pontormo and Bronzino and master artist Michelangelo received key early support from the Medici family. He even lived in the Medici home as a young apprentice, and attended Lorenzo de' Medici's school of art.

Patrons continue to wield considerable influence over the art world. In the early twentieth century, American writer and art collector Gertrude Stein, along with her brother Leo Stein, supported artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse by buying their art at a time when their modern style was unpopular in the mainstream. More recently, Charles Saatchi, a British advertising executive, helped to support the careers of the Young British Artists (YBAs), a group that includes Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. Saatchi collected work for his aptly named Saatchi Gallery; the art he bought and displayed in his gallery directly affected art tastes and monetary values. In 2010, Saatchi donated his gallery to the British public.

What is the **difference** between an **art museum** and an **art gallery**?

The major difference between a museum and a gallery is that while each is a place that displays art, that art is usually for sale in a gallery but not in a museum. Both museums and galleries play an important civic role in the sharing of art and cultural ideas. Slightly complicating things, however, is that the term “art gallery” can also refer to a room or a series of rooms in a museum. When walking through an art museum such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, one might notice that rooms are referred to as “galleries.”

ART FUNDAMENTALS

What is an artist’s **medium**?

The term medium (pl. media) refers to the materials used to create a work of art. Types of media can range widely, and include different types of paint (such as oil or acrylic paint) on canvas, as well as ink, marble, concrete, wood, glass, and metal. Artists also rely on various types of technology to create prints, photographs, videos, sounds, and digital images. The term mixed media refers to works that are made with more than one type of material. Twentieth-century artist Robert Rauschenberg’s “combine” pieces are a good example of mixed media work. His 1959 work, *Canyon*, is often referred to as a painting, but is made with oil paint, pencil, paper, metal, photograph, fabric, wood, 4 canvas, buttons, mirrors, a stuffed eagle, a pillow tied with cord, and a paint tube.

What is **graphic art**?

“Graphic art” is a loose term encompassing two-dimensional art such as drawing, painting, and printmaking, especially work that emphasizes line over color. Graphic art, a broad category, is not the same thing as graphic design, which relates to printed work that incorporates text and image.

What is a **drawing**?

Drawing is a form of graphic art often done in pencil, charcoal, crayon, or ink on paper. Usually, drawings are black and white and feature images composed of lines; however, the definition of a drawing is fairly flexible and has changed a great deal over time. During the early Renaissance, drawings were associated with the fragile media they were made on and were not considered completed works of art. Drawings were used as preparatory sketches and a way for an artist to share ideas with a patron. It wasn’t until the later Renaissance that drawings started to stand on their own as works of art.

What is a **sketch**?

A sketch is a quick, preliminary drawing.

What is **painting**?

Paint is a liquid mixture made of pigment (often a powder) and a binding agent such as water or oil. A painting is a two-dimensional surface, such as stretched canvas or wood panel, to which paint has been artistically applied. A wall mural, or a fresco, is also considered to be a painting, as is work on paper, such as an illuminated book manuscript or a hand scroll. Some of the most common types of paints used are oil paints, egg-yolk tempera (often used in Italy during the Renaissance), watercolors, and acrylics (a modern, water-soluble paint).

What is the difference between **oil paint** and **tempera paint**?

Oil paints are made by mixing pigment into oil, often linseed or another vegetable-based oil. Oil paints create beautiful rich colors that can be easily blended because oil paints dry very slowly. During the late Renaissance, oil painting techniques were developed in the Netherlands and interest in oil painting spread slowly throughout the rest of Europe. In Renaissance Italy, especially Tuscany, tempera paints were preferred over oil and had been in use long before oil paints. Tempera paint is made by mixing pigment with egg yolk. It dries much more slowly than oil paint. Like oil paints, tempera paints create lovely rich colors.

What is **watercolor**?

While oil paints are made by mixing pigment with oil, watercolors are made by mixing pigment with water, usually for use on paper. Watercolors are applied in washes, which create a light, transparent area of color. Before the nineteenth century, water-color was mostly used for quick sketches and was not considered to be as refined as other types of painting. However, perceptions of watercolor changed after John Ruskin, a famous nineteenth-century art critic, promoted it and the artist J.M.W. Turner (who also painted in oil) used watercolor for his dramatic and monumental paintings. Watercolor is still a popular medium used by artists around the world.

What is **gouache**?

Gouache, which rhymes with squash, is a type of opaque watercolor, also known as “body color.” The opacity of gouache is the result of the addition of glue and white pigment.

What is **acrylic paint**?

Acrylics are synthetic paints that have some of the features of oil paint and some features of watercolors. They are water-soluble, but some can be mixed with oil as well. Once acrylic paint dries, it can look quite similar to oil paint. Invented in the twentieth century, acrylics are amongst the most popular type of paints used by modern and contemporary artists.



A display of watercolor supplies. Watercolors mix pigments with water, instead of with oil.

What is **encaustic painting**?

Encaustic paints consist of pigment blended with hot wax, such as beeswax. Encaustic was invented in ancient Greece and popular in ancient Rome, especially when painting sculpture, because encaustics provide rich colors and a fair amount of durability. Although encaustic techniques are difficult and labor intensive, there has been a resurgence in the use of encaustics amongst some twentieth-century artists. The contemporary artist Jasper Johns is known for use his of encaustic.

What are **pastels**?

Pastels are a popular medium used for drawing. To make pastels, gum or resin is added to pigment and formed into the shape of a small stick. When pastels are applied to a surface, the colors can appear powdery, and can be smeared or blended with the tip of a finger. When completed, pastel paintings need to be fixed with a spray or the colors can smear, though these sprays can sometimes cause discoloration. Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt are famous impressionist artists known for their use of pastels.

What is **printmaking**?

Printmaking is a mechanical process that allows an artist to make multiple copies of an image. One of the earliest types of printmaking is woodblock printing, a process popular in Japan and China for over a thousand years. To make a woodblock print, an artist carves a relief image into a block of wood, inks the raised surface of the wood, and then presses the block against paper to make the printed image. Polychrome prints, or prints with multiple colors, can also be made by carving additional blocks, lining up the image (a process called registering), and pressing again. Contemporary artists continue to use this process; linoleum is a popular alternative to wood and prints made this way are called linocuts.

Other types of printmaking include *intaglio*, which was invented in the fifteenth century. Intaglio involves incising an image, usually into a sheet of metal such as a copper plate, and filling the grooved lines with ink before pressing the image. In intaglio printing, the printed image will be the reverse of the image on the metal plate. Common intaglio techniques include engraving, etching, drypoint, and aquatint.

What is the **difference** between **engraving** and **etching**?

Both engraving and etching are forms of intaglio printmaking. To make an engraving, an artist uses a sharp, pointed tool called a burin to cut lines into a metal plate. This is called incising. The metal plate is then inked, and the ink is forced into the grooves made by the burin. The plate can then be pressed. Drypoint is similar to engraving, though a needle is used rather than a burin.

Etching is slightly different. To make an etching, an artist covers a metal plate with an acid-resistant layer of ground. Rather than carve directly into the plate, the artist draws into the ground, revealing small areas of exposed metal underneath. The plate is then submerged into an acid bath. The acid eats away at the exposed metal, creating grooved lines in the shape of the drawn image. The longer the plate remains in the acid, the deeper the grooves will be and the more ink they will hold. Now that the metal plate bears the artist's image, it can be pressed and the image can be transferred to paper. Aquatint is a form of etching that allows the artist to create different areas of tone or value. Developed in the eighteenth century, aquatint involves heating a layer of rosin on a metal plate before placing it in the acid bath. Acid-resistant varnish is used to create areas of white on the final printed image.

What is **lithography**?

Lithography is a method of printmaking in which the artist draws an image on a smooth, polished stone with a special dense crayon. Ink applied to the surface of the stone clings to the greasy crayon, allowing the lithographer to press the image and make a print. Developed in the late eighteenth century, lithography allows the artist to draw freely, without carving.

What is **photography**?

In Greek, *phos* means “light” and *graph* means “drawing”; therefore, *photograph* literally means, “light drawing.” The word itself gives insight into the process of photography, which was invented in the nineteenth century, and involves capturing fixed images through the exposure of light-sensitive materials using a camera. A camera is essentially a light-proof box with photographic film inside. The photographer focuses the camera on a desired scene and then briefly exposes the film to the light from the scene by quickly opening and closing the camera's shutter. Light-sensitive chemicals covering the film react to the light. In a dark room, the film is submerged into developer to make a negative image. It is now common for contemporary photographers to complete this process digitally. Photography is arguably one of the most significant inventions in history. First thought of as a merely scientific endeavor, photography has become an important art medium. (For more information on the invention of photography, including daguerreotypes, please see the chapter on “From the Industrial Revolution to World War I, c. 1850–1914.” Modern and contemporary photographers are covered in the chapter on “Contemporary Art 1960s to Present.”)

What is **sculpture**?

Whereas graphic arts like drawing and painting are two-dimensional, sculpture is three-dimensional. An artist who works in sculpture is called a sculptor. Traditionally, sculptors use different processes including carving, modeling, and casting, though contemporary sculptors sometimes use construction (also known as assemblage) methods to make their works. Different materials are used depending on which technique the artist employs. Stone, such as marble, as well as wood, are often used for carving.

Michelangelo's famous *David* sculpture was carved from Carrara marble, a beautiful gray-white stone from Tuscany. Modeling requires softer, more malleable materials such as clay. In the 1970s, over 7,000 terra cotta soldiers were discovered in the tomb of the ancient Chinese Emperor Qin. Terracotta, which means "baked earth," is commonly used for modeling sculpture, especially in the ancient world.

One of the more complex types of sculpting is casting, a labor-intensive process that relies on metals such as bronze and other metal alloys. In a technique known as lost-wax bronze casting, molten bronze is poured into a wax mold, which forms a negative image of the final sculpture. Once the bronze is cool, the wax mold is heated and removed, revealing a bronze form. Different versions of this process can produce both solid and hollow sculptures. Casting also allows for multiple copies of a work. For example, Auguste Rodin's nineteenth-century masterpiece, *The Thinker*, has been re-cast many times. Sculpture can range from tiny to monumental in size, and can be both representational and abstract. Sculpture made from a wide range of materials can be found all over the world.

What is the **difference** between **subtractive** and **additive sculpture**?

Carving is an example of subtractive sculpture because material is removed in order to create an image. Michelangelo believed, for example, that within each block of stone he worked on, there was a figure inside waiting to be revealed. By contrast, the additive process involves building up a form by adding material. Casting and assemblage are examples of the additive process.

What is the **difference** between **relief sculpture** and **sculpture-in-the-round**?

A relief sculpture is a type of sculpture in which a design projects from the surface of the sculpted material, like a rubber stamp, though not necessarily flat. Relief sculpture can be seen from only one vantage point, usually straight on. Sculpture-in-the-round is freestanding and finished on all sides. A viewer can move all the way around a sculpture-in-the-round, and is able to look at the work from multiple vantage points.

What is **performance art**?

Performance art combines theater, music, video, and visual arts and often features artists actively participating in their own work. Though performance-based ritual art has existed for thousands of years around the world, contemporary performance art developed as part of the early twentieth-century Futurist and Surrealist movements. Notable performance artists include Joseph Beuys and Bruce Nauman. (For more information about contemporary performance art, see the chapter on "Contemporary Art 1960s to Present.")

What is **installation art**?

The term "installation art" developed in the 1970's and refers to art designed for a particular space, usually an indoor space, and is usually temporary. Installation art can incorporate sculpture, video, performance, and mixed media. In a way, installation art conceives of a museum or gallery exhibition space as a work of art in and of itself, and viewer interaction with the space is at the core of the form. Installations often have specific themes and messages and can be designed by a single artist or a group. Artists who have created notable installations include Rachel Whiteread, Ai Weiwei, and Jenny Holzer. The artist Sivan Geer even includes elements of smell in her installation work. (For more examples, see the chapter on "Contemporary Art 1960s to Present.")

What are **decorative arts**?

Traditionally, decorative arts are objects that serve a function. For example, a jewelry box may be beautifully decorated with intricate metalwork, but the box itself is used as a container for jewelry. Fine art, on the other hand, serves no practical purpose and exists for purely aesthetic reasons. Painting and sculpture, for example, are considered fine arts, whereas decorative arts include furniture, pottery, metalwork, jewelry, and some textiles. The line between decorative art (as well as craft) and fine art is increasingly blurry as contemporary artists and theorists are questioning the significance of function in art.

What are **textiles**?

Textiles are fiber-based fabrics such as cotton, wool, or silk (or synthetic fibers such as polyester). The fibers are made into cloth through various techniques including weaving, tapestry, and felting. Textiles are a major art form around the world and are gaining in popularity amongst contemporary fine artists.



The Bayeux Tapestry (a section of which is illustrated here) is an embroidered cloth that commemorates the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. At over 200 feet long, the tapestry is a stunning example of the skill of the women who made it and has been called one of the finest examples of narrative art—making the work like an enormous, embroidered graphic novel.

What is the **difference** between **weaving** and **tapestry**?

Both terms represent a way to make cloth or fabric, though each requires a different technique. In weaving, a thread known as the warp thread is attached vertically to a loom while the weft thread is crisscrossed horizontally with the warp. Combinations of different colors and patterns create different textiles. Weaving has been around for thousands of years. The oldest woven cloth, discovered in Turkey, dates from 7000 B.C.E. Tapestry is a specific type of weaving in which the warps are hidden, and are often used for decoration and wall hanging.

What is **embroidery**?

Embroidery is a textile art found all over the world in which threads are decoratively sewn on to finished cloth such as wool or silk. Although the eleventh-century textile, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, is referred to as a

tapestry, it is actually an example of embroidery. This 230-foot long masterpiece depicts the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. (For more information, see the chapter on “The Medieval World, c. 400–1300.”)

What is **enamel**?

Enamel is colored glass that is fired and fused to metal for decoration. One of the earliest forms of enameling known as *cloisonné* was popular in the Byzantine period and in medieval Europe. *Cloisonné* involves firing enamel into small metal compartments (called cloisons), which have been soldered to a metal plate. Then, the entire piece is fired in a kiln to create a jewel-like effect.

BASICS OF ARCHITECTURE

What is **architecture**?

Famed modern architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe stated, “Architecture starts when you carefully put two bricks together.” Architecture is the art (or science) of designing buildings, and the study of architecture is the study of the built environment. Examples of architecture can range from the small, such as a Craftsman-style bungalow in California, to the very big, like the 108-story Willis Tower in Chicago. Architecture can also be very old. For example, Skara Brae, a Neolithic fishing village in northern Scotland, is thousands of years old, whereas the undulating metal of Frank Gehry’s Disney Concert Hall was finished in 2003. There are many different architectural styles and building systems throughout history, and throughout the globe. The study of architecture is an important part of art history.

What is the **post and lintel system**?

The post and lintel system is the oldest and simplest architectural construction, in which two upright forms (called posts) support the load of a horizontal beam (known as a lintel). The posts must be strong (and close) enough to prevent the lintel from weakening in the middle, especially if the lintel is carrying the heavy load of a wall or a roof.



The contemporary architect Frank Gehry designed the Guggenheim Museum of Modern Art in Bilbao, Spain, which opened in 1997. The swooping planes of metal and glass breathe energy and movement into an otherwise static structure. It is a good example of postmodern architecture.



The Arche romaine de Damas in Damascus, Syria, is a well-preserved example of Roman arches.

What is an **arch**?

In art historical terms, an arch is a semicircular construction of blocks of material, called voussoirs, which hold each other in place due to compression, and span an open space. This type of arch is known as a “true arch.” Other simple forms of arches include the corbelled arch, in which blocks of material are overlapped in order to span a similar opening. The “true arch” is stronger than a corbelled arch, especially when constructed out of stone. The pointed arch, rather than the round arch, provides superior support and was widely used in Gothic cathedrals.