ART HISTORY I



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Glossary

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Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the basic concepts and terminology of Art History as a discipline
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at an art object
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of works of art and architecture

This chapter will serve as an introduction to the History of Art. We will cover some important art historical concepts and terms. It is imperative to understand the "language" of Art History in order to evaluate works of art.

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1.1: Overview

Thia chapter will serve as an introduction to the History of Art. We will cover some important art historical concepts and terms. It is imperative to understand the “language” of Art History in order to evaluate works of art.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Understanding Art

- **Read:** Common Questions about Dates
- **Read:** A Beginner’s Guide to the History of Western Culture
- **Watch:** Why Look at Art? (1:55)
- **Watch:** The Skill of Describing (3:42)
- **Read:** Patronage and the Status of the Artist
- **Watch:** Glossary of Art Terms (4:04)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resource

Assignments

- **Submit:** Module 1 Quiz (5 points)

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1.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What year was the artwork created?
- What is going on in history when the artwork was created?
- How should I look at art?
- How should I describe art?
- What is the special language that is used to describe art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- circa
- two-dimensional
- three-dimensional
- representational art
- abstract art
- non-representational/non-objective art
- portrait
- still life
- landscape
- seascape
- cityscape
- illusion of space
- perspective (one point)
- foreground/middle ground/background
- horizon line
- vanishing point
- sculpture: relief, intaglio, in the round (free standing)

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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1.3: Common Questions about Dates

Today is:

Gregorian	Wednesday, 26 December 2012
Mayan	Long count = 13.0.0.0.5; tzolkin = 9 Chicchan; haab = 8 Kankin
French	6 Nivôse an 221 de la Révolution
Islamic	12 Safar 1434
Hebrew	13 Teveth 5773
Julian	13 December 2012
ISO	Day 3 of week 52 of 2012
Persian	6 Dey 1391
Ethiopic	17 Takhsas 2005
Coptic	17 Kiyahk 1729
Chinese	Cycle 78, year 29 (Ren-Chen), month 11 (Ren-Zi), day 14 (Xin-You)

How long has our calendar been around?

We are writing this on 12/26/12 or Wednesday, December 26, 2012; traditionally understood as two-thousand and twelve years (give or take a few) after Jesus Christ is believed to have been born. But if Jesus used a calendar, it would not have been the one we use.

Our calendar is called the Gregorian calendar and was instituted by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. There are many other calendars. Quite a few societies have used calendars linked to the years their kings ruled. And there are numerous calendars, beyond the Gregorian calendar, that are still in use today. For example, 2012 equates to 1434/35 in the Islamic calendar and 5772–73 in the Jewish calendar (both are lunar, based on the cycles of the moon).

BC or BCE?

Many people use the abbreviations BC and AD when writing a year (for example, AD 2012). BC refers to “Before Christ,” and the initials, AD, stand for Anno Domini, which is Latin for “In the year of our Lord.” This system was devised by a monk in the year 525. A more recent system uses BCE which stands for “Before the Common Era” and CE for “Common Era.” This newer system is now widely used as a way of expressing the same periods as BC and AD, but without the Christian reference. According to these systems, we count time backwards Before the Common Era (BCE) and forwards in the Common Era (CE).

Circa?

Often dates will be preceded with a “c.” or a “ca.” These are abbreviations of the Latin word “circa” which means around, or approximately. We use this before a date to indicate that we do not know exactly when something happened, so c. 400 BCE means approximately 400 years Before the Common Era.

Why 2012 is in the Twenty-First Century?

We live in the twenty-first century, that is, the 2000s. Similarly when we say “twentieth century,” we are referring to the 1900s. All this because, according to the calendar we use, the first century included the years 1–99 (there was no year zero), and the second century, the years 100–199. Similarly, when we say second century BCE we are referring to the years 100–199 BCE.

Within our calendar, we also have a tendency to find portentous meaning in the millennial years, that is, in the years 1000 and more recently, 2000.

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1.4: A Beginner's Guide to the History of Western Culture

History has no natural divisions. A woman living in Florence in the fifteenth century did not think of herself as a woman of the Renaissance. Historians divide history into large and small units in order to make characteristics and changes clear to themselves and to students. It's important to remember that any historical period is a construction and a simplification. Below are some important basics to get you started.

As you read the timeline below, please keep in mind that equally momentous developments have occurred in Africa, Asia, the Americas and in the Pacific.

Prehistoric (before c. 3000 BCE)

The term "prehistoric" refers to the time before written history. In the West, writing was invented in ancient Mesopotamia just before 3000 BCE, so this period includes visual culture (paintings, sculpture, and architecture) made before that date.



Figure **1.4.1**. The Woman of Willendorf.

The oldest decorative forms we can recognize as art come from Africa and may date back to 100,000 BCE. In contrast, the oldest cave paintings known are about 40,800 years old, and although we used to think that only our species, Homo Sapiens Sapiens, made art—anthropologists now speculate that Neanderthals may have made at least some of these very early images.

The Neolithic revolution, one of the most profound developments in all of human history, occurs during the Prehistoric Era. This is when our ancestors learned to farm and domesticate animals, allowing them to give up their nomadic ways, and settle down to build cities and civilizations.

Ancient (c. 3000 BCE to c. 400 CE)

This period includes the great early civilizations of the ancient Near East (think Babylonia), ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, the Etruscans, and the Romans—everything that comes after the invention of writing and before the fall of the Roman Empire. Keep in mind the disintegration of the Roman Empire took centuries, but to simplify, c. 400 will do.



Figure **1.4.2**. Portion of the Parthenon frieze.

It was during this period that the ancient Greeks first applied human reason to their observations of the natural world and created some of the earliest naturalistic images of human beings. This period is often credited with the birth of Western philosophy, mathematics, theater, science, and democracy. The Romans in turn created an empire that extended across most of Europe, and all the lands that surround the Mediterranean Sea. They were expert administrators and engineers and they saw themselves as the inheritors of the great civilizations that came before them, particularly, Greece and Egypt (which they conquered).

It’s important to remember that although history is often presented as a series of discrete stories, in reality narratives often overlap making history both more complex and more interesting. For example, it was also during the Roman Empire that the historical Figure we now call Jesus Christ lived. Jesus and his apostles were Jewish men living in what is today Israel, but which was then part of the Roman Empire.

Middle Ages (c. 400 CE to c. 1400 CE)

The first half of this thousand-year period witnessed terrible political and economic upheaval in Western Europe, as waves of invasions by migrating peoples destabilized the Roman Empire. The Roman emperor Constantine established Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) as a new capital in the East in 330 CE and the Western Roman Empire broke apart soon after. In the Eastern Mediterranean, the Byzantine Empire (with Constantinople as its capital), flourished.



Figure **1.4.3**. Stained glass at the Basilica of St Denis.

Christianity spread across what had been the Roman Empire, even among the migrating invaders (Vandals, Visigoths, etc.), and the Christian Church, headed by the Pope, emerged as the most powerful institution in Western Europe, the Orthodox Church dominated in the East.

It was during this period that Islam, one of the three great monotheistic religions, was born. Within little more than a century of the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, Islam had become an empire that stretched from Spain across North Africa, the Middle and Near East, to India. Medieval Islam was a leader in science and technology and established some of world’s great centers of learning (i.e. Cordoba). Islamic culture played an important role in preserving and translating ancient Greek texts at a time when much of the knowledge created during the ancient world was lost.

Petrarch (a writer who lived in the 1300s) described the early Medieval period as the “Dark Ages” because to him it seemed to be a period of declining human achievement, especially when he compared it to the Ancient Greeks and Romans. The “Middle Ages” got its name because Renaissance scholars saw it as a long barbaric period that separated them from the great civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome that they both celebrated and emulated.



Figure **1.4.4**. October of *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*

Medieval society was organized into clearly defined strata. At the top was the king. Below were lesser nobles. These lords in turn, ruled over peasants and serfs (the vast majority of the population). Serfs were laborers who were permanently bound to work the

land owned by their lord. The basic unit of this system, known as Feudalism, was the lord/vassal relationship. The vassal would provide labor (in the fields or in battle) to the lord in exchange for land and protection. Mobility between strata was very rare.

Of course, the thousand years of the Middle Ages saw the creation of many great works of art and literature, but they were different from what Petrarch valued. The works of art created in the Middle Ages were largely focused on the teachings of the Church.

It is important to remember that during the Middle Ages it was rare that anyone except members of the clergy (monks, priests, etc.) could read and write. Despite expectations that the world would end in the year 1,000, Western Europe became increasingly stable, and this period is sometimes referred to as the Late (or High) Middle Ages. This period saw the renewal of large scale building and the re-establishment of sizable towns. Monasteries, such as Cluny, became wealthy and important centers of learning.

Within the Middle Ages, there are subdivisions in art history, including Early Christian, Byzantine, Carolingian, Ottonian, Romanesque and Gothic. When we look closely at much of the art and politics of the 1,000 years of the Middle Ages, we find a complex and ongoing relationship with the memory and legacy the ancient Roman empire and this is the foundation for the Renaissance.

Renaissance (c. 1400 to 1600)

In part, the Renaissance was a rebirth of interest in ancient Greek and Roman culture. It was also a period of economic prosperity in Europe—particularly in Italy and in Northern Europe. In art history, we study both the Italian Renaissance and the Northern Renaissance. We talk about a way of looking at the world called Humanism, which—at its most basic—placed renewed value on human knowledge, and the experience of this world (as opposed to focusing largely on the heavenly realm), using ancient Greek and Roman literature and art as a model.



Figure **1.4.5**. Close up of *The Triumph of Galatea*, by Raphael.

There are only a handful of moments in history that we can point to that changed everything. The invention and adoption of the printing press was certainly one. As a result of the wider availability of books, literacy rates in Europe dramatically increased. Readers were empowered and in many ways we can trace the origin of our own information revolution to fifteenth-century Germany and Gutenberg's first printing press.

In 1517 a German theologian and monk, Martin Luther, challenged the authority of the Pope and sparked the Protestant Reformation. His ideas spread quickly, thanks in part to the printing press. By challenging the power of the Church, and asserting the authority of individual conscience (it was increasingly possible for people to read the bible in the language that they spoke), the Reformation laid the foundation for the value that modern culture places on the individual.

It is also during this period that the Scientific Revolution began and observation replaced religious doctrine as the source of our understanding of the universe and our place in it. Copernicus up-ended the ancient Greek model of the heavens by suggesting that the sun was at the center of the solar system and that the planets orbited in circles around it. However, there were still problems with getting this theory to match observation. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Kepler theorized (correctly!) that the planets moved in elliptical orbits (not circular ones) and that the speed of the orbits varied according to the planets' distance from the sun. So much for the ideal geometries of the Greeks!

Early Modern (c. 1600 to 1800)

It might seem strange to date the beginning of the "modern era" to so long ago, but in many ways it was the scientific, political and economic revolutions of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that have most shaped our own society.

Art historians study the Baroque style of the seventeenth century. This was a time of extended and often violent conflict between Catholics and Protestants made all the more complex because of the growing power of the Europe's great monarchies. It was a time

when nations grew in size, wealth and autonomy and when national boundaries were hardened, prefiguring the countries we know today (France, Spain and England for example). This was also a period of colonization, when European powers divided and exploited the world's people and natural resources for their own benefit.

The 1700s is often called the Enlightenment. In many ways, it furthers the interest in the individual seen in the Italian Renaissance and more widely during the Protestant Reformation. Thinkers such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Diderot asserted our ability to reason for ourselves instead of relying on the teachings of established institutions, such as the Church. In art history we study the Rococo and Neoclassical styles.

The American and French Revolutions date to this period. The emerging middle classes (and later the working-classes) began a centuries-long campaign to gain political power, challenging the control of the aristocracy and monarchy. Successive reform movements (in this period and the nineteenth century) and revolutions gradually extended the franchise (the right to vote). Previously suffrage had been limited to males who owned land or who paid a certain amount in taxes. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries that universal suffrage became the norm in Europe and North America.



Figure 1.4.5. Isidore-Stanislas Helman's print after Charles Monnet's drawing of the execution of Louis XVI, 1793

Modern (after c. 1800)

Capitalism became the dominant economic system during this period (though it had its roots in the Renaissance). Individuals risked capital to produce goods in a currency-based market which depended on inexpensive, waged labor. Labor eventually organized into unions (latter-day guilds) and in this way, asserted considerable influence. More broadly shared political power was bolstered by overall increases in the standard of living and the first experiments in public education.

Steam-powered machines and unskilled laborers in factories began to replace skilled artisans. London, Paris, and New York le the unprecedented population growth of cities during this period, as people moved from the countryside or emigrated to find a higher standard of living.



Figure 1.4.6. *The Wounded Man*, by Otto Dix

The twentieth century was the most violent in history. It included two world wars, the Cold War, the dismantling of colonialism and the invention of the Totalitarian state. Dictators (Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, the successive leaders of North Korea, etc.) imposed extreme political systems that caused mass starvation, mass dislocations and genocide. At the same time, the twentieth century was marked by the struggle for human rights and the rise of global capitalism.

Where artists had previously worked under the instructions of wealthy patrons associated with the church or state, in this period, art became part of the market economy, and art itself came to be seen as personal self-expression. The high value placed on the individual, which emerged in ancient Greece and Rome and then again in the Renaissance, became the primary value of Western culture. Where artistic styles (for example, Baroque) had once covered numerous artists working over broad regions and periods of time, in the late nineteenth and through the twentieth century, successive styles of art change with increasing speed and fracture into a kaleidoscope of individual artistic practices.

Where Do We Fit In?

We are immersed in our own time and it can be difficult to see the world around us objectively. One of the modern definitions of an artist, in fact, is someone who is particularly insightful about their own cultural moment. Thanks to global capitalism, social media and the internet, we are more interconnected and interdependent than at any other time in history. Some see this as a utopian moment. With internet access, we can all contribute to and benefit from what is being called the Information Revolution. For others, the prevalence of technology in our lives threatens our individuality and privacy, and reduces us to a data point that can be monetized by corporations like Facebook, Google, and Apple. One thing is certain, throughout the time periods sketched above, art has meant different things, and it is likely to be differently defined in the future.

The history of humanity is recorded in our visual culture. Like the fate of previous civilizations, time will eventually destroy much of the visual culture that we are familiar with today. Future art historians will seek to reconstruct the world we now live in, to better understand the nuanced meanings that are so familiar to us. Perhaps someday an art historian will puzzle over an internet meme, a Torqued Ellipse by Richard Serra, or school-yard graffiti.

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1.5: Why Look at Art?

Why look at art? In this video, Laura Mann, Anna Velez, an anonymous professional, and David Torgersen answer this question.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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1.6: The Skill of Describing

This video helps you understand why the skill of describing is so essential to understanding and appreciating art.



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1.7: Patronage and the Status of the Artist

How did buying a work of art work before the modern era?

For artists in the period before the modern era (before about 1800 or so), life was really different for artists than it is now.

In the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance works of art were **commissioned**, that is they were ordered by a **patron** (the person paying for the work of art), and then made to order. A patron usually entered into a contract with an artist that specified how much he would be paid, what kinds of materials would be used, how long it would take to complete, and what the subject of the work would be.

Not what we would consider artistic freedom, huh? It did have its advantages though. You didn't paint something and then just hope it would sell, like artists do now!

Patrons often asked to be included in the painting they had commissioned. When they appear in a painting we usually call them **donors.**

In Figure **1.7.1**, the **donor** is shown kneeling on the right before the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child.

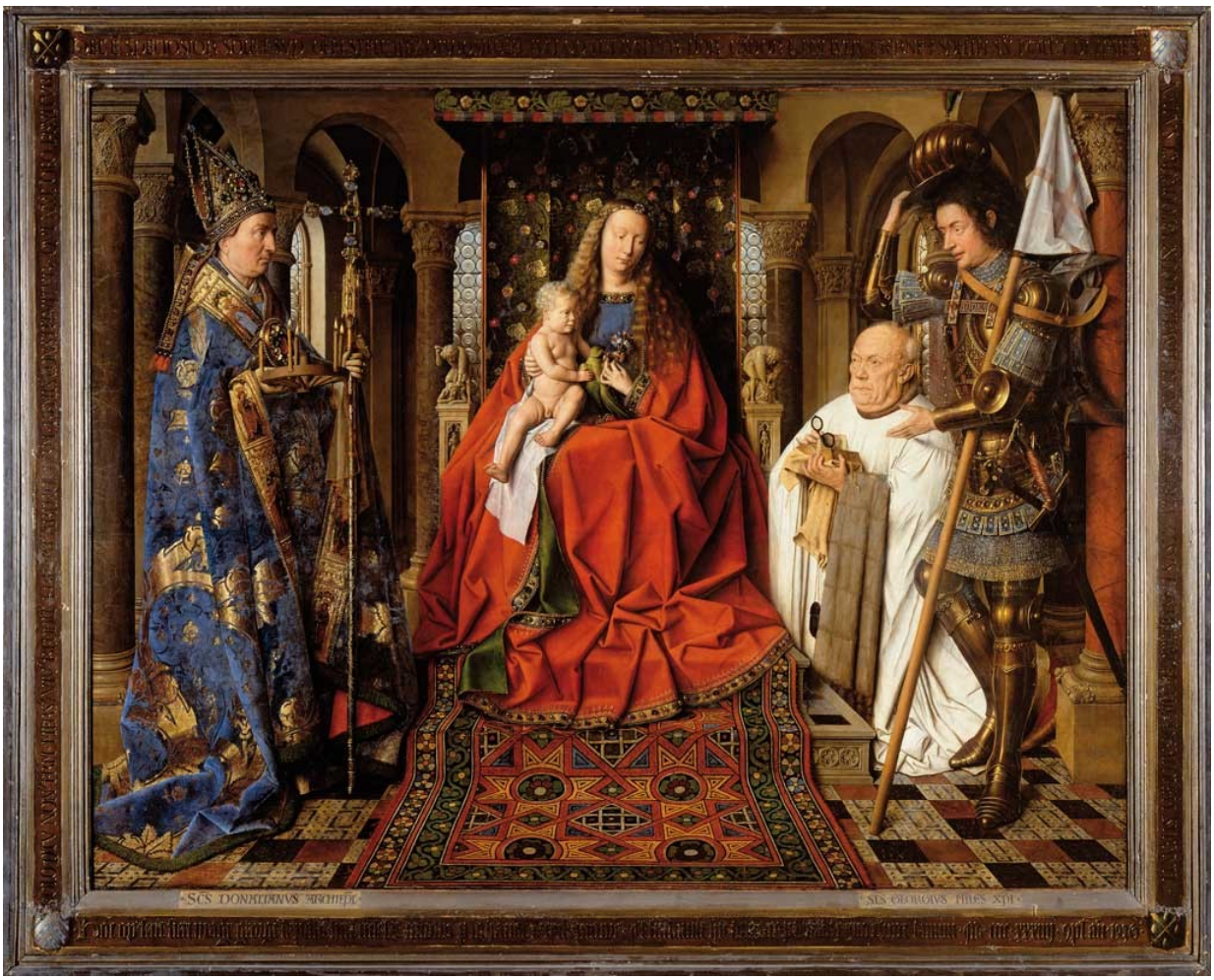


Figure **1.7.1**: *The Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele*, by Jan van Eyck.

What does this mean about the status of the artist in the pre-modern era? How was he viewed in the society at large?

One way to understand this is to think about what you "order" to have made for you today. A pizza comes to mind—ordered from the cook at the local pizza parlor—"I'll have a large pie with pepperoni," or a birthday cake from a baker "I'd like a Chocolate cake

with mocha icing and blue letters that say 'Happy Birthday Jerry.'" Or perhaps you ordered a set of bookshelves from a carpenter, or a wedding dress from a seamstress?

What is the status in our culture of a cook, a baker, a carpenter, or a seamstress?

Do we consider those people to be as high in their status as a lawyer or doctor (remember I'm not asking what we think, but what value our culture generally gives to those professions)? Our culture tends to value people who work with their hands less, and so we have a distinction between "blue collar" work (manual labor) and "white collar" work (brain work). Of course this distinction is false since everyone works with their minds!

In the Middle Ages and for much of the Renaissance, the artist was seen as someone who worked with his hands. They were considered skilled laborers or artisans. This was something that Renaissance artists fought fiercely against. They wanted, understandably, to be considered as thinkers and innovators. And during the Renaissance the status of the artist does change dramatically (a topic we will return to later on!), but it would take a while for artists to become the geniuses we tend to imagine them as today.

What made a painting valuable in the past?

Look at all the gold in the painting in Figure **1.7.2**. Today we might say that a painting is considered valuable because of the artist who created it.

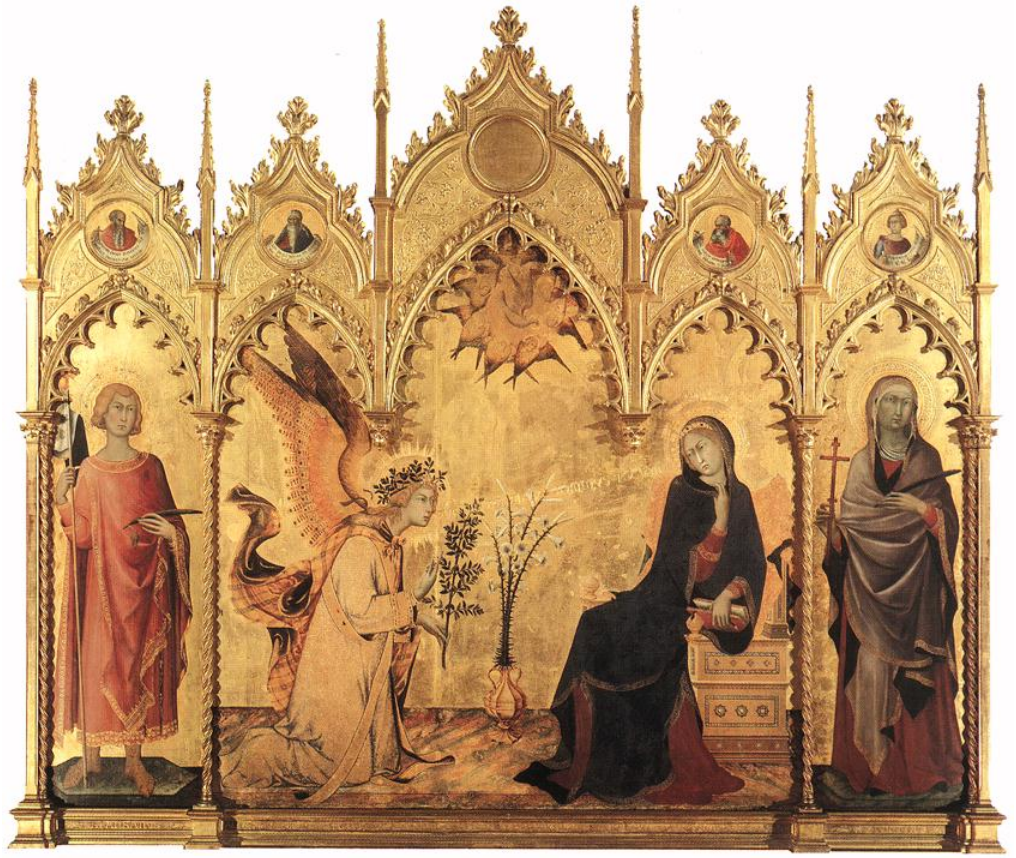


Figure **1.7.2**. *Simone Martini*, *Annunciation*, 1333; Tempera on panel, 72 1/2 × 82 5/8″ or 184 × 210 cm.

In the Middle Ages, and even for much of the Renaissance, what made a painting valuable was the amount of gold and blue paint in it (blue paint was considered valuable because it was made from a semi-precious stone).

So you could say it *used to be* (in the middle ages and for much of the Renaissance) that the *materials* were what made a work of art valuable—and the name of the artist had little or nothing to do with it! *T*oday it is very different. Picasso could have panted on a napkin and it would have been incredibly valuable just because it was by Picasso—*the materials have nothing at all to do with it!*

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1.8: Glossary of Art Terms

This visual art glossary defines art categories, styles, and terms while giving examples of each term.

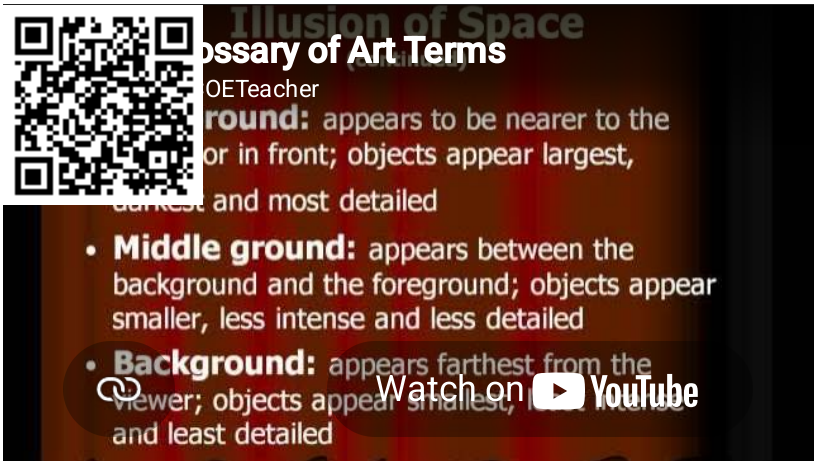


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1.9: External Resource

Check out the Metropolitan Museum of Art's timeline of art history. This timeline shows the chronology of art history, based on typical periods. You will see a list of time periods and places. Please explore this site to understand the breadth and depth of material art history covers. You can filter by a time period or a geographical location to narrow your results.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: The Birth of Art

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of the earliest Western art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of the earliest art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of the earliest art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine the birth of art. We will look at how the earliest art contributed to the development of Western art. It is imperative to understand the birth of art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

2.1: Overview
2.2: Key Learning Items
2.3: Prehistoric Art - Paleolithic Origins
2.4: Nude Woman (Venus of Willendorf)
2.5: Paleolithic Art Explained
2.6: The Neolithic Revolution
2.7: Jericho
2.8: Çatal Höyük
2.9: Stonehenge
2.10: External Resources

Thumbnail: Venus von Willendorf. (CC BY 2.5; unknown via Wikipedia)

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2.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine the birth of art. We will look at how the earliest art contributed to the development of Western art. It is imperative to understand the birth of art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review**: Key Learning Items

Paleolithic Period

- **Read:** Prehistoric Art: Paleolithic Origins
- **Watch:** Nude Woman (Venus of Willendorf) (4:19)
- **Read:** Paleolithic Art Explained

Neolithic Period

- **Read:** The Neolithic Revolution
- **Read:** Jericho
- **Read:** Çatal Höyük
- **Read:** Stonehenge

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 2 Quiz (5 points)

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2.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- How is the human Figure portrayed in the earliest art?
- How has what has survived influenced our views on the earliest art?
- What is the difference between Paleolithic and Neolithic art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- Paleolithic art
- naturalism
- abstraction
- portable art
- stationary art
- figurative art
- non-figurative art
- Neolithic art
- henge
- trilithon

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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2.3: Prehistoric Art - Paleolithic Origins

Humans make art. We do this for many reasons and with whatever technologies are available to us. Extremely old, non-representational ornamentation has been found across Africa. The oldest firmly-dated example is a collection of 82,000 year old Nassarius snail shells found in Morocco that are pierced and covered with red ochre. Wear patterns suggest that they may have been strung beads. Nassarius shell beads found in Israel may be more than 100,000 years old and in the Blombos cave in South Africa, pierced shells and small pieces of ochre (red Haematite) etched with simple geometric patterns have been found in a 75,000-year-old layer of sediment.

The oldest known representational imagery comes from the Aurignacian culture of the Upper Paleolithic period. Archeological discoveries across a broad swath of Europe (especially Southern France, Northern Spain, and Swabia, in Germany) include over two hundred caves with spectacular Aurignacian paintings, drawings and sculpture that are among the earliest undisputed examples of representational image-making. The oldest of these is a 2.4-inch tall female Figure carved out of mammoth ivory that was found in six fragments in the Hohle Fels cave near Schelklingen in southern Germany. It dates to 35,000 BCE.

Watch This

A carved female figurine dating to at least 35,000 years ago has been recovered from caves in the Hohle Fels region of Germany. The Figure represents the oldest figurative art yet discovered. In this film the authors describe the importance of their find.



Figure **2.3.1**: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)

The caves at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc (see Figure **2.3.1**), Lascaux, Pech Merle, and Altamira contain the best known examples of pre-historic painting and drawing. Here are remarkably evocative renderings of animals and some humans that employ a complex mix of naturalism and abstraction. Archeologists that study Paleolithic (old stone age) era humans, believe that the paintings discovered in 1994, in the cave at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc in the Ardèche valley in France, are more than 30,000 years old. The images found at Lascaux and Altamira are more recent, dating to approximately 15,000 BCE. The paintings at Pech Merle date to both 25,000 and 15,000 BCE.



Figure **2.3.1**. Cave paintings in Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc

What can we really know about the creators of these paintings and what the images originally meant? These are questions that are difficult enough when we study art made only 500 years ago. It is much more perilous to assert meaning for the art of people who shared our anatomy but had not yet developed the cultures or liguistic structures that shaped who we have become. Do the tools of art history even apply? Here is evidence of a visual language that collapses the more than 1,000 generations that separate us, but we must be cautious. This is especially so if we want understand the people that made this art as a way to understand ourselves. The desire to speculate based on what we see and the physical evidence of the caves is wildly seductive.

The cave at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc is over 1,000 feet in length with two large chambers. Carbon samples date the charcoal used to depict the two head-to-head Rhinoceroses (see the image above, bottom right) to between 30,340 and 32,410 years before 1995 when the samples were taken. The cave's drawings depict other large animals including horses, mammoths, musk ox, ibex, reindeer, aurochs, megaceros deer, panther, and owl (scholars note that these animals were not then a normal part of people's diet). Photographs show that the drawing shown above is very carefully rendered but may be misleading. We see a group of horses, rhinos and bison and we see them as a group, overlapping and skewed in scale. But the photograph distorts the way these animal Figures would have been originally seen. The bright electric lights used by the photographer create a broad flat scope of vision; how different to see each animal emerge from the dark under the flickering light cast by a flame.

In a 2009 presentation at UC San Diego, Dr. Randell White, Professor of Anthropology at NYU, suggested that the overlapping horses pictured above might represent the same horse over time, running, eating, sleeping, etc. Perhaps these are far more sophisticated representations than we have imagined. There is another drawing at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc that cautions us against ready assumptions. It has been interpreted as depicting the thighs and genitals of a woman but there is also a drawing of a bison and a lion and the images are nearly intertwined. In addition to the drawings, the cave is littered with the skulls and bones of cave bear and the track of a wolf. There is also a foot print thought to have been made by an eight-year-old boy.

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2.4: Nude Woman (Venus of Willendorf)

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Nude Woman*, commonly called the *Venus of Willendorf*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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2.5: Paleolithic Art Explained



The Stone Age covers the time period from approximately 30,000 to 10,000 BCE. Click on the link below to view the article “What is Paleolithic Art?” from the Art History portion of About.com. This page will help you learn more about the art of the Old Stone Age.

- “What is Paleolithic Art?”.

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2.6: The Neolithic Revolution

A Settled Life



Stonehenge, c. 3,000 BCE, Salisbury Plain, England

When people think of the Neolithic era, they often think of Stonehenge, the iconic image of this early era. Dating to approximately 3000 BCE and set on Salisbury Plain in England, it is a structure larger and more complex than anything built before it in Europe. Stonehenge is an example of the cultural advances brought about by the Neolithic revolution—the most important development in human history. The way we live today, settled in homes, close to other people in towns and cities, protected by laws, eating food grown on farms, and with leisure time to learn, explore and invent is all a result of the Neolithic revolution, which occurred approximately 11,500–5,000 years ago. The revolution which led to our way of life was the development of the technology needed to plant and harvest crops and to domesticate animals.

Before the Neolithic revolution, it's likely you would have lived with your extended family as a nomad, never staying anywhere for more than a few months, always living in temporary shelters, always searching for food and never owning anything you couldn't easily pack in a pocket or a sack. The change to the Neolithic way of life was huge and led to many of the pleasures (lots of food, friends and a comfortable home) that we still enjoy today.

Neolithic Art

The massive changes in the way people lived also changed the types of art they made. Neolithic sculpture became bigger, in part, because people didn't have to carry it around anymore; pottery became more widespread and was used to store food harvested from farms. This is when alcohol was invented and when architecture, and its interior and exterior decoration, first appears. In short, people settle down and begin to live in one place, year after year.

It seems very unlikely that Stonehenge could have been made by earlier, Paleolithic, nomads. It would have been a waste to invest so much time and energy building a monument in a place to which they might never return or might only return infrequently. After all, the effort to build it was extraordinary. Stonehenge is approximately 320 feet in circumference and the stones which compose the outer ring weigh as much as 50 tons; the small stones, weighing as much as 6 tons, were quarried from as far away as 450 miles. The use or meaning of Stonehenge is not clear, but the design, planning and execution could have only been carried out by a culture in which authority was unquestioned. Here is a culture that was able to rally hundreds of people to perform very hard work for extended periods of time. This is another characteristic of the Neolithic era.

Plastered Skulls



Skulls with plaster and shell from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B, 6,000–7,000 BCE, found at the Yiftah'el archeological site in the Lower Galilee, Israel

The Neolithic period is also important because it is when we first find good evidence for religious practice, a perpetual inspiration for the fine arts. Perhaps most fascinating are the plaster skulls found around the area of the Levant, at six sites, including Jericho in Israel. At this time in the Neolithic, c. 7000–6,000 BCE, people were often buried under the floors of homes, and in some cases their skulls were removed and covered with plaster in order to create very life-like faces, complete with shells inset for eyes and paint to imitate hair and moustaches.

The traditional interpretation of these the skulls has been that they offered a means of preserving and worshiping male ancestors. However, recent research has shown that among the sixty-one plastered skulls that have been found, there is a generous number that come from the bodies of women and children. Perhaps the skulls are not so much religious objects but rather powerful images made to aid in mourning lost loved ones. Neolithic peoples didn't have written language, so we may never know.[1]

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1. The earliest example of writing develops in Sumer in Mesopotamia in the late fourth millennium BCE. However, there are scholars that believe that earlier proto-writing developed during the Neolithic period. ↵

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2.7: Jericho

A Natural Oasis

The site of Jericho, just north of the Dead Sea and due west of the Jordan River, is one of the oldest continuously lived-in cities in the world. The reason for this may be found in its Arabic name, Ārīḥā, which means fragrant; Jericho is a natural oasis in the desert where countless fresh water springs can be found. This resource, which drew its first visitors between 10,000 and 9000 BCE, still has ancestors that live there today.



Figure **2.7.1**. Jericho, Tell es-Sultan archaeological site

Biblical Reference

The site of Jericho is best known for its identity in the Bible and this has drawn pilgrims and explorers to it as early as the fourth century CE; serious archaeological exploration didn't begin until the latter half of the nineteenth century. What continues to draw archaeologists to Jericho today is the hope of finding some evidence of the warrior Joshua, who lead the Israelites to an unlikely victory against the Canaanites ("the walls of the city fell when Joshua and his men marched around them blowing horns" Joshua 6:1–27). Although unequivocal evidence of Joshua himself has yet to be found, what has been uncovered are some 12,000 years of human activity. The most spectacular finds at Jericho, however, do not date to the time of Joshua, roughly the Bronze Age (3300–1200 BCE), but rather to the earliest part of the Neolithic era, before even the technology to make pottery had been discovered.

Old Walls

The site of Jericho rises above the wide plain of the Jordan Valley, its height the result of layer upon layer of human habitation, a formation called a Tell. The earliest visitors to the site who left remains (stone tools) came in the Mesolithic period (around 9000 BCE) but the first settlement at the site, around the Ein as-Sultan spring, dates to the early Neolithic era, and these people, who built homes, grew plants, and kept animals, were among the earliest to do such anywhere in the world. Specifically, in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A levels at Jericho (8500–7000 BCE) archaeologists found remains of a very large settlement of circular homes made with mud brick and topped with domed roofs. As the name of this era implies, these early people at Jericho had not yet Figured out how to make pottery, but they made vessels out of stone, wove cloth and for tools were trading for a particularly useful kind of stone, obsidian, from as far away as Çiftlik, in eastern Turkey. The settlement grew quickly and, for reasons unknown, the inhabitants soon constructed a substantial stone wall and exterior ditch around their town, complete with a stone tower almost eight meters high, set against the inner side of the wall. Theories as to the function of this wall range from military defense to keeping out animal predators to even combating the natural rising of the level of the ground surrounding the settlement. However, regardless of its original use, here we have the first version of the walls Joshua so ably conquered some six thousand years later.



Figure **2.7.2**. Pre-Pottery era tower at Jericho

Plastered Human Skulls

The Pre-Pottery Neolithic A period is followed by the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (7000–5200 BCE), which was different from its predecessor in important ways. Houses in this era were uniformly rectangular and constructed with a new kind of rectangular mud bricks which were decorated with herringbone thumb impressions, and always laid lengthwise in thick mud mortar. This mortar, like a plaster, was also used to create a smooth surface on the interior walls, extending down across the floors as well. In this period there is some strong evidence for cult or religious belief at Jericho. Archaeologists discovered one uniquely large building dating to the period with unique series of plastered interior pits and basins as well as domed adjoining structures and it is thought this was for ceremonial use. Other possible evidence of cult practice was discovered in several homes of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic town, in the form of plastered human skulls which were molded over to resemble living heads. Shells were used for eyes and traces of paint revealed that skin and hair were also included in the representations. The largest group found together were nine examples, buried in the fill below the plastered floor of one house.

Jericho isn't the only site at which plastered skulls have been found in Pre-Pottery Neolithic B levels; they have also been found at Tell Ramad, Beisamoun, Kfar Hahoresh, 'Ain Ghazal and Nahal Hemar. Among the some sixty-two skulls discovered among these sites, we know that older and younger men as well as women and children are represented, which poses interesting questions as to their meaning. Were they focal points in ancestor worship, as was originally thought, or did they function as images by which deceased family members could be remembered? As we are without any written record of the belief system practiced in the Neolithic period in the area, we will never know.

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2.8: Çatal Höyük

Çatal Höyük is not the oldest site of the Neolithic era or the largest, but it is extremely important to the beginning of art. Located near the modern city of Konya in south central Turkey, it was inhabited 9000 years ago by up to 8000 people who lived together in a large town. Çatal Höyük, across its history, witnesses the transition from exclusively hunting and gathering subsistence to increasing skill in plant and animal domestication. We might see Çatal Höyük as a site whose history is about one of man's most important transformations: from nomad to settler. It is also a site at which we see art, both painting and sculpture, appear to play a newly important role in the lives of settled people.



Figure **2.8.1**. Çatal Hüyük excavations

Çatal Höyük had no streets or foot paths; the houses were built right up against each other and the people who lived in them traveled over the town's rooftops and entered their homes through holes in the roofs, climbing down a ladder. Communal ovens were built above the homes of Çatal Höyük and we can assume group activities were performed in this elevated space as well. Like at Jericho, the deceased were placed under the floors or platforms in houses and sometimes the skulls were removed and plastered to resemble live faces. The burials at Çatal Höyük show no significant variations, either based on wealth or gender; the only bodies which were treated differently, decorated with beads and covered with ochre, were those of children. The excavator of Çatal Höyük believes that this special concern for youths at the site may be a reflection of the society becoming more sedentary and required larger numbers of children because of increased labor, exchange and inheritance needs.

Art is everywhere among the remains of Çatal Höyük, geometric designs as well as representations of animals and people. Repeated lozenges and zigzags dance across smooth plaster walls, people are sculpted in clay, pairs of leopards are formed in relief facing one another at the sides of rooms, hunting parties are painted baiting a wild bull. The volume and variety of art at Çatal Höyük is immense and must be understood as a vital, functional part of the everyday lives of its ancient inhabitants.

Many figurines have been found at the site, the most famous of which illustrates a large woman seated on or between two large felines. The figurines, which illustrate both humans and animals, are made from a variety of materials but the largest proportion are quite small and made of barely fired clay. These casual figurines are found most frequently in garbage pits, but also in oven walls, house walls, floors and left in abandoned structures. The figurines often show evidence of having been poked, scratched or broken, and it is generally believed that they functioned as wish tokens or to ward off bad spirits.

Nearly every house excavated at Çatal Höyük was found to contain decorations on its walls and platforms, most often in the main room of the house. Moreover, this work was constantly being renewed; the plaster of the main room of a house seems to have been redone as frequently as every month or season. Both geometric and figural images were popular in two-dimensional wall painting and the excavator of the site believes that geometric wall painting was particularly associated with adjacent buried youths. Figural

paintings show the animal world alone, such as, for instance, two cranes facing each other standing behind a fox, or in interaction with people, such as a vulture pecking at a human corpse or hunting scenes. Wall reliefs are found at Çatal Höyük with some frequency, most often representing animals, such as pairs of animals facing each other and human-like creatures. These latter reliefs, alternatively thought to be bears, goddesses or regular humans, are always represented splayed, with their heads, hands and feet removed, presumably at the time the house was abandoned.

The most remarkable art found at Çatal Höyük, however, are the installations of animal remains and among these the most striking are the bull bucrania. In many houses the main room was decorated with several plastered skulls of bulls set into the walls (most common on East or West walls) or platforms, the pointed horns thrust out into the communal space. Often the bucrania would be painted ochre red. In addition to these, the remains of other animas' skulls, teeth, beaks, tusks or horns were set into the walls and platforms, plastered and painted. It would appear that the ancient residents of Çatal Höyük were only interested in taking the pointy parts of the animals back to their homes!

How can we possibly understand this practice of interior decoration with the remains of animals? A clue might be in the types of creatures found and represented. Most of the animals represented in the art of Çatal Höyük were not domesticated; wild animals dominate the art at the site. Interestingly, examination of bone refuse shows that the majority of the meat which was consumed was of wild animals, especially bulls. The excavator believes this selection in art and cuisine had to do with the contemporary era of increased domestication of animals and what is being celebrated are the animals which are part of the memory of the recent cultural past, when hunting was much more important for survival.

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2.9: Stonehenge

Stonehenge, on Salisbury plain in England, is one of the most recognizable monuments of the Neolithic world and one of the most popular, with over one million visitors a year. People come to see Stonehenge because it is so impossibly big and so impossibly old; some are searching for a connection with a prehistoric past; some come to witness the workings of a massive astrological observatory. The people living in the fourth millennium BC who began work on Stonehenge were contemporary with the first dynasties of Ancient Egypt, and their efforts predate the building of the Pyramids. What they created has endured millennia and still intrigues us today.



Figure **2.9.1**. Stonehenge from north



Figure **2.9.2**. Stonehenge Map

Phase One

In fact, what we see today is the result of at least three phases of construction, although there is still a lot of controversy among archaeologists about exactly how and when these phases occurred. It is generally agreed that the first phase of construction at Stonehenge occurred around 3100 BCE, when a great circular ditch about six feet deep was dug with a bank of dirt within it about 360 feet in diameter, with a large entrance to the northeast and a smaller one to the south. This circular ditch and bank together is called a henge. Within the henge were dug 56 pits, each slightly more than three feet in diameter, called Aubrey holes, after John Aubrey, the seventeenth century English archaeologist who first found them. These holes, it is thought, were either originally filled with upright bluestones or upright wooden beams. If it was bluestones which filled the Aubrey holes, it involved quite a bit of effort as each weighed between 2 and 4 tons and were mined from the Preseli Hills, about 250 miles away in Wales.

Phase Two

The second phase of work at Stonehenge occurred approximately 100–200 years later and involved the setting up of upright wooden posts, possibly of a roofed structure, in the center of the henge, as well as more upright posts near the northeast and southern entrances. Surprisingly, it is also during this second phase at Stonehenge that it was used for burial. At least 25 of the Aubrey holes were emptied and reused to hold cremation burials and another 30 cremation burial pits were dug into the ditch of the henge and in the eastern portion within the henge enclosure.

Phase Three

The third phase of construction at Stonehenge happened approximately 400–500 years later and likely lasted a long time. In this phase the remaining blue stones or wooden beams which had been placed in the Aubrey holes were pulled and a circle 108 feet in diameter of 30 huge and very hard sarsen stones were erected within the henge; these were quarried from nearby Marlborough Downs. These upright sarsen stones were capped with 30 lintel stones. Each standing stone was around 13 feet high, almost seven feet wide and weighed around 25 tons. This ring of stones enclosed five sarsen trilithons (a trilithon is a pair of upright stones with a lintel stone spanning their tops) set up in a horseshoe shape 45 feet across. These huge stones, ten uprights and five lintels, weigh up to 50 tons each. Bluestones, either reinstalled or freshly quarried, were erected in a circle, half in the outer sarsen circle and half within the sarsen horseshoe. At the end of the phase there is some rearrangement of the bluestones as well as the construction of a long processional avenue, consisting of parallel banks with exterior ditches approximately 34 meters across, leading from the northeast entrance to Stonehenge, dipping to the south and eventually to the banks of the Avon river.



Figure **2.9.3**. Stonehenge Interior

Questions

All three phases of the construction of Stonehenge pose fascinating questions. The first phase of work required precise planning and a massive amount of labor. Who planned the henge and who organized whom to work together in its construction? Unfortunately, remains of Neolithic villages, which would provide information about who built Stonehenge, are few, possibly because so many lie underneath later Broze Age, Roman, Medieval and modern cities. The few villages that have been explored show simple farming hamlets with very little evidence of widely differing social status. If there were leaders or a social class who convinced or forced people to work together to build the first phase of Stonehenge, we haven't found them. It also probably means the first phase of Stonehenge's construction was an egalitarian endeavor, highly unusual for the ancient world.

Who were the people buried at Stonehenge in the its second phase? Recent analysis of these bones has revealed that nearly all the burials were of adult males, aged 25–40 years, in good health and with little sign of hard labor or disease. No doubt, to be interred at Stonehenge was a mark of elite status and these remains may well be those of some of the first political leaders of Great Britain, an island with a ruling tradition extending all the way to the House of Windsor. They also show us that in this era, some means of social distinction must have been desirable.

Conclusion

The work achieved in the long third phase of Stonehenge's construction, however, is the one which is most remarkable and enduring. Like the first phase of Stonehenge, except on a much larger scale, the third phase involved tremendous planning and organization of labor. But, it also entailed an entirely new level of technical sophistication, specifically in the working of very hard stone. For instance, the horizontal lintel stones which topped the exterior ring of sarsen stones were fitted to them using a tongue and grove joint and then fitted to each other using a mortise and tenon joint, methods used in modern woodworking. Each of the upright sarsens were dressed differently on each side, with the inward facing side more smoothly finished than the outer. Moreover, the stones of the outer ring of sarsens were subtly modified to accommodate the way the human eye observes the massive stones against the bright shades of the Salisbury plain: upright stones were gently widened toward the top which makes their mass constant when viewed from the ground. The lintel stones also curve slightly to echo the circular outer henge. The stones in the horseshoe of trilithons are arranged by size; the smallest pair of trilithons are around 20 feet tall, the next pair a little higher and the largest, single trilithon in the south west corner would have been 24 feet tall. This effect creates a kind of pull inward to the monument, and dramatizes the outward Northeast facing of the horseshoe. Although there are many theories, it is still not known

how or why these subtle refinements were made to Stonehenge, but their existence is sure proof of a sophisticated society with organized leadership and a lot of free time.

A Solar and Lunar Calendar?

Of course the most famous aspect of Stonehenge is its relationship with the solar and lunar calendar. This idea was first proposed by scholars in the eighteenth century who noted that the sunrise of the midsummer solstice is exactly framed by the end of the horseshoe of trilithons at the interior of the monument and exactly opposite that point, at the center of the bend of the horseshoe, at the midwinter sunset, the sun is aligned. These dates, the longest and shortest days of the year, are the turning point of the two great seasonal episodes of the annual calendar. Since this discovery, several other theories about astrological observation have been offered but few stand up to scrutiny together with the physical details of the monument.

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2.10: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Smithsonian.com: New Light on Stonehenge
- BBC Animation of Stonehenge Over Time
- The Owl of Athena: Women, Sex and Paleolithic Art
- Virtual Tour of Cave of Lascaux
- Virtual Tour of Cave of Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: The Ancient Near East

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Ancient Near Eastern art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Ancient Near Eastern art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Ancient Near Eastern art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Ancient Near Eastern art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Near Eastern art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

3.1: Overview
3.2: Key Learning Items
3.3: Ancient Near East
3.4: Sumerian Art
3.5: The Invention of Writing
3.6: The Standard of Ur
3.7: Ziggurat of Ur
3.8: Art of Akkad and Ur
3.9: Victory Stele of Naram-Sin
3.10: Theories on the Meaning of the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin
3.11: Law Code of Hammurabi
3.12: Assyrian Art
3.13: Lamassu
3.14: Neo-Babylonian Art
3.15: Art of the Persian Empire
3.16: External Resources

Thumbnail: Figures at the top of the stele "fingernail", above Hammurabi's code of laws. (Public Domain; unknown via Wikipedia)

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3.1: Overview

In chapter 3, we will examine Ancient Near Eastern art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Near Eastern art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Ancient Near East

- **Read:** Ancient Near East

Sumer

- **Read:** Sumerian Art
- **Read:** The Invention of Writing
- **Watch:** The Standard of Ur (8:48)
- **Read:** Ziggurat of Ur

Akkad and Ur

- **Read:** Art of Akkad and Ur
- **Watch:** Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (3:24)
- **Read:** Theories on the Meaning of the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin

Babylon

- **Watch:** Law Code of Hammurabi (3:16)

Assyria

- **Watch:** Assyrian Art (5:53)
- **Watch:** Lamassu (5:09)

Neo-Babylon

- **Watch:** Neo-Babylonian Art (6:49)

The Persian Empire

- **Read:** Art of the Persian Empire

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 3 Quiz (5 points)
- **Discuss:** Introduction Activity (15 points)

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3.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- How does the artwork function in the Ancient Near East?
- What are the different geographical regions that constitute the Ancient Near East?
- What is the role of death and burial rituals in Ancient Near Eastern art?
- What is the role of animals in Ancient Near Eastern art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- cylinder seal
- cuneiform characters
- stele
- iconography
- ziggurat
- hierarchy of scale
- register
- wall reliefs
- composite creature
- lamassu
- apadana

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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3.3: Ancient Near East



Figure **3.3.1**. Map of the Ancient Near East

The Cradle of Civilization

Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (in modern day Iraq), is often referred to as the cradle of civilization because it is the first place where complex urban centers grew. The history of Mesopotamia, however, is inextricably tied to the greater region, which is comprised of the modern nations of Egypt, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, the Gulf states and Turkey. We often refer to this region as the Near or Middle East.

What's in a Name?

Why is this region named this way? What is it in the middle of or near to? It is the proximity of these countries to the West (to Europe) that led this area to be termed "the *near* east." Ancient Near Eastern Art has long been part of the history of Western art, but history didn't have to be written this way. It is largely because of the West's interests in the Biblcial "Holy Land" that ancient Near Eastern materials have been be regarded as part of the Western canon of the history of art.

The Land of the Bible

An interest in finding the locations of cities mentioned in the Bible (such as Nineveh and Babylon) inspired the original English and French nineteenth century archaeological expeditions to the Near East. These sites were discovered and their excavations revealed to the world a style of art which had been lost.

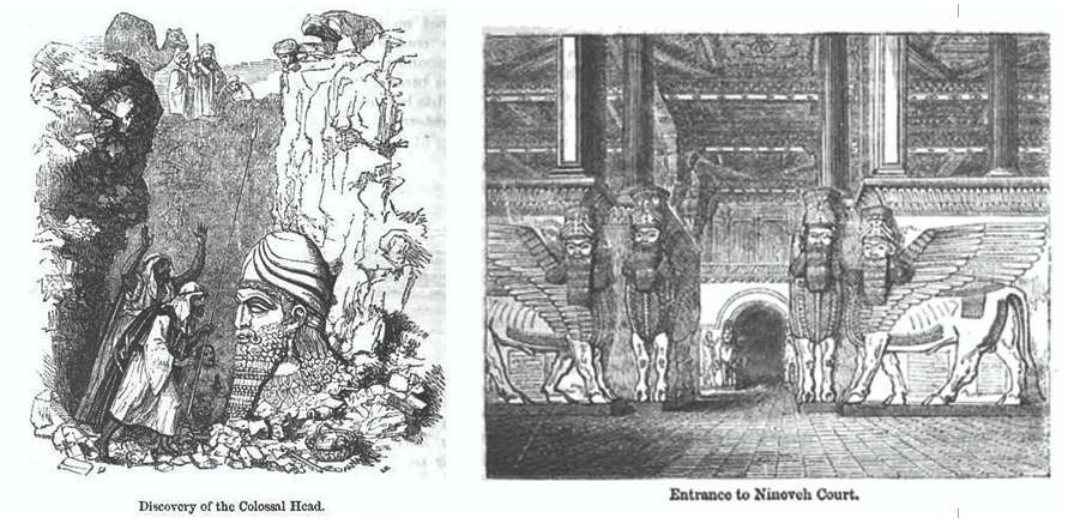


Figure **3.3.2**. Illustrations from: Sir Austen Henry Layard, *The Ninevah Court in the Crystal Palace*, 1854

The excavations inspired *The Nineveh Court* at the 1851 World's Fair in London and a style of decorative art and architecture called Assyrian Revival. Ancient Near Eastern art remains popular today; in 2007 a 2.25 inch high, early 3rd millennium limestone sculpture, the *Guennol Lioness*, was sold for 57.2 million dollars, the second most expensive piece of sculpture sold at that time.

A Complex History



Figure **3.3.3**. The Euphrates River in 2005

The history of the Ancient Near East is complex and the names of rulers and locations are often difficult to read, pronounce and spell. Moreover, this is a part of the world which today remains remote from the West culturally while political tensions have impeded mutual understanding. However, once you get a handle on the general geography of the area and its history, the art reveals itself as uniquely beautiful, intimate and fascinating in its complexity.

Geography and the Growth of Cities

Mesopotamia remains a region of stark geographical contrasts: vast deserts rimmed by rugged mountain ranges, punctuated by lush oases. Flowing through this topography are rivers and it was the irrigation systems that drew off the water from these rivers, specifically in southern Mesopotamia, that provided the support for the very early urban centers here.

The region lacks stone (for building) and precious metals and timber. Historically, it has relied on the long-distance trade of its agricultural products to secure these materials. The large-scale irrigation systems and labor required for extensive farming was managed by a centralized authority. The early development of this authority, over large numbers of people in an urban center, is really what distinguishes Mesopotamia and gives it a special position in the history of Western culture. Here, for the first time, thanks to ample food and a strong administrative class, the West develops a very high level of craft specialization and artistic production.

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3.4: Sumerian Art

The region of southern Mesopotamia is known as Sumer, and it is in Sumer that we find some of the oldest known cities, including Ur and Uruk.

Uruk

Prehistory ends with Uruk, where we find some of the earliest written records. This large city-state (and it environs) was largely dedicated to agriculture and eventually dominated southern Mesopotamia. Uruk perfected Mesopotamian irrigation and administration systems.



Figure **3.4.1**. Uruk is circled in the region of Sumer, as are other city-states discussed in Smarthistory.

An Agricultural Theocracy



Figure **3.4.2**. Cuneiform tablet still in its clay case: legal case from Niqmepuh, King of Iamhad (Aleppo), 1720 BCE, 3.94 x 2″ (British Museum)

Within the city of Uruk, there was a large temple complex dedicated to Innana, the patron goddess of the city. The City-State's agricultural production would be "given" to her and stored at her temple. Harvested crops would then be processed (grain ground into flour, barley fermented into beer) and given back to the citizens of Uruk in equal share at regular intervals.

The head of the temple administration, the chief priest of Innana, also served as political leader, making Uruk the first known theocracy.

We know many details about this theocratic administration because the Sumarians left numerous documents in cuneiform script.

These tablets made of dried mud and many were sealed in clay envelopes and signed using cylinder seals. A cylinder seals is a small pierced object like a long bead that is carved in reverse (intaglio) with a unique image and sometimes the name of the owner.

The seal was rolled over the soft clay of a tablet and functioned as a signature. The minute images on these seals use a system of symbolic representation that identifies the political status of the owner.



Figure **3.4.3**. Lapis Lazuli Cylinder Seal with a modern impression, From Ur, southern Iraq, c. 2600 BCE (British Museum)

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3.5: The Invention of Writing

It is almost impossible to imagine a time before writing. Our thanks should go to the cultures of the Ancient Near East. However, you might be disappointed to learn that writing was not invented to record stories, poetry, or prayers to a god. The first fully developed written script, cuneiform, was invented to account for something unglamorous, but very important—surplus commodities: bushels of barley, head of cattle, and jars of oil!

The origin of written language (c. 3200 BCE) was born out of economic necessity and was a tool of the theocratic (priestly) ruling elite who needed to keep track of the agricultural wealth of the city-states. The last known document written in the cuneiform script dates to the first century BCE Only the hieroglyphic script of the Ancient Egyptians lasted longer.

A Reed and Clay Tablet



Figure **3.5.1**. Cuneiform script tablet from the Kirkor Minassian collection in the Library of Congress. From Year 6 in the reign from Amar-Suena/Amar-Sin or 2041 and 2040 BCE.

A single reed, cleanly cut from the banks of the Euphrates or Tigris river, when pressed cut-edge down into a soft clay tablet, will make a wedge shape. The arrangement of multiple wedge shapes (as few as two and as many as ten) created cuneiform characters. Characters could be written either horizontally or vertically, although a horizontal arrangement was more widely used.

Very few cuneiform signs have only one meaning; most have as many as four. Cuneiform signs could represent a whole word or an idea or a number. Most frequently though, they represented a syllable. A cuneiform syllable could be a vowel alone, a consonant plus a vowel, a vowel plus a consonant and even a consonant plus a vowel plus a consonant. There isn't a sound that a human mouth can make that this script can't record.

Probably because of this extraordinary flexibility, the range of languages that were written with cuneiform across history of the Ancient Near East is vast and includes Sumerian, Akkadian, Amorite, Hurrian, Urartian, Hittite, Luwian, Palaic, Hatian and Elamite.

Cuneiform writing was typically done on clay tablets, and these ranged in size from little more to an inch to several inches long. Letters written on clay tablets would be placed in clay envelopes and "addressed" in cuneiform.

Cuneiform was also carved into important stone stele such as the *Law Code Stele of Hammurabi* (a stele is a vertical stone monument or marker), and dedications were inscribed in cuneiform on clay cones that were laid at the foundation of palaces and temples identifying to whom the structure was dedicated and who built it.



Figure 3.5.2. Cylinder Seal (with modern impression), royal worshipper before a god on a throne with bull's legs; human-headed bulls below, c. 1820–1730 BCE. (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Sign with a Cylinder Seal

Cuneiform was used for official accounting, governmental and theological pronouncements and a wide range of correspondence. Nearly all of these documents required a formal "signature," the impression of a cylinder seal.

A cylinder seal is a small pierced object, like a long round bead, carved in reverse (intaglio) and hung on strings of fiber or leather. These often beautiful objects were ubiquitous in the Ancient Near East and remain a unique record of individuals from this era. Each seal was owned by one person and was used and held by them in particularly intimate ways, such as strung on a necklace or bracelet.

When a signature was required, the seal was taken out and rolled on the pliable clay document, leaving behind the positive impression of the reverse images carved into it. However, some seals were valued not for the impression they made, but instead, for the magic they were thought to possess or for their beauty.

The first use of cylinder seals in the Ancient Near East dates to earlier than the invention of cuneiform, to the Late Neolithic period (7600–6000 BCE) in Syria. However, what is most remarkable about cylinder seals is their scale and the beauty of the semi-precious stones from which they were carved. The images and inscriptions on these stones can be measured in millimeters and feature incredible detail.

The stones from which the cylinder seals were carved include agate, chalcedony, lapis lazuli, steatite, limestone, marble, quartz, serpentine, hematite and jasper; for the most distinguished there were seals of gold and silver. To study Ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals is to enter a uniquely beautiful, personal and detailed miniature universe of the remote past, but one which was directly connected to a vast array of individual actions, both mundane and momentous.



Figure 3.5.3. Cylinder Seal (with modern impression), showing Kneeling Nude Heroes, c. 2220-2159 BCE, Akkadian (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Why Cylinder Seals are Interesting

Art historians are particularly interested in cylinder seals for at least two reasons. First, it is believed that the images carved on seals accurately reflect the pervading artistic styles of the day and the particular region of their use. In other words, each seal is a small time capsule of what sorts of motifs and styles were popular during the lifetime of the owner. These seals, which survive in great numbers, offer important information to understand the developing artistic styles of the Ancient Near East.

The second reason why art historians are interested in cylinder seals is because of the iconography (the study of the content of a work of art). Each character, gesture and decorative element can be "read" and reflected back on the owner of the seal, revealing

his or her social rank and even sometimes the name of the owner. Although the same iconography found on seals can be found on carved stelae, terra cotta plaques, wall reliefs and paintings, its most complete compendium exists on the thousands of seals which have survived from antiquity.

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3.6: The Standard of Ur

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective and analysis of the *Standard of Ur*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Standard of Ur, c. 2600–2400 BCE, 21.59 × 49.5 × 12 cm (British Museum)

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3.7: Ziggurat of Ur

The Great Ziggurat



Figure **3.7.1**. Ziggurat of Ur, c. 2100 BCE mud brick and baked brick, Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq (largely reconstructed)

The ziggurat is the most distinctive architectural invention of the Ancient Near East. Like an ancient Egyptian pyramid, an ancient Near Eastern ziggurat has four sides and rises up to the realm of the gods. However, unlike Egyptian pyramids, the exterior of Ziggurats were not smooth but tiered to accommodate the work which took place at the structure as well as the administrative oversight and religious rituals essential to Ancient Near Eastern cities. Ziggurats are found scattered around what is today Iraq and Iran, and stand as an imposing testament to the power and skill of the ancient culture that produced them.

One of the largest and best-preserved ziggurats of Mesopotamia is the great Ziggurat at Ur. Small excavations occurred at the site around the turn of the twentieth century, and in the 1920s Sir Leonard Woolley, in a joint project with the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia and the British Museum in London, revealed the monument in its entirety.



Figure **3.7.2**. Ziggurat of Ur, c. 2100 BCE, Woolley excavation workers (Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq)

What Woolley found was a massive rectangular pyramidal structure, oriented to true North, 210 by 150 feet, constructed with three levels of terraces, standing originally between 70 and 100 feet high. Three monumental staircases led up to a gate at the first terrace level. Next, a single staircase rose to a second terrace which supported a platform on which a temple and the final and highest terrace stood. The core of the ziggurat is made of mud brick covered with baked bricks laid with bitumen, a naturally occurring tar. Each of the baked bricks measured about 11.5 × 11.5 × 2.75 inches and weighed as much as 33 pounds. The lower portion of the ziggurat, which supported the first terrace, would have used some 720,000 baked bricks. The resources needed to build the Ziggurat at Ur are staggering.

Moon Goddess Nanna



Figure **3.7.3**. Ziggurat of Ur, partly restored, c. 2100 BCE mudbrick and baked brick. Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq

The Ziggurat at Ur and the temple on its top were built around 2100 BCE by the king Ur-Nammu of the Third Dynasty of Ur for the moon goddess Nanna, the divine patron of the city state. The structure would have been the highest point in the city by far and, like the spire of a medieval cathedral, would have been visible for miles around, a focal point for travelers and the pious alike. As the Ziggurat supported the temple of the patron god of the city of Ur, it is likely that it was the place where the citizens of Ur would bring agricultural surplus and where they would go to receive their regular food allotments. In antiquity, to visit the ziggurat at Ur was to seek both spiritual and physical nourishment.

Clearly the most important part of the ziggurat at Ur was the Nanna temple at its top, but this, unfortunately, has not survived. Some blue glazed bricks have been found which archaeologists suspect might have been part of the temple decoration. The lower parts of the ziggurat, which do survive, include amazing details of engineering and design. For instance, because the unbaked mud brick core of the temple would, according to the season, be alternatively more or less damp, the architects included holes through the baked exterior layer of the temple allowing water to evaporate from its core. Additionally, drains were built into the ziggurat's terraces to carry away the winter rains.

Hussein's Assumption



Figure **3.7.4**. US soldiers decend the Ziggurat of Ur, Tell el-Mukayyar, Iraq

The Ziggurat at Ur has been restored twice. The first restoration was in antiquity. The last Neo-Babylonian king, Nabodinus, apparently replaced the two upper terraces of the structure in the sixth century BCE Some 2400 years later in the 1980s, Saddam Hussein restored the façade of the massive lower foundation of the ziggurat, including the three monumental staircases leading up to the gate at the first terrace. Since this most recent restoration, however, the Ziggurat at Ur has experienced some damage. During the recent war led by American and coalition forces, Saddam Hussein parked his MiG fighter jets next to the Ziggurat, believing that the bombers would spare them for fear of destroying the ancient site. Hussein's assumptions proved only partially true as the ziggurat sustained some damage from American and coalition bombardment.

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3.8: Art of Akkad and Ur

Akkad



Figure **3.8.1**. Head of Akkadian Ruler, 2250–2200 BCE (Iraqi Museum, Baghdad)

Competition between Akkad in the north and Ur in the south created two centralized regional powers at the end of the third millennium.

This centralization was military in nature and the art of this period generally became more martial. The Akkadian Empire was begun by Sargon, a man from a lowly family who rose to power and founded the royal city of Akkad (Akkad has not yet been located, though one theory puts it under modern Baghdad).

This image of an unidentified Akkadian ruler (some say it is Sargon, but no one knows) is one of the most beautiful and terrifying images in all of Ancient Near Eastern art. The life sized bronze head shows in sharp geometric clarity, locks of hair, curled lips and a wrinkled brow. Perhaps more awesome than the powerful and somber face of this ruler is the violent attack that was mutilated it in antiquity.

Ur



Figure **3.8.2**. Stela of Ur-Nammu, c. 2112-2094 BCE, limestone, 3 × 1.5 m (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)

The kingdom of Akkad ends with internal strife and invasion by the the Gutians from the Zagros mountains to the northeast. The Gutians were ousted in turn and the city of Ur, south of Uruk, became dominant. King Ur-Nammu established the third dynasty of Ur, also referred to as the Ur III period.

Perhaps because of the changing fortunes of the area, monuments erected by rulers begin to include multiple registers and tell long and complicated stories, almost like three-dimensional comic books.

This limestone stele, found in a very fragmentary state at Ur, has five narrative layers (registers) on both sides. They likely depict King Ur Nammu building and consecrating the major temple complex at Ur dedicated to Nanna, the moon god and divine patron of the city.

The king is shown multiple times carrying mud bricks. He is accompanied by an architect and is also shown praying to Nanna who is represented as a huge crescent moon at the top of the stele.

The late third millennium is the era in which massive temple structures, so typical of ancient Near Eastern architecture, were first created. The name of the current ruler was often stamped on each brick of these huge raised platform temples known as ziggurats. The Ziggurat at Ur is a largely reconstructed example from a later period.

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3.9: Victory Stele of Naram-Sin

A stele is a vertical stone monument or marker often inscribed with text or with relief carving. Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker discuss the *Victory Stele of Naram-Sin* and its historical context.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Victory Stele of Naram-Sin, Akkadian, pink limestone, 2254–2218 BCE (Louvre, Paris)

This monument depicts the Akkadian victory over the Lullubi Mountain people. In the twelfth century BCE, 1,000 years after it was originally made, the Elamite king, Shutruk-Nahhunte, attacked Babylon and, according to his later inscription, the stele was taken to Susa in what is now Iran. A stele is a vertical stone monument or marker often inscribed with text or relief carving.

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3.10: Theories on the Meaning of the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin



Scholars have speculated on the possible meanings of the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin; the post “Intro to Ancient Near East: Akkad” focuses on Akkad and the *Victory Stele of Naram-Sin*. In particular, the author writes about the stars on the stele and their symbolic significance.

- Intro to Ancient Near East: Akkad

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3.11: Law Code of Hammurabi

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker discuss the *Law Code Stele of King Hammurabi* and its historical context.



Video **3.11.1**: Law Code Stele of King Hammurabi, basalt, Babylonian, 1792–1750 B.C.E. (Musée du Louvre, Paris) https://youtu.be/JO9YxZYd0qY

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3.12: Assyrian Art

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Ashurbanipal Hunting Lions* from the North Palace, Ninevah, Assyrian.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Ashurbanipal Hunting Lions, gypsum hall relief from the North Palace, Ninevah, c. 645–635 BCE, excavated by H. Rassam beginning in 1853 (British Museum)

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3.13: Lamassu

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Lamassu* from the citadel of Sargon II.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Lamassu (winged human-headed bulls possibly lamassu or shedu) from the citadel of Sargon II, Dur Sharrukin (now Khorsabad, Iraq), Neo-Assyrian, c. 720–705 BCE, gypseous alabaster, 4.20 × 4.36 × 0.97 m, excavated by P.-E. Botta 1843–44 (Musée du Louvre)

In the News

Irreplaceable Lamassu sculpture, Assyrian architecture and whole archaeological sites have recently been destroyed by militants that control large areas of Iraq and Syria. This tragedy cannot be undone and is an attack on our shared history and cultural heritage. To learn more read this February 27, 2015, New York Times article.

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3.14: Neo-Babylonian Art

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way from the city of Babylon.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way, Babylon, c. 575 BCE, glazed mud brick (Pergamon Museum, Berlin)

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3.15: Art of the Persian Empire

The heart of ancient Persia is in what is now southwest Iran, in the region called the Fars. In the second half of the sixth century, the Persians (also called the Achaemenids) created an enormous empire reaching from the Indus Valley to Northern Greece and from Central Asia to Egypt.

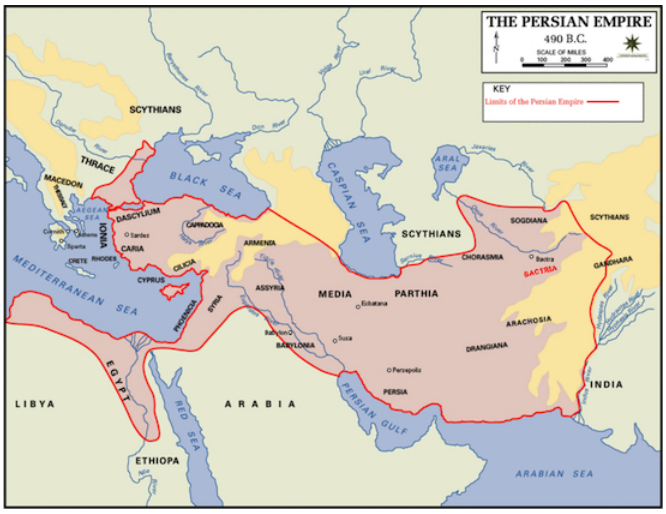


Figure **3.15.1**. A Map of the Persian Empire

Although the surviving literary sources on the Persian empire were written by ancient Greeks who were the sworn enemies of the Persians and highly contemptuous of them, the Persians were in fact quite tolerant and ruled a multi-ethnic empire. Persia was the first empire known to have acknowledged the different faiths, languages and political organizations of its subjects.

This tolerance for the cultures under Persian control carried over into administration. In the lands which they conquered, the Persians continued to use indigenous languages and administrative structures. For example, The Persians accepted hieroglyphic script written on papyrus in Egypt and traditional Babylonian record keeping in cuneiform in Mesopotamia. The Persians must have been very proud of this new approach to empire as can be seen in the representation of the many different peoples in the reliefs from Persepolis, a city founded by Darius the Great in the sixth century BCE.



Figure **3.15.2**. Apadana, Persepolis (undated photograph)



Figure 3.15.3. Assyrian delegation, Persepolis (Assyrians bringing rams and other tribute), Stairway to the Apadana

Persepolis included a massive columned hall used for receptions by the Kings, called the Apadana. This hall contained 72 columns and two monumental stairways. The walls of the spaces and stairs leading up to the reception hall were carved with hundreds of Figures, several of which illustrated subject peoples of various ethnicities, bringing tribute to the Persian king.

The Persian Empire was, famously, conquered by Alexander the Great. Alexander no doubt was impressed by the Persian system of absorbing and retaining local language and traditions as he imitated this system himself in the vast lands he won in battle. Indeed, Alexander made a point of burying the last Persian emperor, Darius III, in a lavish and respectful way in the royal tombs near Persepolis. This enabled Alexander to claim title to the Persian throne and legitimize his control over the greatest empire of the Ancient Near East.

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3.16: External Resources

Explore the following website for information about Sumer (remember that means Mesopotamia and includes the city of Ur) and its religious art/architecture (including its ziggurats and the Standard of Ur):

- Crystal Links
- British Museum (Mesopotamia The British Museum) and click on Sumer. Look at the information on the Royal Tombs at Ur and the ziggurats
- Oriental Institute: Apadana of Persepolis Slideshow
- Letter from Iraq: A U.S. Soldier Reflects

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: The Art of Ancient Egypt

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Ancient Egyptian art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Ancient Egyptian art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Ancient Egyptian art on the continued evolution of Western art

In Module 5 we will examine Ancient Greek art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Greek art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

4.1: Module 4 Overview
4.2: Key Learning Items
4.3: Ancient Egypt
4.4: Egyptian Art
4.5: Materials and Techniques
4.6: Seated Scribe
4.7: The Great Pyramids of Giza
4.8: Pyramid of Khufu
4.9: Pyramid of Khafre and the Great Sphinx
4.10: Pyramid of Menkaure
4.11: House Altar (Amarna Period)
4.12: Portrait Head of Queen Tiye
4.13: Bust of Nefertiti
4.14: Ramesses II
4.15: External Resources

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4.1: Module 4 Overview

What You'll Learn To Do: Examine Ancient Egyptian art and its impact on art history.

In Module 4 we will examine Ancient Egyptian art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Egyptian art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Ancient Egypt

- **Read:** Ancient Egypt
- **Read:** Egyptian Art
- **Read:** Materials & Techniques

Old Kingdom Art

- **Watch:** Seated Scribe (3:00)
- **Read:** The Great Pyramids of Giza
- **Read:** Pyramid of Khufu
- **Read:** Pyramid of Khafre and the Great Sphinx
- **Read:** Pyramid of Menkaure

New Kingdom Art

- **Watch:** House Altar (Amarna Period) (5:02)
- **Watch:** Portrait Head of Queen Tiye (3:15)
- **Watch:** Bust of Nefertiti (4:00)
- **Watch:** Ramesses II (9:33)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit: Review:** Module 4 Quiz (5 points)

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4.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- How does the artwork function in Egypt?
- What were the conventions for depicting pharaohs?
- How did the Egyptian religious beliefs affect their art and architecture?
- Were there many stylistic changes throughout the course of ancient Egyptian art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- formal frontality
- divine cult statues
- registers
- hierarchy of scale
- hieroglyphs
- faience
- raised relief
- sunk relief
- mastaba
- ben-ben stone
- ka statue
- Old Kingdom Art
- New Kingdom Art
- Amarna Period Art

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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4.3: Ancient Egypt

Egypt's impact on later cultures was immense. You could say that Egypt provided the building blocks for Greek and Roman culture, and, through them, influenced all of the Western tradition.



Figure **4.3.1**. Pyramid of Khafre at Giza, c. 2520–2494. Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Today, Egyptian imagery, concepts, and perspectives are found everywhere; you will find them in architectural forms, on money, and in our day to day lives. Many cosmetic surgeons, for example, use the silhouette of Queen Nefertiti (whose name means "the beautiful one has come") in their advertisements.

Longevity

Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted for more than 3000 years and showed an incredible amount of continuity. That is more than 15 times the age of the United States, and consider how often our culture shifts; less than 10 years ago, there was no Facebook, Twitter, or Youtube.

While today we consider the Greco-Roman period to be in the distant past, it should be noted that Cleopatra VII's reign (which ended in 30 BCE) is closer to our own time than it was to that of the construction of the pyramids of Giza. It took humans nearly 4000 years to build something—anything—taller than the Great Pyramids. Contrast that span to the modern era; we get excited when a record lasts longer than a decade.

Consistency and Stability

Egypt's stability is in stark contrast to the Ancient Near East of the same period, which endured an overlapping series of cultures and upheavals with amazing regularity.

The earliest royal monuments, such as the Narmer Palette carved around 3100 BCE, display identical royal costumes and poses as those seen on later rulers, even Ptolemaic kings on their temples 3000 years later.



Figure **4.3.2**. (left) Palette of Narmer, c. 3000–2920 BCE and (right) Ramses III smiting at Medinet Habu (1160 BCE)

A vast amount of Egyptian imagery, especially royal imagery that was governed by decorum (a sense of what was 'appropriate'), remained stupefyingly consistent throughout its history. This is why, especially to the untrained eye, their art appears extremely static—and in terms of symbols, gestures, and the way the body is rendered, it was. It was intentional. The Egyptians were aware of their consistency, which they viewed as stability, divine balance, and clear evidence of the correctness of their culture.



Figure **4.3.3**. Painted raised relief offering table in the Temple of Seti I at Abydos (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

This consistency was closely related to a fundamental belief that depictions had an impact beyond the image itself—tomb scenes of the deceased receiving food, or temple scenes of the king performing perfect rituals for the gods—were functionally causing those things to occur in the divine realm. If the image of the bread loaf was omitted from the deceased's table, they had no bread in the Afterlife; if the king was depicted with the incorrect ritual implement, the ritual was incorrect and this could have dire consequences. This belief led to an active resistance to change in codified depictions.

The earliest recorded tourist graffiti on the planet came from a visitor from the time of Ramses II who left their appreciative mark at the already 1300-year-old site of the Step Pyramid at Saqqara, the earliest of the massive royal stone monuments. They were understandably impressed by the works of their ancestors and endeavored to continue that ancient legacy.

Geography

Egypt is a land of duality and cycles, both in topography and culture. The geography is almost entirely rugged, barren desert, except for an explosion of green that straddles either side of the Nile as it flows the length of the country. The river emerges from far to the south, deep in Africa, and empties into the Mediterranean sea in the north after spreading from a single channel into a fan-shaped system, known as a delta, at its northernmost section.



Figure **4.3.4**. View from the high peak of the Theban hills showing the sharp delineation between the lush Valley and the barren desert. Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

The influence of this river on Egyptian culture and development cannot be overstated—without its presence, the civilization would have been entirely different, and most likely entirely elsewhere. The Nile provided not only a constant source of life-giving water, but created the fertile lands that fed the growth of this unique (and uniquely resilient) culture.

Each year, fed by melting snows in the far-off headlands, the river overflowed its banks in an annual flood that covered the ground with a rich, black silt and produced incredibly fertile fields. The Egyptians referred to this as *Kemet*, the "black lands," and contrasted this dense, dark soil against the *Deshret*, the "red lands" of the sterile desert; the line between these zones was (and in most cases still is) a literal line. The visual effect is stark, appearing almost artificial in its precision.

Time—Cyclical and Linear

The annual inundation of the Nile was also a reliable, and measurable, cycle that helped form their concept of the passage of time. In fact, the calendar we use today is derived from one developed by the ancient Egyptians.

They divided the year into 3 seasons: *akhet* "inundation," *peret* "growing/emergence," and *shemw* "harvest." Each season was, in turn, divided into four 30-day months. Although this annual cycle, paired with the daily solar cycle that is so evident in the desert, led to a powerful drive to see the universe in cyclical time, this idea existed simultaneously with the reality of linear time.

These two concepts—the cyclical and the linear—came to be associated with two of their primary deities: Osiris, the eternal lord of the dead, and Re, the sun god who was reborn with each dawn.

Early Development: The Predynastic Period

The civilization of Egypt obviously did not spring fully formed from the Nile mud; although the massive pyramids at Giza may appear to the uninitiated to have appeared out of nowhere, they were founded on thousands of years of cultural and technological development and experimentation. Dynastic Egypt—sometimes referred to as *Pharaonic* (after *pharaoh*, the Greek title of the Egyptian kings derived from the Egyptian title *per aA*, "Great House") which was the time when the country was largely unified under a single ruler, begins around 3100 BCE.

The period before this, lasting from about 5000 BCE until unification, is referred to as Predynastic by modern scholars. Prior to this were thriving Paleolithic and Neolithic groups, stretching back hundreds of thousands of years, descended from northward migrating homo erectus who settled along the Nile Valley. During the Predynastic period, ceramics, figurines, mace heads, and other artifacts such as slate palettes used for grinding pigments, begin to appear, as does imagery that will become iconic during the Pharaonic era—we can see the first hints of what is to come.

Dynasties

It is important to recognize that the dynastic divisions modern scholars use were not used by the ancients themselves. These divisions were created in the first Western-style history of Egypt, written by an Egyptian priest named Manetho in the 3rd century BCE. Each of the 33 dynasties included a series of rulers usually related by kinship or the location of their seat of power. Egyptian history is also divided into larger chunks, known as *kingdoms* and *periods*, to distinguish times of strength and unity from those of change, foreign rule, or disunity.

Period	Dates
Old Kingdom (a.k.a. The Pyramid Age)	c. 2649–2150 BCE
First Intermediate Period	c. 2150–2030 BCE
Middle Kingdom	c. 2030–1640 BCE
Second Intermediate Period (Northern Delta region ruled by Asiatics)	c. 1640–1540 BCE
New Kingdom	c. 1550–1070 BCE
Third Intermediate Period	c. 1070–713 BCE
Late Period (a series from foreign dynasties, including Nubian, Libyan, and Persian rulers)	c. 712–332 BCE
Ptolemaic Period (ruled by Greco-Romans)	c. 332–330 BCE

The Egyptians themselves referred to their history in relation to the ruler of the time. Years were generally recorded as the regnal dates (from the Latin regnum, meaning kingdom or rule) of the ruling king, so that with each new reign, the numbers began anew.

Later kings recorded the names of their predecessors in vast *king-lists* on the walls of their temples and depicted themselves offering to the rulers who came before them—one of the best known examples is in the temple of Seti I at Abydos.

These lists were often condensed, with some rulers (such as the contentious and disruptive Akhenaten) and even entire dynasties omitted from the record; they are not truly history, rather they are a form of ancestor worship, a celebration of the consistency of kingship of which the current ruler was a part.

The Pharaoh—Not Just a King

Kings in Egypt were complex intermediaries that straddled the terrestrial and divine realms. They were, obviously, living humans, but upon accession to the throne, they also embodied the eternal office of kingship itself.

The ka, or spirit, of kingship was often depicted as a separate entity standing behind the human ruler. This divine aspect of the office of kingship was what gave authority to the human ruler.

The living king was associated with the god Horus, the powerful, virile falcon-headed god who was believed to bestow the throne to the first human king.

Horus is regularly shown guarding and guiding the living ruler; as in this image of a falcon (Horus) wrapped behind the head of Ramses III in the tomb of Khaemwaset (Figure **4.3.5**, right).



Figure 4.3.5: (left) Horus in the tomb of Khaemwaset. (right) Horus wrapped behind the head of Ramses III. Photos: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC



Figure 4.3.7; Osiris from QV44 in the Valley of the Queens. Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Horus's immensely important father, Osiris, was the lord of the underworld. One of the original divine rulers of Egypt, this deity embodied the promise of regeneration. Cruelly murdered by his brother Seth, the god of the chaotic desert, Osiris was revived through the potent magic of his wife Isis.

Through her knowledge and skill, Osiris was able to sire the miraculous Horus, who avenged his father and threw his criminal uncle off the throne to take his rightful place.

Osiris became ruler of the realm of the dead, the eternal source of regeneration in the Afterlife. Deceased kings were identified with this god, creating a cycle where the dead king fused with the divine king of the dead and his successor defeated death to take his place on the throne as Horus.

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4.4: Egyptian Art



Figure 4.4.1. Beautifully preserved life-size painted limestone funerary sculptures of Prince Rahotep and his wife Nofret. Note the lifelike eyes of inlaid rock crystal (Old Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Ancient Egyptian art must be viewed from the standpoint of the ancient Egyptians to understand it. The somewhat static, usually formal, strangely abstract, and often blocky nature of much Egyptian imagery has, at times, led to unfavorable comparisons with later, and much more "naturalistic," Greek or Renaissance art. However, the art of the Egyptians served a vastly different purpose than that of these later cultures.

Art Not Meant to Be Seen

While today we marvel at the glittering treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamun, the sublime reliefs in New Kingdom tombs, and the serene beauty of Old Kingdom statuary, it is imperative to remember that the majority of these works were never intended to be seen—that was simply not their purpose.



Figure 4.4.2. Painted sunk relief of the king being embraced by a goddess. Tomb of Amenherkhepshef (QV 55) (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

The Function of Egyptian Art

These images, whether statues or relief, were designed to benefit a divine or deceased recipient. Statuary provided a place for the recipient to manifest and receive the benefit of ritual action. Most statues show a formal frontality, meaning they are arranged straight ahead, because they were designed to face the ritual being performed before them. Many statues were also originally placed in recessed niches or other architectural settings—contexts that would make frontality their expected and natural mode.

Statuary, whether divine, royal, or elite, provided a kind of conduit for the spirit (or *ka*) of that being to interact with the terrestrial realm. Divine cult statues (few of which survive) were the subject of daily rituals of clothing, anointing, and perfuming with incense and were carried in processions for special festivals so that the people could "see" them (they were almost all entirely shrouded from view, but their "presence" was felt).

Royal and elite statuary served as intermediaries between the people and the gods. Family chapels with the statuary of a deceased forefather could serve as a sort of 'family temple.' There were festivals in honor of the dead, where the family would come and eat in the chapel, offering food for the Afterlife, flowers (symbols of rebirth), and incense (the scent of which was considered divine). Preserved letters let us know that the deceased was actively petitioned for their assistance, both in this world and the next.

What We See in Museums



Figure **4.4.3**. Hard stone group statue of Ramses II with Osiris, Isis, and Horus in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Generally, the works we see on display in museums were products of royal or elite workshops; these pieces fit best with our modern aesthetic and ideas of beauty. Most museum basements, however, are packed with hundreds (even thousands!) of other objects made for people of lower status—small statuary, amulets, coffins, and stelae (similar to modern tombstones) that are completely recognizable, but rarely displayed. These pieces generally show less quality in the workmanship; being oddly proportioned or poorly executed; they are less often considered 'art' in the modern sense. However, these objects served the exact same function of providing benefit to their owners (and to the same degree of effectiveness), as those made for the elite.

Modes of Representation for Three-Dimensional Art



Figure **4.4.4**. Painted wooden model of the deceased overseeing the counting of cattle in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (Middle Kingdom). Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Three-dimensional representations, while being quite formal, also aimed to reproduce the real-world—statuary of gods, royalty, and the elite was designed to convey an idealized version of that individual. Some aspects of 'naturalism' were dictated by the material. Stone statuary, for example, was quite closed—with arms held close to the sides, limited positions, a strong back pillar that provided support, and with the fill spaces left between limbs.

Wood and metal statuary, in contrast, was more expressive—arms could be extended and hold separate objects, spaces between the limbs were opened to create a more realistic appearance, and more positions were possible. Stone, wood, and metal statuary of elite Figures, however, all served the same functions and retained the same type of formalization and frontality. Only statuettes of lower status people displayed a wide range of possible actions, and these pieces were focused on the actions, which benefitted the elite owner, not the people involved.

Modes of Representation for Two-Dimensional Art

Two-dimensional art represented the world quite differently. Egyptian artists embraced the two-dimensional surface and attempted to provide the most representative aspects of each element in the scenes rather than attempting to create vistas that replicated the

real world.

Each object or element in a scene was rendered from its most recognizable angle and these were then grouped together to create the whole. This is why images of people show their face, waist, and limbs in profile, but eye and shoulders frontally. These scenes are complex composite images that provide complete information about the various elements, rather than ones designed from a single viewpoint, which would not be as comprehensive in the data they conveyed.

Registers



Figure **4.4.5**. Painted sunk relief showing orderly registers in the Temple of Ramses II at Abydos (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Scenes were ordered in parallel lines, known as registers. These registers separate the scene as well as provide ground lines for the Figures. Scenes without registers are unusual and were generally only used to specifically evoke chaos; battle and hunting scenes will often show the prey or foreign armies without groundlines. Registers were also used to convey information about the scenes—the higher up in the scene, the higher the status; overlapping Figures imply that the ones underneath are further away, as are those elements that are higher within the register.



Figure **4.4.6**. Chaotic fighting scene on a painted box from the tomb of Tutankhamen in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Hierarchy of Scale

Difference in scale was the most commonly used method for conveying hierarchy—the larger the scale of the Figures, the more important they were. Kings were often shown at the same scale as deities, but both are shown larger than the elite and far larger than the average Egyptian.



Figure 4.4.7. Highly detailed raised relief hieroglyphs on the White Chapel of Senusret I at Karnak (Middle Kingdom). Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Text accompanied almost all images. In statuary, identifying text will appear on the back pillar or base, and relief usually has captions or longer texts that complete and elaborate on the scenes. Hieroglyphs were often rendered as tiny works of art in themselves, even though these small pictures do not always stand for what they depict; many are instead phonetic sounds. Some, however, are logographic, meaning they stand for an object or concept.

The lines blur between text and image in many cases. For instance, the name of a Figure in the text on a statue will regularly omit the determinative (an unspoken sign at the end of a word that aids identification—for example, verbs of motion are followed by a pair of walking legs, names of men end with the image of a man, names of gods with the image of a seated god, etc.) at the end of the name. In these instances, the representation itself serves this function.

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4.5: Materials and Techniques



Figure **4.5.1**. Egyptian stones

Egyptian artists used a wide array of materials, both local and imported, from very early in their history. For instance, already in the Predynastic period we find figurines carved from lapis lazui—a lustrous blue stone that originates in what is now Afghanistan and indicates the early presence of robust trade routes.

Stone



Figure **4.5.2**. Menkaure (Mycerinus) and Khamerernebty(?), graywacke, c. 2490-2472 BCE (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

There were numerous native stones used for statuary, including the ubiquitous soft limestone of the desert cliffs that line most of the Nile valley, as well as sandstone, calcite, and schist.

Harder stones include quartzite, diorite, granite, and basalt. Carving on softer stones was done using copper chisels and stone tools; hard stone required tools of yet harder stone, copper alloys, and the use of abrasive sand to shape them. Polishing was achieved with a smooth rubbing stone and abrasive sands with a fine grit.

Painted Statuary

Most statuary was painted; even stones selected for the symbolism of their color were often painted. For instance, the exemplary statues of Menkaure (right), builder of the smallest of the three major pyramids at Giza, were executed in dark schist (also called graywacke). This smooth black stone is connected with Osiris, resurrected god of the dead who was often shown with black or green skin referring to the fertile silt and lush vegetation of the Nile valley.

These images preserve traces of red paint on the king's skin indicating that, when completed and placed in his memorial temple near his pyramid, they would have appeared lifelike in coloration. With time, the paint would have flaked away, revealing the black stone underneath and explicitly linking the deceased king with the Lord of the Underworld.

Wood



Figure **4.5.3**. Ceremonial gilded wooden shield from the tomb of Tutakhamun. Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom) Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Egyptian artists also used a variety of woods in their work, including the native acacia, tamarisk, and sycamore fig as well as fir, cedar, and other conifers imported from Syria. Artisans excelled at puzzling together small, irregular pieces of wood and pegged them into place to create statuary, coffins, boxes, and furniture.

Metals

They also executed pieces in various metals, including copper, copper alloys (such as bronze), gold, and silver. Cult statues of gods were made in gold and silver—materials identified by myth as their skin and bones—and were often quite small. Very few metal statues survive because they were often melted down and the material reused, although preserved examples from the Old and Middle Kingdoms demonstrate that they were skilled not only in sheet metal forming, but also practiced complex casting.



Figure **4.5.4**. Tutankhamun's lunar pectoral in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Jewelry work was quite sophisticated even in the Old Kingdom, as demonstrated by some highly creative pieces depicted in tomb scenes. A cache of royal jewelry from the tombs of Middle Kingdom princesses displays extremely high levels of skill in terms of design as well as precisely cut stone inlays, repoussé, and cloisonné.

Faience

Many objects, especially small amulets and inlays, were made from a manufactured material known as Egyptian faience. This quartz-based medium could be easily shaped, molded, and mass produced. The glaze coating could be almost any color, depending on the minerals used in the composition, although turquoise blue is the most common.

Relief Sculpture



Figure **4.5.5**. Painted raised relief in the Temple of Seti I at Abydos (New Kingdom). Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Relief was usually carved before being painted. The two primary classes of relief are raised relief (where the Figures stand up out from the surface) and sunk relief (where the Figures are cut into and below the surface). The surface would be smoothed with a layer of plaster and then painted. If the surface was not carved before painting, several layers of mud plaster would be applied to create a flat plane.

The drawing surface would be delineated using gridded guidelines, snapped onto the wall using string coated in red pigment dust (very much like chalk lines used by modern carpenters). This grid helped the artists properly proportion the Figures and lay out the scenes. Scene elements were drafted out using red paint, corrections noted in black paint, and then the painting was executed one color at a time. Even on carved relief, many elements in a scene would be executed only in paint and not cut into the surface.

Pigments



Figure **4.5.6**. Iron oxide nodules, source of a range of red pigments, Thebes. Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Most pigments in Egypt were derived from local minerals. White was often made from gypsum, black from carbon, reds and yellows from iron oxides, blue and green from azurite and malachite, and bright yellow (representing gold) from orpiment. These minerals were ground and then mixed with a plant or animal based glue to make a medium able to attach to the walls. They could be applied as a single plane, but were also layered to create subtle effects and additional colors, such as pink or gray. More information on the materials used to make pigments, as well as a discussion of the symbolism of various colors may be found in the article “Aspects of Color in Ancient Egypt” at Egyptological.

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4.6: Seated Scribe

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *The Seated Scribe*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

The Seated Scribe, c. 2620–2500 BCE, c. fourth Dynasty, Old Kingdom, painted limestone with rock crystal, magnesite, and copper/arsenic inlay for the eyes and wood for the nipples, found in Saqqara (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

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4.7: The Great Pyramids of Giza

One of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World



Figure **4.7.1**. Pyramid of Khafre (Photo: Amy Calvert)

The last remaining of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the great pyramids of Giza are perhaps the most famous and discussed structures in history. These massive monuments were unsurpassed in height for thousands of years after their construction and continue to amaze and enthrall us with their overwhelming mass and seemingly impossible perfection. Their exacting orientation and mind-boggling construction has elicited many theories about their origins, including unsupported suggestions that they had extra-terrestrial impetus. However, by examining the several hundred years prior to their emergence on the Giza plateau, it becomes clear that these incredible structures were the result of many experiments, some more successful than others, and represent an apogee in the development of the royal mortuary complex.

Three Pyramids, Three Rulers

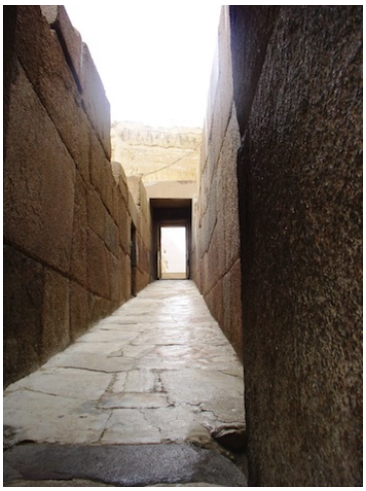


Figure **4.7.2**. View up the causeway from Khafre's valley temple towards his pyramid (Photo:Dr. Amy Calvert)

The three primary pyramids on the Giza plateau were built over the span of three generations by the rulers Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. Each pyramid was part of a royal mortuary complex that also included a temple at its base and a long stone causeway (some nearly 1 kilometer in length) leading east from the plateau to a valley temple on the edge of the floodplain.

Other (Smaller) Pyramids, and Small Tombs

In addition to these major structures, several smaller pyramids belonging to queens are arranged as satellites. A major cemetery of smaller tombs, known as **mastabas** (Arabic for *bench* in reference to their shape—flat-roofed, rectangular, with sloping sides), fills the area to the east and west of the pyramid of Khufu and were constructed in a grid-like pattern for prominent members of the court. Being buried near the pharaoh was a great honor and helped ensure a prized place in the afterlife.

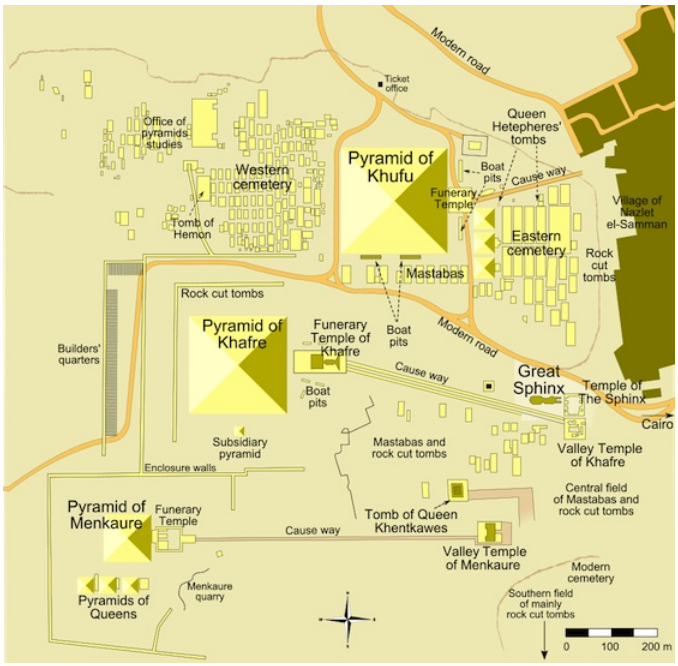


Figure **4.7.3**. Giza Pyramid Complex

A Reference to the Sun

The shape of the pyramid was a solar reference, perhaps intended as a solidified version of the rays of the sun. Texts talk about the sun's rays as a ramp the pharaoh mounts to climb to the sky—the earliest pyramids, such as the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara—were actually designed as a staircase. The pyramid was also clearly connected to the sacred ben-ben stone, an icon of the primeval mound that was considered the place of initial creation. The pyramid was considered a place of regeneration for the deceased ruler.

Construction



Figure **4.7.4**. View up the side of Khufu's pyramid showing scale of the core blocks (Photo: Amy Calvert)

Many questions remain about the construction of these massive monuments, and theories abound as to the actual methods used. The workforce needed to build these structures is also still much discussed. Discovery of a town for workers to the south of the plateau has offered some answers. It is likely that there was a permanent group of skilled craftsmen and builders who were supplemented by seasonal crews of approximately 2,000 conscripted peasants. These crews were divided into gangs of 200 men, with each group further divided into teams of 20. Experiments indicate that these groups of 20 men could haul the 2.5 ton blocks from quarry to pyramid in about 20 minutes, their path eased by a lubricated surface of wet silt. An estimated 340 stones could be

moved daily from quarry to construction site, particularly when one considers that many of the blocks (such as those in the upper courses) were considerably smaller.

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4.8: Pyramid of Khufu



Figure **4.8.1**. Pyramid of Khufu, c. 2551–2528 BCE (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Size

The Great Pyramid, the largest of the three, was built by the pharaoh Khufu and rises to a height of 146 meters (481 feet) with a base length of more than 230 meters (750 feet) per side. The greatest difference in length among the four sides is a mere 4.4 cm (1 ¾ inches) and the base is level within 2.1 cm (less than an inch), an astonishing engineering accomplishment.

Construction: Inner Core Stones, and Outer Casing Stones



Figure **4.8.2**. Detail of core blocks of Khufu's pyramid (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

The pyramid contains an estimated 2,300,000 blocks, some of which are upwards of 50 tons. Like the pyramids built by his predecessor Snefru and those that followed on the Giza plateau, Khufu's pyramid is constructed of inner, rough-hewn, locally quarried core stones, which is all we see today, and angled, outer casing blocks laid in even horizontal courses with spaces filled with gypsum plaster.

The fine outer casing stones, which have long since been removed, were laid with great precision. These blocks of white Tura limestone would have given the pyramid a smooth surface and been quite bright and reflective. At the very top of the pyramid would have sat a capstone, known as a pyramidion, that may have been gilt. This dazzling point, shining in the intense sunlight, would have been visible for a great distance.

Interior

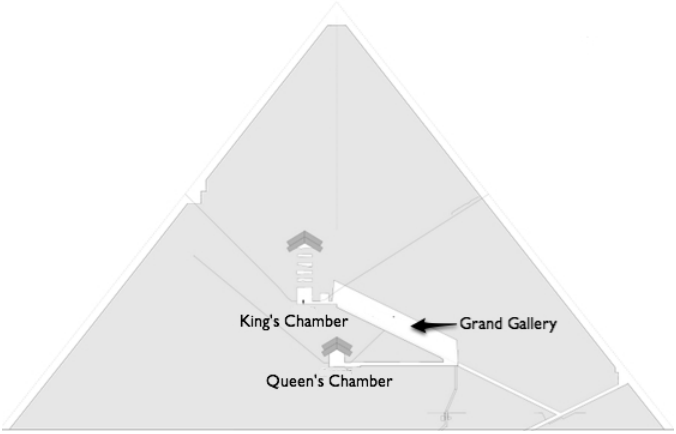


Figure **4.8.3**. Diagram of the pyramid's interior

The interior chambers and passageways of Khufu's pyramid are unique and include a number of enigmatic features. There is an unfinished subterranean chamber whose function is mysterious as well as a number of so-called "air shafts" that radiate out from the upper chambers. These have recently been explored using small robots, but a series of blocking stones have obscured the passages.



Figure **4.8.4**. Entrance, Pyramid of Khufu (Photo: Olaf Tausch)

When entering the pyramid, one has to crawl up a cramped ascending chamber that opens suddenly into a stunning Grand Gallery. This corbelled passage soars to a height of 8.74 m (26 feet) and leads up to the King's Chamber, which is constructed entirely from red granite brought from the southern quarries at Aswan.

Above the King's Chamber are five stress-relieving chambers of massive granite blocks topped with immense cantilevered blocks forming a pent roof to distribute the weight of the mountain of masonry above it. The king's sarcophagus, also carved from red granite, sits empty at the exact central axis of the pyramid. This burial chamber was sealed with a series of massive granite blocks and the entrance to the shaft filled with limestone in an effort to obscure the opening.

Boats for the Afterlife



Figure **4.8.5**. Reconstructed funerary boat of Khufu (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Khufu's mortuary complex also included seven large boat pits. Five of these are located to the east of the pyramid and were a sort of model; these brick-lined boat shaped elements were probably intended for use in the afterlife to transport the king to stellar destinations. Boat burials and models of this type had a long history in royal mortuary contexts—a fleet of 14 such pits, containing actual boats averaging 18-19 meters (60 feet) in length encased inside, were discovered at a Dynasty 1 mortuary enclosure in Abydos, the cemetery of Egypt's earliest kings. Often, however, as with Khufu, the pits were simply boat shaped models rather than containing actual boats.

In addition to these model boat pits, however, on the south side of the pyramid Khufu had two massive, rectangular stone lined pits that contained completely disassembled boats. One of these has been removed and reconstructed in a special museum on the south side of the pyramid. This cedar boat measures 43.3 meters (142 feet) in length and was constructed of 1,224 separate pieces stitched together with ropes. These boats appear to have been used for the funerary procession and as ritual objects connected to the last earthly voyage of the king, and were then dismantled and interred.

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4.9: Pyramid of Khafre and the Great Sphinx

Size and Appearance

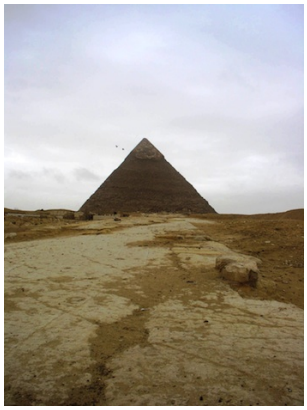


Figure **4.9.1**. Pyramid of Khafre, c. 2520–2494 (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

The second great pyramid of Giza, that built by Khufu's second son Khafre, has a section of outer casing that still survives at the very top (and which would have entirely covered all three of the great pyramids at Giza). Although this monument appears larger than that of his father, it is actually slightly smaller but was constructed 10 m (33 feet) higher on the plateau.

Interior

The interior is much simpler than that of Khufu's pyramid, with a single burial chamber, one small subsidiary chamber, and two passageways. The mortuary temple at the pyramid base was more complex than that of Khufu and was filled with statuary of the king—over 52 life-size or larger images originally filled the structure.

Valley Temple



Figure **4.9.2**. Pillars in Valley Temple of Khafre (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Khafre's valley temple, located at the east end of the causeway leading from the pyramid base, is beautifully preserved. It was constructed of megalithic blocks sheathed with granite and floors of polished white calcite. Statue bases indicate that an additional 24 images of the pharaoh were originally located in this temple.

The Great Sphinx



Figure **4.9.3**. The Great Sphinx (photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Right next to the causeway leading from Khafre's valley temple to the mortuary temple sits the first truly colossal sculpture in Egyptian history: the Great Sphinx. This close association indicates that this massive depiction of a recumbent lion with the head of

a king was carved for Khafre.

The Sphinx is carved from the bedrock of the Giza plateau, and it appears that the core blocks used to construct the king's valley temple were quarried from the layers of stone that run along the upper sides of this massive image.

Khafre



Figure **4.9.4**. Khafre, Egyptian Museum, Cairo

The lion was a royal symbol as well as being connected with the sun as a symbol of the horizon; the fusion of this powerful animal with the head of the pharaoh was an icon that survived and was often used throughout Egyptian history. The king's head is on a smaller scale than the body. This appears to have been due to a defect in the stone; a weakness recognized by the sculptors who compensated by elongating the body.

Directly in front of the Sphinx is a separate temple dedicated to the worship of its cult, but very little is known about it since there are no Old Kingdom texts that refer to the Sphinx or its temple. The temple is similar to Khafre's mortuary temple and has granite pillars forming a colonnade around a central courtyard. However, it is unique in that it has two sanctuaries—one on the east and one on the west—likely connected to the rising and setting sun.

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4.10: Pyramid of Menkaure

The third of the major pyramids at Giza belongs to Mekaure. This is the smallest of the three, rising to a height of 65 meters (213 feet), but the complex preserved some of the most stunning examples of sculpture to survive from all of Egyptian history.



Figure **4.10.1**. Pyramid of Menkaure (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Mekaure's pyramid chambers are more complex than those of Khafre and include a chamber carved with decorative panels and another chamber with six large niches. The burial chamber is lined with massive granite blocks.



Figure **4.10.2**. Pyramid of Menkaure, chamber with niches

His black stone sarcophagus, also carved with niched panels, was discovered inside, but was lost at sea as it was being transported to England.

Within Menkaure's mortuary and valley temples, neither of which were completed before his death, excavation revealed a series of statues of the king. The stunning diad of the king with his primary queen, Khamerernebty II (now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), as well as a number of triads showing the king being embraced by various deities, were discovered in the valley temple and were originally set up surrounding the open court.

This temple was still an active place of cult late in the Old Kingdom and was almost entirely rebuilt at the end of the sixth dynasty after it was heavily damaged by a flood.

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4.11: House Altar (Amarna Period)

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a House Altar depicting Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Three of their Daughters.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

House Altar depicting Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Three of their Daughters, limestone, New Kingdom, Amarna period, eighteenth dynasty, c.1350 BCE (Ägyptisches Museum/Neues Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

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4.12: Portrait Head of Queen Tiye

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Portrait Head of Queen Tiye with a Crown of Two Feathers*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Portrait Head of Queen Tiye with a Crown of Two Feathers, c. 1355 BCE, Amarna Period, eighteenth dynasty, New Kingdom, Egypt, yew wood, lapis lazuli, silver, gold, faience, 22.5 cm high (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection at the Neues Museum, Berlin)

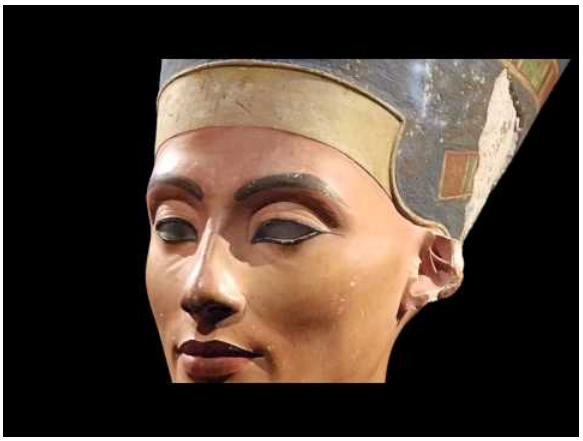
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4.13: Bust of Nefertiti

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti.



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Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti, c. 1340 BCE, limestone and plaster, New Kingdom, eighteenth dynasty, Amarna Period (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection/Neues Museum, Berlin)

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4.14: Ramesses II

Monica Hahn and Brian Seymour provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a larger than life sculpture of Ramesses II.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Ramesses II, Herakleopolis (Temple of Harsaphes), New Kingdom, Egypt, c. 1250 BCE. (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)

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4.15: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Pyramids
- Smithsonian: Pyramids
- History.com: Pyramids Explored
- King Tut's New Face

Watch this video:



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- Akhenaten, King Tut, and the Shock of the New: Carlos Conversations. **Authored by**: Emory University. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/GWM4UehpmOg. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: The Art of Ancient Greece I

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Ancient Greek art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Ancient Greek art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Ancient Greek art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Ancient Greek art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Greek art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

5.1: Module 5 Overview
5.2: Key Learning Items
5.3: Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology
5.4: The Early Aegean (3000–700 BCE)
5.5: Geometric Greek Krater
5.6: Black Figure Amphora
5.7: Niobid Painter, Attic Red Figure Calyx-Krater
5.8: New York Kouros
5.9: Spear Bearer
5.10: The Greek Temple
5.11: East and West Pediments, Temple of Aphaia
5.12: Myron, Discus Thrower
5.13: The Parthenon
5.14: Parthenon's East Pediment
5.15: Parthenon Frieze
5.16: Parthenon Metopes
5.17: Erechtheion
5.18: External Resources

Thumbnail: Parthenon, Athens Greece. Photo taken in 1978. (CC BY-SA 2.0; via Wikipedia)

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5.1: Module 5 Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Ancient Greek art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Greek art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Aegean

- **Read:** Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology
- **Read:** The Early Aegean (3000–700 BCE)

Geometric Period

- **Watch:** Geometric Greek Krater (4:26)

Archaic Period

- **Watch:** Black Figure Amphora (6:42)
- **Watch:** Niobid Painter, Attic Red Figure Calyx-Krater (6:04)
- **Watch:** New York Kouros (5:52)

Classical Period

- **Watch:** Spear Bearer (5:07)
- **Watch:** The Greek Temple (6:31)
- **Watch:** East and West Pediments, Temple of Aphaia (14:39)
- **Watch:** Myron, Discus Thrower (3:45)
- **Watch:** The Parthenon (16:03)
- **Watch:** Parthenon's East Pediment (4:58)
- **Watch:** Parthenon Frieze (5:21)
- **Watch:** Parthenon Metopes (6:42)
- **Watch:** Erechtheion (4:13)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 5 Quiz (5 points)

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5.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the features of Greek art and architecture?
- What elements of Greek art and architecture do you still see today?
- What are the parts of a Greek temple?
- How did Greek sculpture change from the Archaic to Classical periods?
- What are the major differences in the Bronze age sites at Knossos and Mycenae?What was the purpose of each site?
- What structural innovations or conveniences were provided by the architecture?
- What elements of Greek art and architecture do you still see today?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- Geometric art
- krater
- amphora
- black Figure
- red Figure
- Archaic art
- Kouros
- contrapposto
- Classical art
- canon
- pediment
- frieze
- column
- capital
- Doric order
- Ionic order
- entablature
- metope
- caryatid
- symmetria

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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5.3: Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology



Click on the link below to view the website “Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology” developed by Jeremy B. Rutter and JoAnn Gonzalez-Major, and sponsored by Dartmouth College.

This site contains information about the prehistoric archaeology of the Aegean. Through a series of lessons and illustrations, it traces the cultural evolution of humanity in the Aegean basin from the era of hunting and gathering (Palaeolithic-Mesolithic) through the early village farming stage (Neolithic) and the formative period of Aegean civilization into the age of the great palatial cultures of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece.

- Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology

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- Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology. **Authored by**: Jeremy B. Rutter and JoAnn Gonzalez-Major. **Provided by**: Dartmouth College. **Located at**: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~prehistory/aegean/. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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5.4: The Early Aegean (3000–700 BCE)



Click on the link below to view the website “The Early Aegean” by Michael D. Gunther. This website provides a basic timeline of the Early Aegean Period, as well as a large library of images of typical art pieces from the period.

- “The Early Aegean” by Michael D. Gunther

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5.5: Geometric Greek Krater

Brian Seymour and Monica Hahn provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a Geometric Krater from eight century BCE.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Krater, Terracotta, 42 5/8 in. height (108.25 cm), ca. 750–700 BCE, Attic

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- Krater, ca. 750--700 B.C.E.. **Authored by**: Smarthistory. art, history, conversation.. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/hfu1LZ8LTU0. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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5.6: Black Figure Amphora

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of Exekias's attic black Figure amphora.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Attic black Figure amphora by Exekias (potter and painter), archaic period, c. 540–530 BCE, 61.1 cm high, found Vulci (Gregorian Etruscan Museum, Vatican)

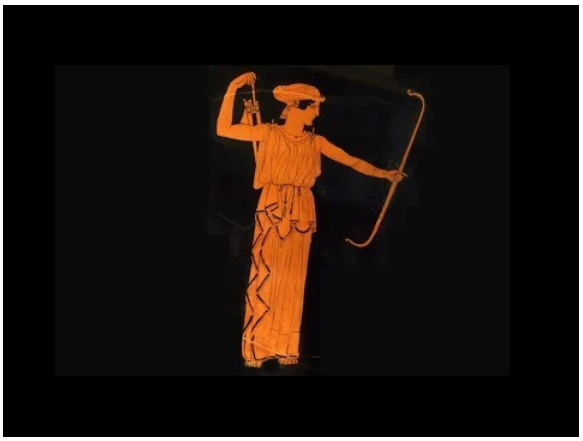
Contributors and Attributions

- Attic Black-Figure: Exekias, amphora with Ajax and Achilles playing a game. **Authored by**: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/greek-pottery/v/exekias-attic-black-Figure-amphora-with-ajax-and-achilles-playing-a-game. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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5.7: Niobid Painter, Attic Red Figure Calyx-Krater

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Niobid Painter's *Niobid Krater*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Niobid Painter, *Niobid Krater*, Attic red-Figure calyx-krater, c. 460–50 BCE (Musée du Louvre)

Contributors and Attributions

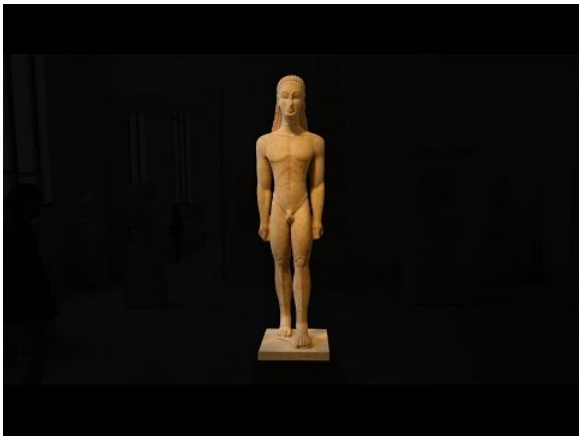
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- Niobid Painter, Niobid Krater, Attic red-Figure calyx-krater, c. 460-50 B.C.E.. **Authored by**: Smarthistory. art, history, conversation.. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/S3TlDyT2lyg. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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5.8: New York Kouros

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of kouros sculptures.



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Marble Statue of a Kouros (New York Kouros), c. 590–580 BCE (Attic, archaic), Naxian marble, 194.6 × 51.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Contributors and Attributions

- New York Kouros. **Authored by**: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/daedalic-archaic/v/kouros-youth-archaic-greek-c-590-580-b-c-e. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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5.9: Spear Bearer

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of Polykleitos's *Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer)*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Polykleitos, *Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer)*, Early Classical Period, Roman marble copy after a Greek bronze original from c. 450–440 BCE, (Museo Archaeologico Nazionale, Naples).

External Link

View this statue up close in the Google Art Project.

Contributors and Attributions

- Polykleitos, Doryphoros (Spear Bearer). **Authored by**: Dr. Beth Harris & Dr. Steven Zucker. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/classical/v/polykleitos-doryphoros-spear-bearer. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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5.10: The Greek Temple

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Ancient Greek Temples at Paestum.



Figure **5.10.1**: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)

Temples Discussed

- Hera I, c. 560–530 BCE, Archaic Period
- Hera II, c. 460 BCE, Classical Period
- Temple of Minerva, c. 500 BCE Archaic Period

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- Ancient Greek temples at Paestum, Italy. **Authored by**: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/daedalic-archaic/v/ancient-greek-temples-at-paestum. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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5.11: East and West Pediments, Temple of Aphaia

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the East and West Pediments from the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

East and West Pediments from the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina, Archaic/Early Classical Periods, c. 490–480 BCE (Glyptothek, Munich)

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5.12: Myron, Discus Thrower

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of Myron's *Discobolus (Discus Thrower)*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Myron, *Discobolus (Discus Thrower)*, Roman copy of an ancient Greek bronze from c. 450 BCE, Classical Period (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme).

Contributors and Attributions

- Myron, Discobolus (Discus Thrower), Roman copy of an ancient Greek bronze. **Authored by**: Dr. Beth Harris & Dr. Steven Zucker. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/classical/v/myron-discobolus-discus-thrower-roman-copy-of-an-ancient-greek-bronze-from-c-450-b-c-e. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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5.13: The Parthenon

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Parthenon.



Video **5.13.1**: Iktinos and Kallikrates (Phidias directed the sculptural program), Parthenon, Athens, 447–432 BCE (High Classical Moment). https://youtu.be/tWDflkBZC6U

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5.14: Parthenon’s East Pediment

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Sculpture from the East Pediment of the Parthenon, possibly carved by Phidias.



Video **5.14.1**: Phidias (?), *Sculpture from the East Pediment of the Parthenon*, marble, c. 448–432 BCE, Classical Period (British Museum, London).

The identification of the Parthenon’s pediment Figures remains unsettled. It is thought that the east pediment depicted the birth of the goddess Athena (fully grown) from the head of her father, Zeus, though these central Figures are now lost.

Scholars have tentatively deduced the identities of the existing Figures as follows (left to right):

- Helios (god of the sun), only the shoulder and arm survive
- Horse, which was part of a quadriga (four-horse chariot) pulling Helios
- Dionysus (god of wine), lounging
- Persephone (daughter of Zeus, abducted by Hades), seated beside her mother Demeter
- Demeter (goddess of the law, marriage, the seasons, and the harvest), seated between her daugther and the standing Figure of Artemis
- Artemis (goddess of the hunt), shown turning from the central scene
- a gap, which likely would have been occupied by Zeus and Athena
- Hestia (goddess of the hearth, later Roman equivalent was Vesta), seated beside Dione
- Dione seated beside Hestia provides a lap for her daugther Aphrodite. Her name is the feminine varient of Zeus, she is sometimes seen as an equivalent of Gaia, goddess of the Earth
- Aphrodite (goddess of love and beauty), leans against her mother Dione
- Horse, thought to belong to either the setting moon (Selene) or night (Nyx)

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- Sculpture from the Parthenon's East Pediment. **Authored by**: Dr. Beth Harris, Dr. Steven Zucker. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: https://web.archive.org/web/20130906011642/http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/Sculpture-from-the-Parthenons-East-Pediment.html. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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5.15: Parthenon Frieze

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a Frieze from the Parthenon, possibly carved by Phidias.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Phidias(?), Parthenon Frieze, c. 438–32 BCE, pentelic marble, Classical Period (420 linear feet of the 525 that complete the frieze are in the British Museum).

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5.16: Parthenon Metopes

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs* from the Parthenon.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs, Parthenon Metopes, south flank, marble, c. 440 BCE, Classical Period (British Museum, London).

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5.17: Erechtheion

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a Caryatid from the Erechtheion on the Acropolis at Athens. Mnesicles may have been the architect.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Mnesicles (?), Caryatid (South Porch) and Ionic Column (North Porch), Erechtheion on the Acropolis, Athens, marble, 421–407 BCE, Classical Period (British Museum, London).

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5.18: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Virtual Tour of the Acropolis
- PBS: The Greeks

Watch these videos:



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

https://youtu.be/F59pH4UJjz4

https://youtu.be/Pk1EyMTSBP8

https://youtu.be/YSbmABgXRWg





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- Minoan civilization on the island of Crete. **Authored by**: tektamos. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/YSbmABgXRWg. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License
- Festos,Faistos,Phaistos, Crete,Kreta,May 2011. **Authored by**: mark conroy. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/jVKt7kK3F4c. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License
- The Enigma of the 'Cup Bearer' - Google Art Project. **Authored by**: Museum Of Cycladic Art. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/zgAPXqw0DjU. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: The Art of Ancient Greece II

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Ancient Greek art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Ancient Greek art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Ancient Greek art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will continue to examine Ancient Greek art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Greek art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

6.1: Overview
6.2: Key Learning Items
6.3: Lysippos- Farnese Hercules
6.4: After Praxiteles, Venus
6.5: Barberini Faun
6.6: Dying Gaul
6.7: Nike of Samothrace
6.8: The Pergamon Altar
6.9: Boxer at Rest
6.10: Alexander Mosaic
6.11: Laocoön and his Sons
6.12: Eros Sleeping and an Old Market Woman
6.13: ** Petra- An Introduction
6.14: Petra- Rock Cut Facades
6.15: ** Petra- Urban Metropolis
6.16: External Resources

Thumbnail: Dying Gaul. (CC BY-SA 3.0; via Wikipedia)

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6.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will continue to examine Ancient Greek art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Greek art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Late Classical Period

- **Watch:** Lysippos: Farnese Hercules (6:27)
- **Watch:** After Praxiteles, Venus (9:08)

Hellenistic Period

- **Watch:** Barberini Faun (5:57)
- **Watch:** Dying Gaul (3:31)
- **Watch:** Nike of Samothrace (2:54)
- **Watch:** The Pergamon Altar (8:49)
- **Watch:** Boxer at Rest (4:13)
- **Watch:** Alexander Mosaic (5:53)
- **Watch:** Laocoön and his Sons (3:42)
- **Watch:** Eros Sleeping and an Old Market Woman (5:19)
- **Read:** Petra: An Introduction
- **Read:** Petra: Rock Cut Facades
- **Read:** Petra: Urban Metropolis

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 6 Quiz (5 points)

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6.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the common features of Greek art and architecture?
- What elements of Greek art and architecture do you still see today?
- How did Greek sculpture change from the Late Classical to Hellenistic era?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- Hellenistic art
- mosaic
- rock-cut facade
- broken pediment
- tholos
- cella
- betyls

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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6.3: Lysippos- Farnese Hercules

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of Lysippos's *Farnese Hercules*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Lysippos, *Farnese Hercules*, fourth century BCE, (later Roman copy by Glycon), Archaeological Museum, Naples.

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6.4: After Praxiteles, Venus

Dr. Francesca Tronchin, Dr. Beth Harris, and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Venus* by an unknown sculpture.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Unknown sculptor, *Venus* after the Greek original by Praxiteles from the fourth century BCE, Roman, 175–200 CE (Getty Villa)

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6.5: Barberini Faun

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Barberini Faun*.



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Barberini Faun, c. 220 BCE, Hellenistic Period (Glyptothek, Munich).

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6.6: Dying Gaul

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Dying Gaul*.



Figure **6.6.1**: *Dying Gaul*, ancient Roman marble copy of a lost bronze Greek sculpture, c. 220 BCE, Hellenistic Period (Capitoline Museum).

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6.7: Nike of Samothrace

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Nike (Winged Victory) of Samothrace*.



Video **6.7.1**: *Nike (Winged Victory) of Samothrace*, Lartos marble (ship) and Parian marble (Figure), c. 190 BCE 3.28m high, Hellenistic Period (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

The sculpture was unearthed in 1863 after its discovery under the direction of Charles Champoiseau, the French Vice-Consul to Turkey. Please note that the theoretical reconstruction of the Nike as a trumpeter mentioned in the video has been largely abandoned; the monument is now thought to have been part of a fountain possibly commemorating a naval victory.

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6.8: The Pergamon Altar

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of The Pergamon Altar, which features Athena and Zeus.



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The Pergamon Altar, c. 200–150 BCE, 35.64 × 33.4 meters, Hellenistic Period (Pergamon Museum, Berlin).

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6.9: Boxer at Rest

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of Apollonius's, *Boxer at Rest*.



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Apollonius, *Boxer at Rest*, c. 100 BCE, bronze, Hellenistic Period (Palazzo Massimo, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome).

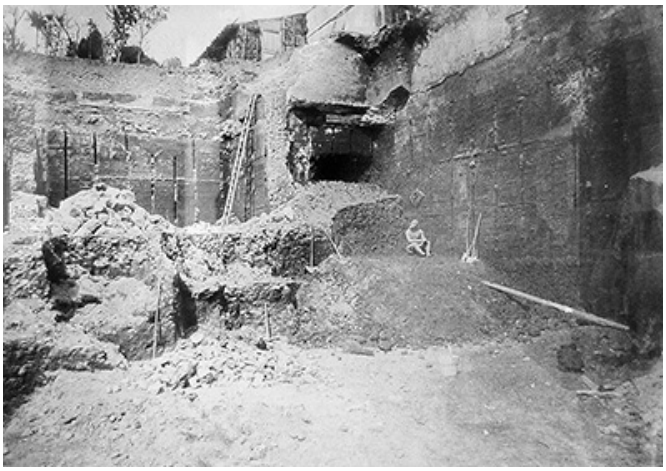


Figure **6.9.1**. The Boxer excavated

This Greek bronze was found in 1885, buried, possibly purposefully, on the Quirinal, one of the seven hills of Rome. It has been suggested that this sculpture may represent the Olympic champion, Theogenes.

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6.10: Alexander Mosaic

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Alexander Mosaic*.



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Alexander Mosaic, c. 100 BCE, tessera mosaic from the House of the Faun, Pompeii, 8 feet 11 inches × 16 feet 9 inches (this Roman floor mosaic may be based on a lost Hellenistic painting by Philoxenos of Eretria, *The Battle of Issus*, c. 315 BCE), Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.

Note on the Battle

Scholars continue to debate whether this mosaic depicts the Battle of Issus in 333 BCE or the Battle of Gaugamela two years later in 331.

Note on the Mosaic

A replica was installed in the House of the Faun, Pompeii. The original mosaic was uncovered at the House of the Faun in 1841 and moved to Naples two years later. In 2003, Severo Bignami and a team from the International Center for the Study and Teaching of Mosaic in Ravenna, began work on a replica mosaic. The project took 22 months and was installed at the House of the Faun in 2005.

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6.11: Laocoön and his Sons

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Laocoön and his Sons*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, *Laocoön and his Sons*, early first century CE, marble, 7′ 10 1/2″ high (Vatican Museums)

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6.12: Eros Sleeping and an Old Market Woman

Brian Seymour and Monica Hahn provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Statue of Sleeping Eros* and *Statue of an Old Market Woman*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Works Discussed

Statue of Sleeping Eros, Hellenistic or Augustan, third century BCE–early first century CE

Statue of an Old Market Woman, Early Imperial, Julio-Claudian, first century CE

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6.13: ** Petra- An Introduction



Figure **6.13.1**. The Treasury, through the Siq, Petra (photo: E. Macaulay-Lewis)

There is only one true way to experience Petra, the greatest city of the Nabataeans, a people who occupied the area from Sinai and Negev to northern Arabia in the west and as far north as southern Syria. On foot or mounted on a camel, one should leave the modern village of Wadi Musa in modern-day Jordan and enter the Siq, a narrow, curving canyon, that traders, explorers and travelers have been walking down since time immemorial.

Stone carvings, camel carvans and *betyls* (the famous god blocks) set in niches, appear. But these elaborate carvings are merely a prelude to one's arrival into the heart of Petra, where the Treasury, or Khazneh, a monumental tomb, awaits to impress even the most jaded visitors. The natural, rich hues of Arabian light hit the remarkable façade, giving the Treasury its famed rose-red color.



Figure **6.13.2**. Camel Carvan, carved in stone, the Siq, Petra (photo: Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis)

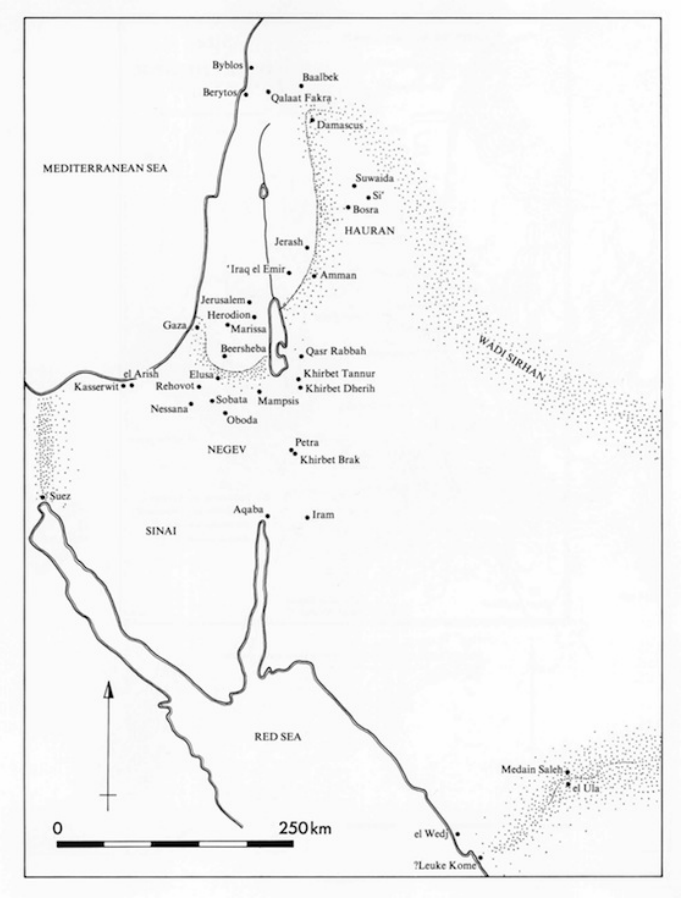
The Nabataeans and the Incense Trade

Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom for most of its history until the Roman Emperor Trajan created the province of Arabia in 106 CE, annexed the Nabataean kingdom, and moved the capital of this new province to Bosra (also spelt Bostra) in what is today modern southern Syria.

The ancient sources inform us that the Nabataeans were great traders, who controlled the luxury trade in incense during the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods. The Hellenistic period stretches from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE to 31 BCE when the Roman Empire emerged. It can also refer to artistic and cultural similarities in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, Egypt and the Middle East in this era. Petra, the rock-cut city of the Nabataeans, lay at the intersection of these rich trade routes.

The great wealth that the Nabataeans amassed allowed them to create the spectacular architecture that so many admire in Petra today.

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6.14: Petra- Rock Cut Facades

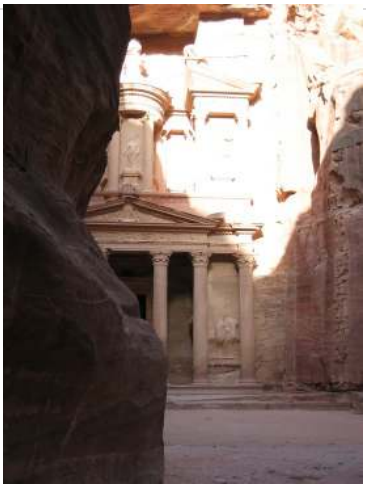


Figure **6.14.1**. The Treasury, or Khazneh, of Petra (photo: E. Macaulay-Lewis)

The rock-cut façades are the iconic monuments of Petra. Of these, the most famous is the so-called Treasury, or Khazneh, which appeared in the film Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, as the final resting place of the Holy Grail. The prominence of the tombs in the landscape led many early explorers and scholars to see Petra as a large necropolis; however, archaeology has shown that Petra was a well-developed metropolis with all of the trappings of a Hellenistic city.

The tomb façades draw upon a rich array of Hellenistic and Near Eastern architecture and, in this sense, their architecture reflects the diverse and different cultures with which the Nabateans traded, interacted, and even intermarried (King Aretas IV's daughter was married to Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, whose mother was also Nabataean). Many of the tombs contain niches or small chambers for burials, cut into the stone walls. No human remains have ever been found in any of the tombs, and the exact funerary practices of the Nabataeans remain unknown.

The dating of the tombs has proved difficult as there are almost no finds, such as coins and pottery, that enable archaeologists to date these tombs; a few inscriptions allow us to date some of the tombs at Petra, although at Egra, another Nabataean site in modern Saudi Arabia, there are thirty-one dated tombs. Today scholars believe that the tombs were probably constructed when the Nabateans were wealthiest between the second century BCE and the early second century CE Archaeologists and art historians have identified a number styles for the tomb façades, but they all co-existed and cannot be used date the tombs. The few surviving inscriptions in Nabataean, Greek, and Latin tell us about the people who were buried in these tombs.

The Treasury's façade (24.9 m W × 38.77 m H) most clearly embodies the Hellenistic style and reflects the influence of Alexandria, the greatest city in the Eastern Mediterranean at this time (see the photograph at the top of this page). Its architecture features a broken pediment and central tholos (a circular building) on the upper level; this architectural composition originated in Alexandria. Ornate Corinthian columns are used throughout. Above the broken pediments, the bases of two obelisks appear and stretch upwards into the rock.

The sculptural decoration also underscores a connection to the Hellenistic world. On the upper level, Amazons (bare-breasted) and Victories stand, flanking a central female Figure (on the tholos), who is probably Isis-Tyche, a combination of the Egyptian Goddess, Isis, and Tyche, the Greek Goddess of good fortune. The lower level features the Greek twin gods, Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, who protected travelers and the dead on their journeys. There are other details from the artistic traditions of the Hellenistic world, including eagles, the symbols of royal Ptolemies; vines; vegetation; kantharoi (vase with large handles); and acroteria (architectural ornaments on a pediment). However, the tomb also features rosettes, a design originally associated with the ancient Near Eastern.

There are no inscriptions or ceramic evidence associated with the tomb that allows us to date it. Considering that it was located at the most important entrance to Petra through the Siq, it was probably a tomb for one of the Nabataean Kings. Aretas IV (reigned, 9 BCE–40 CE) is the most likely candidate, because he was the Nabataeans' most successful ruler, and many buildings were erected in Petra during his reign.



Figure **6.14.2**. Tombs at Petra (photo: E. Macaulay-Lewis)

The treasury was exceptional for its figurative detail and ornate Hellenistic architectural orders; most tombs did not have figurative sculpture, a legacy of the Nabataean artistic tradition that was largely aniconic, or non-figurative. Many of the smaller tombs were less complex and also drew far less upon the artistic conventions of the Hellenistic world, suggesting that the Nabataeans combined the artistic traditions of the East and West in many different and unique ways.

It is a popular misconception that all of the rock-cut monuments, which number over 3,000, were all tombs. In fact, many of the other rock-cut monuments were living quarters or monumental dining rooms with interior benches. Of these, the Monastery (also known as ed-Deir) is most the famous. Even the large theater, constructed in the first century BCE, was cut into the rock of Petra.



Figure **6.14.3**. The Monastery, or ed-Deir (photo: E. Macaulay-Lewis)

Much like the Treasury, ed-Deir was not a monastery, but rather behind its façade was a monumental cella (the inner chamber of a temple) with a large area for dining with a cultic podium at the back. While no traces of decoration remain today, the room would have been plastered and painted. The façade again features a broken pediment around a central tholos, but its decoration is more abstract and less figurative than that of the Treasury. The column capitals are typically Nabataean, modeled on the Corinthian order, but abstracted. The façade features a Doric entablature, but rather than having Figures in the metopes, roundels with no decoration appear. Thus, while the Monastery deploys many elements of Classical architecture, it does so in a unique way.

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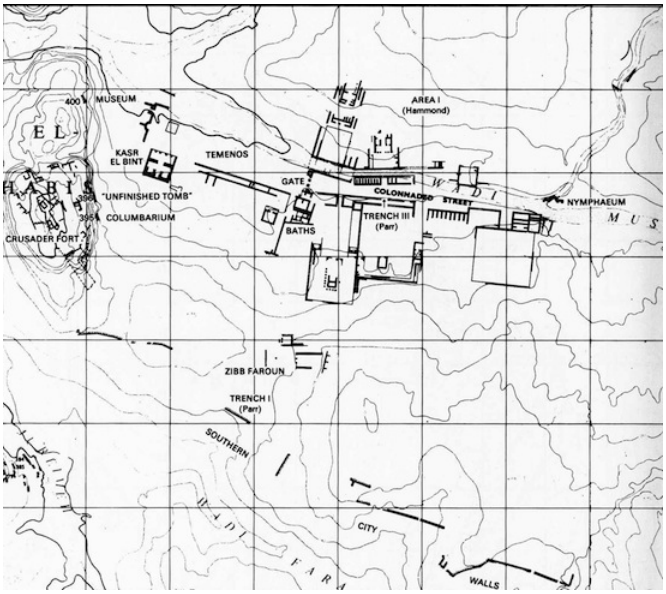
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6.15: ** Petra- Urban Metropolis

Petra was a well-developed city and contained many of the buildings and urban infrastructure that one would expect of a Hellenistic city. Recent archaeological work has radically reshaped our understanding of downtown Petra. Most of Petra's great tombs and buildings were built before the Roman annexation in 106 CE.

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Petra had a larger theater, which was probably built during the reign of Aretas IV (9 BCE–40 CE), a monumental colonnaded street that ran along the south side of Wadi Musa. Important buildings graced both sides of the Wadi. On the southside of the street was a nymphaeum and a series of monumental spaces, which were once identified as markets. The so-called Lower Market has recently been excavated and shown to be a garden-pool complex. This stood adjacent to so-called Great Temple of Petra. Within the cella, or inner sanctuary room, of the Great Temple, a series of stone seats were discovered; this may suggest that the structure was not a temple, but an audience hall at least for part of its history. Baths were also located in its vicinity. Opposite the so-called Great Temple is the Temple of the Winged Lions, from which a unique god block of a female goddess, was recovered. Column capitals at Petra are truly unique and we have winged lions and elephants.



Figure **6.15.2**. The Qasr el-Bint, the most important sanctuary in Petra (photo: E. Macaulay-Lewis)

Just to the west, past a gate in a temenos, or sacred precinct, was the Qasr el-Bint, the most important temple in the city. It was also probably built under Aretas the IV, but we do not know to which gods the Qasr el-Bint was dedicated.Petra is also filled with more mundane architecture, including domestic residences, as well as the all-important water-catchment and storage systems that allowed life and agriculture to flourish here.

Petra is often seen in isolation; in fact, it was one of many Nabataean sites; the Nabataean lands stretched from the Sinai and Negev in the west, as far north as Damascus at one point, and as far south as Egra, modern-day Madain Saleh, in Northern Saudi Arabia, which also had numerous rock-cut tombs, amongst others. At Egra an inscription attests to the presence of a Roman Legion at the

site, marking the city as the southern most boundary of the Roman Empire in the Antonine Era. Khirbet et-Tannur was a major sanctuary in central Jordan; many of its reliefs are in the Cincinnati Museum of Art today.

The Nabataeans took an active role in their architectural and artistic creations, drawing upon the artistic vocabulary of the Hellenistic world and the ancient Near East. Rather than slavishly copying either one of these traditions, the Nabataeans actively selected and adopted certain elements for their tombs, dining pavilions, and temples to suit their needs and purposes, on both the group and individual level. Indeed, the Treasury and the Monastery could only have been conceived of and executed in Petra.

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6.16: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Old Market Woman Statue
- Praxiteles Exhibition at the Louvre Museum

Watch these videos:

https://youtu.be/AvfzTEA9RVI



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: The Art of the Etruscans

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Etruscan art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Etruscan art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Etruscan art on the continued evolution of Western art

In Module 7 we will examine Etruscan art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Etruscan art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

7.1: Overview
7.2: Key Learning Items
7.3: Etruscan Art
7.4: Sarcophagus of the Spouses
7.5: Etruscan Necropolises
7.6: Etruscan Art Explained by the Met
7.7: External Resources

Thumbnail: The Chimera of Arezzo is regarded as the best example of ancient Etruscan artwork. (CC BY-SA 3.0; unkown via Wikipedia)

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7.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Etruscan art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Etruscan art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review**: Key Learning Items

Etruscan Art

- **Read:** Etruscan Art
- **Read:** Sarcophagus of the Spouses
- **Read:** Etruscan Necropolises
- **Read:** Etruscan Art Explained by the Met

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignments

- **Submit:** Module 7 Quiz (5 points)
- **Discuss:** Unit 1 Discussion Essay (30 points)
- **Submit:** Unit 1 Scavenger Hunt (50 points)
- **Complete:** Exam 1

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7.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- How were the Etruscans mysterious?
- What was the function of much Etruscan art?
- How did Etruscan art differ from Greek art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- fibula
- Etruscan necropolis
- sarcophagus
- terracotta

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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7.3: Etruscan Art

A Brilliant Civilization

Before the small village of Rome became “Rome” with a capital R (to paraphrase D.H. Lawrence), a brilliant civilization once controlled almost the entire peninsula we now call Italy. This was the Etruscan civilization, a vanished culture whose achievements set the stage not only for the development of ancient Roman art and culture but for the Italian Renaissance as well.

Though you may not have heard of them, the Etruscans were the first superpower of the Western Mediterranean who, alongside the Greeks, developed the earliest true cities in Europe. They were so successful, in fact, that the most important cities in modern Tuscany (Florence, Pisa, and Siena to name a few) were first established by the Etruscans and have been continuously inhabited since then.

Yet the labels “mysterious” or “enigmatic” are often attached to the Etruscans since none of their own histories or literature survives. This is particularly ironic as it was the Etruscans who were responsible for teaching the Romans the alphabet and for spreading literacy throughout the Italian peninsula.

The Influence on Ancient Rome



Figure **7.3.1**. Phersu and his victim, Tomb of the Augurs, (late sixth century BCE, Tarquinia)

Etruscan influence on ancient Roman culture was profound and it was from the Etruscans that the Romans inherited many of their own cultural and artistic traditions, from the spectacle of gladiatorial combat, to hydraulic engineering, temple design, and religious ritual, among many other things. In fact, hundreds of years after the Etruscans had been conquered by the Romans and absorbed into their empire, the Romans still maintained an Etruscan priesthood in Rome (which they thought necessary to consult when under attack from invading “barbarians”).

We even derive our very common word *person* from the Etruscan mythological Figure Phersu—the frightful, masked Figure you see in this Early Etruscan tomb painting (Figure **7.3.1**)—who would engage his victims in a dreadful “game” of blood letting in order to appease the soul of the deceased (the original gladiatorial games, according to the Romans!).

Etruscan Art and the Afterlife

Early on the Etruscans developed a vibrant artistic and architectural culture, one that was often in dialogue with other Mediterranean civilizations. Trading of the many natural mineral resources found in Tuscany, the center of ancient Etruria, caused them to bump up against Greeks, Phoenicians and Egyptians in the Mediterranean. With these other Mediterranean cultures, they exchanged goods, ideas and, often, a shared artistic vocabulary.

Unlike with the Greeks, however, the majority of our knowledge about Etruscan art comes largely from their burials. (Since most Etruscan cities are still inhabited, they hide their Etruscan art and architecture under Roman, Medieval and Renaissance layers). Fortunately, though, the Etruscans cared very much about equipping their dead with everything necessary for the afterlife—from lively tomb paintings to sculpture to pottery that they could use in the next world.



Figure **7.3.2**. Etruscan hut urn (c. 800 BCE), impasto (Vatican Museums)

From their extensive cemeteries, we can look at the world of the dead and begin to understand some about the world of the living. During the early phases of Etruscan civilization, they conceived of the afterlife in terms of life as they knew it. When someone died, he or she would be cremated and provided with another home for the afterlife. This type of hut urn, made of an unrefined clay known as impasto, would be used to house the cremated remains of the deceased. Not coincidentally, it shows us in miniature form what a typical Etruscan house would have looked like in Iron Age Etruria (900–750 BCE)—oval with a timber roof and a smoke hole for an internal hearth.

Later on, houses for the dead became much more elaborate. During the Orientalizing period (750–575 BCE), when the Etruscans began to trade their natural resources with other Mediterranean cultures and became staggeringly wealthy as a result, their tombs became more and more opulent.

The well-known Regolini-Galassi tomb from the city of Cerveteri shows how this new wealth transformed the modest hut to an extravagant house for the dead. Built for a woman clearly of high rank, the massive stone tomb contains a long corridor with lateral, oval rooms leading to a main chamber.



Figure **7.3.3**. Fibula from Regolini Galassi tomb in Cerveteri, gold, mid-seventh century BCE (Vatican Museums) (Photo: Brasileiro)

A stroll through the Etruscan rooms in the Vatican museum where the tomb artifacts are now housed presents a mind boggling view of the enormous wealth of the period.

Found near the woman were objects of various precious materials intended for personal adornment in the afterlife—a gold pectoral, gold bracelets, a gold brooch of outsized proportions, among other objects—as well as silver and bronze vessels and numerous other grave goods and furniture.

Of course, this important woman might also need her four-wheeled bronze-sheathed carriage in the afterlife as well as an incense burner, jewelry of amber and ivory, and, touchingly, her bronze bed around which thirty-three figurines, all in various gestures of mourning, were arranged.



Figure **7.3.4**. Bronze bed and carriage, Regolini-Galassi Tomb, (c. 650 BCE), Cerveteri (Vatican Museums)

Though later periods in Etruscan history are not characterized by such wealth, the Etruscans were, nevertheless, extremely powerful and influential and left a lasting imprint on the city of Rome and other parts of Italy.

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7.4: Sarcophagus of the Spouses

The Freedom Enjoyed by Etruscan Women

One of the distinguishing features of Etruscan society, and one that caused much shock and horror to their Greek neighbors, was the relative freedom enjoyed by Etruscan women. Unlike women in ancient Greece or Rome, upper class Etruscan women actively participated in public life—attending banquets, riding in carriages and being spectators at (and participants in) public events. Reflections of such freedoms are found throughout Etruscan art; images of women engaged in these activities appear frequently in painting and in sculpture.



Figure **7.4.1**. *Sarcophagus of the Spouses*, Etruscan, c. 520–510 BCE, painted terracotta (Musée du Louvre)

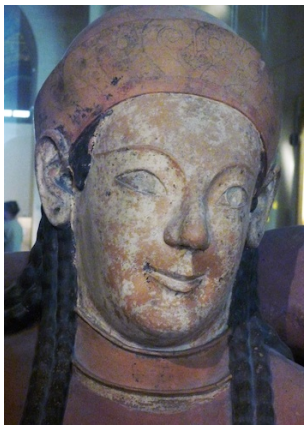


Figure **7.4.2**. The Etruscan Woman

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses* was found in Cerverteri, a town in Italy north of Rome, which is the site of a large Etruscan necropolis (or cemetery), with hundreds of tombs. The sarcophagus vividly evokes both the social visibility of Etruscan women and a type of marital intimacy rarely seen in Greek art from this period.

A Funerary Banquet?

In the sarcophagus (and another largely identical example at the Villa Giulia in Rome), the two Figures recline as equals as they participate in a banquet, possibly a funerary banquet for the dead. In contemporary Greece, the only women attending public banquets, or symposia, were courtesans, not wives! The affectionate gestures and tenderness between the Etruscan man and woman convey a strikingly different attitude about the status of women and their relative equality with their husbands.

Terracotta

Aside from its subject matter, the sarcophagus is also a remarkable example of Etruscan large-scale terracotta sculpture (terracotta is a type of ceramic also called earthenware). At nearly two meters long, the object demonstrates the rather accomplished feat of modeling clay figures at nearly life-size. Artists in the Etruscan cities of Cerveteri and Veii in particular preferred working with highly refined clay for large-scale sculpture as it provided a smooth surface for the application of paint and the inclusion of fine detail.



Figure **7.4.3**. Sarcophagus of the Spouses

Handling such large forms, however, was not without complications; evidence of this can be seen in the cut that bisects the sarcophagus. Splitting the piece in two parts would have allowed the artist to more easily manipulate the pieces before and after firing. If you look closely, you can also see a distinct line separating the Figures and the lid of the sarcophagus; this was another trick for creating these monumental pieces—modeling the Figures separately and then placing them on top of their bed.

Color

A really lovely characteristic of this sculpture is the preservation of so much color. In addition to colored garments and pillows, red laced boots, her black tresses and his blond ones, one can easily discern the gender specific skin tones so typical in Etruscan art. The man's ochre flesh signifies his participation in a sun-drenched, external world, while the woman's pale cream skin points to a more interior, domestic one. Gendered color conventions were not exclusive to the Etruscans but have a long pedigree in ancient art. Though their skin and hair color may be different, both Figures share similar facial features—archaic smiles (like the ones we see in ancient Greek archaic sculptures), almond shaped eyes, and highly arched eyebrows—all typical of Etruscan art.

What Were They Holding?

One of the great puzzles of the sarcophagus centers on what the figures were holding. Etruscan art often featured outsized, expressive hands with suggestively curled fingers. Here the arm positions of both Figures hint that each must have held small objects, but what? Since the Figures are reclining on a banqueting couch, the objects could have been vessels associated with drinking, perhaps wine cups, or representations of food. Another possibility is that they may have held alabastra, small vessels containing oil used for anointing the dead. Or, perhaps, they held all of the above—food, drink and oil, each a necessity for making the journey from this life to the next.



Figure 7.4.4. Sarcophagus of the Spouses

Whatever missing elements, the conviviality of the moment and intimacy of the Figures capture the life-affirming quality often seen in Etruscan art of this period, even in the face of death.

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7.5: Etruscan Necropolises



Click on the link below to view the website “Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri and Tarquinia,” a part of the World Heritage List developed by UNESCO. This site explores two necropolises, providing a description, maps, documents, photographs, and video.

- Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri and Tarquinia

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7.6: Etruscan Art Explained by the Met



Click on the link below to view the website “Etruscan Art” developed by the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of their Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. This page gives a short description of Etruscan art and includes a slideshow of notable examples.

- “Etruscan Art” by the Metropolitan Museum of Art

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7.7: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- The Mysterious Etruscans
- Virtual Reconstruction of an Etruscan Tomb

Go to YouTube to watch The Etruscans—Legacy of a Lost Civilization

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: The Art of Ancient Rome I

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Ancient Roman art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Ancient Roman art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Ancient Roman art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Ancient Roman art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Roman art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

8.1: Overview
8.2: Key Learning Items
8.3: Ancient Rome
8.4: Digging Through Time
8.5: Temple of Portunus
8.6: Veristic Male Portrait
8.7: The Pantheon
8.8: Augustus of Primaporta
8.9: Painted Garden
8.10: Head of Augustus
8.11: Ara Pacis
8.12: Villa of Mysteries
8.13: Colosseum
8.14: External Resources

Thumbnail: Patheon vista notturna. (CC BY-SA 3.0; Jfabrix101 via Wikipedia)

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8.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Ancient Roman art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Roman art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Introduction

- **Watch:** Ancient Rome (13:46)
- **Watch:** Digging Through Time (2:26)

Roman Republic

- **Watch:** Temple of Portunus (3:10)
- **Watch:** Veristic Male Portrait (2:58)

Roman Empire

- **Watch:** The Pantheon (8:31)
- **Read:** Augustus of Primaporta (includes a video—4:52)
- **Watch:** Painted Garden (4:03)
- **Watch:** Head of Augustus (5:15)
- **Watch:** Ara Pacis (10:40)
- **Watch:** Villa of Mysteries (9:12)
- **Watch:** Colosseum (8:33)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 8 Quiz (5 points)

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8.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the characteristic features of Roman art and architecture?
- How were the Romans inventive with their monuments and artistic styles?
- How did how Greek artistic ideas influence Roman art and architecture?
- What elements of Roman art and architecture do you still see today?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- veristic portrait
- coffered dome
- oculus
- contrapposto stance
- triclinium
- fresco
- buon (true) fresco
- secco fresco
- Second Style Roman wall painting

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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8.3: Ancient Rome

Dr. Bernard Frischer and Dr. Steven Zucker provide and narrate a video simulation that takes a tour through Ancient Rome. This tour was created to help visualize where things were located in Rome, especially in relation to one another.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

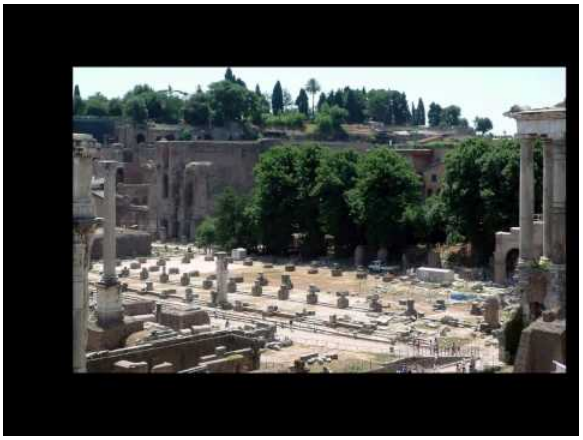
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8.4: Digging Through Time

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Darius Arya discuss the process through which ancient artifacts become buried over time.



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8.5: Temple of Portunus

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Temple of Portunus, which was formerly known as Fortuna Virilis. Portunus was the Roman god of doors and keys (this was adjacent to a port on the Tiber river). The temple is thought to have survived because it was converted to a church, Saint Mary of Egypt, in 872 CE. Please note that this recording contains traffic and wind noise due to the busy and open location of the Temple of Portunus.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), travertine, tufa, and stucco, c. 120–80 BCE, Rome.

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8.6: Veristic Male Portrait

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Veristic male portrait*, originating in early first century BCE.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Veristic male portrait, early first century BCE, marble life size (Vatican Museums, Rome)

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- Veristic male portrait, early 1st Century B.C.E., marble life size (Vatican Museums, Rome). **Authored by**: Smarthistory. art, history, conversation.. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/T0fq3XFfxrY. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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8.7: The Pantheon

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of The Pantheon in Rome.



Video 8.7.1: The Pantheon, Rome, c. 125. (https://youtu.be/KaY8zqYfQI0)

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8.8: Augustus of Primaporta

Today, politicians think very carefully about how they will be photographed. Think about all the campaign commercials and print ads we are bombarded with every election season. These images tell us a lot about the candidate, including what they stand for and what agendas they are promoting. Similarly, Roman art was closely intertwined with politics and propaganda. This is especially true with portraits of Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire; Augustus invoked the power of imagery to communicate his ideology.



Figure **8.8.1**. *Augustus of Primaporta*, first century CE.

One of Augustus' most famous portraits is the so-called Augustus of Primaporta of 20 BCE; the sculpture gets its name from the town in Italy where it was found. At first glance this statue might appear to simply resemble a portrait of Augustus as an orator and general, but this sculpture also communicates a good deal about the emperor's power and ideology. In fact, in this portrait Augustus shows himself as a great military victor and a staunch supporter of Roman religion. The statue also foretells the 200 year period of peace that Augustus initiated, called the Pax Romana.

In this marble freestanding sculpture, Augustus stands in a contrapposto pose with all of his weight on his right leg. The emperor wears military regalia and his right arm is outstretched, demonstrating that the emperor is addressing his troops. We immediately sense the emperor's power as the leader of the army and a military conqueror.



Figure 8.8.2. Polykleitos' *Doryphoros*, fifth century BCE

Delving further into the composition of the Primaporta statue, a distinct resemblance to Polykleitos' *Doryphoros* (Figure 8.8.2), a Classical Greek sculpture of the fifth century BCE, is apparent. Both have a similar contrapposto stance and both are idealized. That is to say that both *Augustus* and the *Spear-Bearer* are portrayed as youthful and flawless individuals: they are perfect. The Romans often modeled their art on Greek predecessors. This is significant because Augustus is essentially depicting himself with the perfect body of a Greek athlete: he is youthful and virile, despite the fact that he was middle-aged at the time of the sculpture's commissioning. Furthermore, by modeling the Primaporta statue on such an iconic Greek sculpture created during the height of Athens' influence and power, Augustus connects himself to the Golden Age of that previous civilization.

So far the message of the Augustus of Primaporta is clear: he is an excellent orator and military victor with the youthful and perfect body of a Greek athlete. Is that all there is to this sculpture? Definitely not! The sculpture contains even more symbolism. First, at Augustus' right leg is cupid Figure riding a dolphin. The dolphin became a symbol of Augustus' great naval victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, a conquest that made Augustus the sole ruler of the Empire. The cupid astride the dolphin sends another message too: that Augustus is descended from the gods. Cupid is the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Julius Caesar, the adoptive father of Augustus, claimed to be descended from Venus and therefore Augustus also shared this connection to the gods.



Figure 8.8.3. Detail of the breastplate (*Augustus of Primaporta*)

Finally, Augustus is wearing a cuirass, or breastplate, that is covered with Figures that communicate additional propagandistic messages. Scholars debate over the identification over each of these Figures, but the basic meaning is clear: Augustus has the gods

on his side, he is an international military victor, and he is the bringer of the Pax Romana, a peace that encompasses all the lands of the Roman Empire.

In the central zone of the cuirass are two Figures, a Roman and a Parthian. On the left, the enemy Parthian returns military standards. This is a direct reference to an international diplomatic victory of Augustus in 20 BCE, when these standards were finally returned to Rome after a previous battle. Surrounding this central zone are gods and personifications. At the top are Sol and Caelus, the sun and sky gods respectively. On the sides of the breastplate are female personifications of countries conquered by Augustus. These gods and personifications refer to the Pax Romana. The message is that the sun is going to shine on all regions of the Roman Empire, bringing peace and prosperity to all citizens. And of course, Augustus is the one who is responsible for this abundance throughout the Empire.

Beneath the female personifications are Apollo and Diana, two major deities in the Roman pantheon; clearly Augustus is favored by these important deities and their appearance here demonstrates that the emperor supports traditional Roman religion. At the very bottom of the cuirass is Tellus, the earth goddess, who cradles two babies and holds a cornucopia. Tellus is an additional allusion to the Pax Romana as she is a symbol of fertility with her healthy babies and overflowing horn of plenty.

The Augustus of Primaporta is one of the ways that the ancients used art for propagandistic purposes. Overall, this statue is not simply a portrait of the emperor, it expresses Augustus' connection to the past, his role as a military victor, his connection to the gods, and his role as the bringer of the Roman Peace.

Video: Augustus of Primaporta

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Augustus of Primaporta*.



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8.9: Painted Garden

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Painted Garden* from Villa of Livia. Plant species found in the fresco include umbrella pine, oak, red fir, quince, pomegranate, myrtle, oleander, date palm, strawberry, laurel, viburnum, holm oak, boxwood, cypress, ivy, acanthus, rose, poppy, chrysanthemum, chamomile, fern, violet, and iris.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Painted Garden, Villa of Livia, fresco, 30–20 BCE (Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, Rome)

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8.10: Head of Augustus

Pippa Couch and Rachel Ropeik provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Head of Augustus.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Roman, Head of Augustus, c. 27–25 BCE, bronze and glass, 46.2 cm high × 26.5 cm wide × 29.4 cm deep, (British Museum, London)

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8.11: Ara Pacis

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace).

On my return from Spain and Gaul after successful operations restoring law and order in these provinces, the Senate voted, during the consulship of Tiberius Nero and Publius Quintilius, in honor of my return, that an altar to Peace be consecrated in the Campus Martius, and that on this altar the magistrates, priests, and Vestal Virgins are to make annual sacrifices.

—*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* II.12



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Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace), 13–9 BCE.

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8.12: Villa of Mysteries

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Villa of Mysteries, which may have been created by the Dionysian Cult Cycle.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Dionysian Cult Cycle (?), Villa of Mysteries, before 79 CE, fresco, Pompeii

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8.13: Colosseum

Valentina Follo (of Context Travel), Dr. Beth Harris, and Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Colosseum, originally known as Amphitheatrum Flavium.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Colosseum (Amphitheatrum Flavium), c. 70–80 CE, Rome

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8.14: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Crystal Links: Ancient Rome Explored
- BBC: The Colosseum
- Virtual Tour of Colosseum
- Virtual Tour of a Roman Villa

Watch this video:



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: The Art of Ancient Rome II

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Ancient Roman art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Ancient Roman art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Ancient Roman art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will continue to examine Ancient Roman art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Ancient Roman art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

9.1: Overview
9.2: Key Learning Items
9.3: Arch of Titus
9.4: Hadrian's Villa
9.5: Maritime Theater, Hadrian's Villa
9.6: Pair of Centaurs
9.7: Column of Trajan
9.8: Medea Sarcophagus
9.9: Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius
9.10: Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus
9.11: Tetrarchs
9.12: Arch of Constantine
9.13: Colossus of Constantine
9.14: External Resources

Thumbnail: The Colossus of Constantine was a colossal acrolithic statue of the late Roman emperor Constantine the Great (c. 280–337) that once occupied the west apse of the Basilica of Maxentius near the Forum Romanum in Rome. (CC BY-SA 2.0 Generic; photo by Carole Raddato via Wikipedia)

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9.1: Overview

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

The Roman Empire, Continued

- **Watch:** Arch of Titus (6:34)
- **Watch:** Hadrian's Villa (8:03)
- **Watch:** Maritime Theater, Hadrian's Villa (5:01)
- **Watch:** Pair of Centaurs (4:47)
- **Watch:** Column of Trajan (4:55)
- **Watch:** Medea Sarcophagus (4:56)
- **Watch:** Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius (3:47)
- **Watch:** Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus (5:33)
- **Watch:** Tetrarchs (6:07)
- **Read:** Arch of Constantine (includes a video—10:56)
- **Watch:** Colossus of Constantine (4:31)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 9 Quiz (5 points)

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9.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the characteristic features of Roman art and architecture?
- How were the Romans inventive with their monuments and artistic styles?
- How did how Greek artistic ideas influence Roman art and architecture?
- What elements of Roman art and architecture do you still see today?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- triumphal arch
- equestrian statue
- porphyry
- naturalistic style
- abstract style
- roundels
- niche
- idealized sculpture

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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9.3: Arch of Titus

Dr. Steven Fine and Dr. Beth Harris provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a relief panel showing the spoils of Jerusalem being brought into Rome from the *Arch of Titus*.



Figure **9.3.1**: Relief panel showing The Spoils of Jerusalem being brought into Rome, *Arch of Titus*, Rome, after 81 CE, marble, 7′ 10″ high. https://www.youtube.com/embed/2Pz_p8Tf24g

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9.4: Hadrian’s Villa

A virtual tour of Hadrian’s Villa using a 3D digital model of the villa created under the direction of Dr. Bernard Frischer.

The ruins of Hadrian’s Villa, in the town of Tivoli, near Rome, is spread over an area of approximately 250 acres. Many of the structures were designed by the Emperor Hadrian who ruled from 117 until his death in 138 CE. This virtual rendering is based on current archeological research and has been created in consultation with art historians, archaeologists, and museum curators with expertise in this area. Please note, a few features are necessarily assumptions based on the best available evidence.

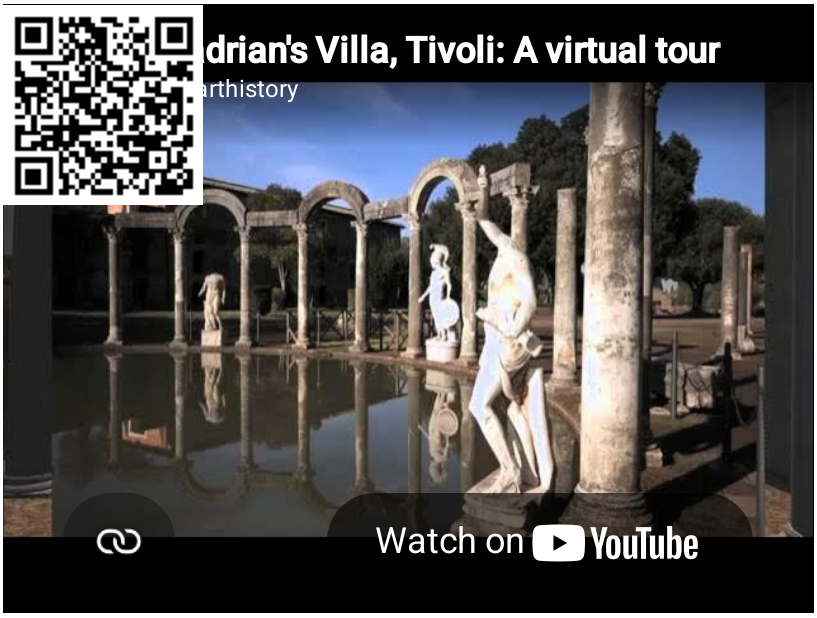


Figure **9.4.1**: A virtual tour of Hadrian's Villa using a 3D digital model of the villa created under the direction of Dr. Bernard Frischer.

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9.5: Maritime Theater, Hadrian’s Villa

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Bernard Frischer provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Maritime Theatre at Hadrian’s Villa.



Figure **9.5.1**: Maritime Theatre at Hadrian’s Villa, Tivoli, Villa begun in 117 CE.

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9.6: Pair of Centaurs

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Pair of Centaurs Fighting Cats of Prey* from Hadrian's Villa.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Pair of Centaurs Fighting Cats of Prey from Hadrian's Villa, mosaic, c. 130 CE, (Altes Museum, Berlin)

External Link

View this mosaic up close in the Google Art Project.

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9.7: Column of Trajan

Valentina Follo (of Context Travel), Dr. Beth Harris, and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Column of Trajan*.

The inscription on the base is the source of the typeface Trajan and reads (with abbreviations spelled out):

SENATUS POPULUSQUE ROMANUS
IMPERATORI CAESARI DIVI NERVAE FILIO NERVAE
TRAIANO AUGUSTO GERMANICO DACICO PONTIFICI
MAXIMO TRIBUNICIA POTESTATE XVII IMPERATORI VI CONSULI VI PATRI PATRIAE
AD DECLARANDUM QUANTAE ALTITUDINIS
MONS ET LOCUS TAN[TIS OPER]IBUS SIT EGESTUS

The Senate and the People of Rome
To Emperor Caesar Nerva Trajan Augustus, son of the divine Nerva
Conqueror of Germany and Dacia, high priest, with the office of the tribune 17 times
Proclaimed Imperator 6 times, elected consul 6 times, father of the Empire
Here shows the height which this hill once stood
Now removed for such great works as these



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Column of Trajan, Carrara marble, completed 113 CE, Rome Dedicated to Emperor Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Nerva Traianus b. 53, d. 117 CE) in honor of his victory over Dacia (now Romania) 101–02 and 105–06 CE.

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9.8: Medea Sarcophagus

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Medea Sarcophagus*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Medea Sarcophagus, 140–150 CE, marble, 65 × 227 cm (Altes Museum, Berlin)

External Link

View this work up close in the Google Art Project.

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9.9: Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius*. The original location of the sculpture is unknown, though it had been housed in the Lateran Palace since the eighth century until it was placed in the center of the Piazza del Campidoglio by Michelangelo in 1538. The original is now indoors for purposes of conservation. Marcus Aurelius ruled 161–180 CE.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Equestrian Sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, bronze, c. 173–76 CE, (Capitoline Museums, Rome).

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9.10: Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Battle of the Romans and Barbarians*. This sarcophagus, also known as the Great Ludovisi sarcophagus (or the Via Tiburtina Sarcophagus), is thought to be a memorial to the wars between the Ostrogoths and Imperial Romans then taking place. It was found in 1621 and named after Ludovico Ludovisi, its initial modern owner.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Battle of the Romans and Barbarians (Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus), c. 250–260 CE. (Museo Nazionale Romano-Palazzo Altemps, Rome)

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9.11: Tetrarchs

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Portraits of the Four Tetrarchs*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Portraits of the Four Tetrarchs, from Constantinople, c. 305, porphyry, 4′ 3″ high (St. Marks, Venice)

Note: the missing left foot of the right most Figure was found at the Philadelphion near the Bodrum Mosque in present day Istanbul. The foot fragment is displayed at the Istanbul Archaeology Museum.

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9.12: Arch of Constantine

The Move Away from a Naturalistic Style

Since an emperor cannot be present to all persons, it is necessary to set up the statue of the emperor in law courts, market places, public assemblies, and theatres. In every place, in fact in which an official acts, the imperial effigy must be present, so that the emperor may thus confirm what takes place. For the emperor is only a human being, and he cannot be present everywhere.

—Severian of Gabala, On the "Creation of the World" 5.5, as qtd. in J. Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, p. 54

An important theme in Medieval art is the continuity of the Roman Empire. The Byzantine Empire of Justinian and the Carolingian Empire of Charlemagne traced their origins back to the Roman Empire of Augustus and his followers. But just as continuity is an important theme, so is transformation. The institution of imperial authority underwent dramatic changes during the period of Late Antiquity. The idea of the Emperor as the Principate or the first citizen of Rome gave way to the idea of the Emperor as the Dominate or as the absolute and awesome wielder of power. This transformation in the conception of imperial power is dramatically manifested in imperial images. As testified to by the quotation above, images of the Emperor held great power in the Roman World. Ernst Kitzinger has written that art became Medieval before it became Christian. By this he means that there was already a move away from the naturalistic and organic style of the Classical tradition to a more abstract and mechanical style independent of the influence of Christianity.

Ján Elsner in his recent book Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph, has written:

Power is very rarely limited to the pure exercise of brute force. . . . The Roman state bolstered its authority and legitimacy with the trappings of ceremonial—cloaking the actualities of power beneath a display of wealth, the sanction of tradition, and the spectacle of insuperable resources.

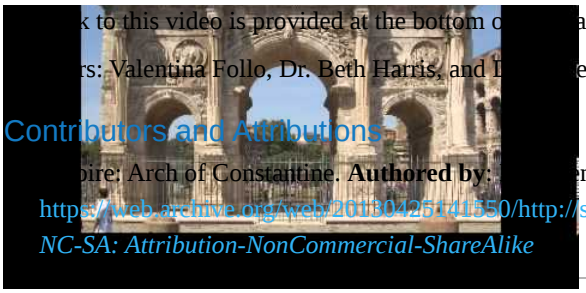
Power is a far more complex and mysterious quality than any apparently simple manifestation of it would appear. It is as much a matter of impression, of theatre, of persuading those over whom authority is wielded to collude in their subjugation. Insofar as power is a matter of presentation, its cultural currency in antiquity (and still today) was the creation, manipulation, and display of images. In the propagation of the imperial office, at any rate, art was power.

A monument documenting this shift in conception of Imperial power is represented by the Triumphal Arch built by the Senate to commemorate Constantine's defeat of his rival Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 CE. It is hard to underestimate the importance of Constantine in the narrative of Medieval art. His patronage and ultimate conversion to Christianity were pivotal in the transformation of Christianity as a religion on the margins to Christianity as integral to imperial power. An important theme is the Christianization of Rome and the Romanization of Christianity. It is interesting to note that on the Arch that was constructed adjacent to the Colosseum, near the formal center of old Rome, there are no references to Christianity. There is not even a reference to the famous vision of the monogram of Christ that Constantine was believed to have seen before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. It is important to see how this monument justifies Constantine's power by linking him to the Roman Imperial past. In its form as a Triumphal Arch it links Constantine to the tradition of this form going back to monuments like the Arch of Titus constructed after 81 CE.

Significantly, it was decided to include on the Arch of Constantine reliefs that were taken from monuments made for earlier Emperors. There is a relief in the passageway under the primary arch that is from the time of the Emperor Trajan, while the roundels or medallions were made for the Emperor Hadrian. The oblong reliefs in the attic come from the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Scholars used to argue that this use of "spolia" from earlier buildings was a good indication of artistic decline. More recently scholars have seen this inclusion of earlier monuments as a way of linking Constantine to the great emperors of the past. Despite this clear linking of Constantine to the Roman Imperial past, one can not help but be struck by the dramatic constrast in style between the earlier reliefs and the Constantinian reliefs.

Arch of Constantine, 315 CE, Rome





k to this video is provided at the bottom o age.

rs: Valentina Follo, Dr. Beth Harris, and E en Zucker

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9.13: Colossus of Constantine

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *The Colossus of Constantine*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

The Colossus of Constantine, c. 312–15, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Musei Capitolini, Rome

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9.14: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Column of Trajan
- Roman Sculpture at the Met

Watch these videos:

https://youtu.be/B8IcwFwNLr8

https://youtu.be/4QWMZJvQX_Q

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Early Christian Art

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Early Christian art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Early Christian art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Early Christian art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter we will examine Early Christian art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Early Christian art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

10.1: Overview
10.2: Key Learning Items
10.3: Introduction to Early Christianity
10.4: Early Christian Art
10.5: After Constantine
10.6: Santa Maria Antiqua Sarcophagus
10.7: Santa Pudenziana
10.8: Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus
10.9: Santa Sabina
10.10: Santa Maria Maggiore
10.11: Mausoleum of Galla Placidia
10.12: External Resources

Thumbnail: Rome, Basilica Santa Sabina, Exterior. (CC BY-SA 3.0; Dnalor 01 via Wikipedia)

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10.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Early Christian art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Early Christian art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Early Christian Art

- **Read:** Introduction to Early Christianity
- **Read:** Early Christian Art
- **Read:** After Constantine
- **Read:** Santa Maria Antiqua Sarcophagus
- **Read:** Santa Pudenziana
- **Read:** Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (includes a video—4:26)
- **Read:** Santa Sabina
- **Watch:** Santa Maria Maggiore (4:37)
- **Watch:** Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (8:07)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

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10.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- Does Early Christian art have a look distinct from Classical art?
- What are the characteristic features of Early Christian art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- monotheism
- catacombs
- mosaic
- mausoleum
- basilica
- orant Figure
- Pagan art
- nave
- Greco-Roman
- clerestory

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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10.3: Introduction to Early Christianity

Key Events

Two important moments played a critical role in the development of early Christianity:

1. The decision of the Apostle Paul to spread Christianity beyond the Jewish communities of Palestine into the Greco-Roman world
2. When the Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity and became its patron at the beginning of the fourth century

The creation and nature of Christian art were directly impacted by these moments.

The Spread of Christianity

As implicit in the names of his Epistles, Paul spread Christianity to the Greek and Roman cities of the ancient Mediterranean world. In cities like Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Rome, Paul encountered the religious and cultural experience of the Greco Roman world. This encounter played a major role in the formation of Christianity.

Christianity as a Mystery Cult

Christianity in its first three centuries was one of a large number of mystery religions that flourished in the Roman world. Religion in the Roman world was divided between the public, inclusive cults of civic religions and the secretive, exclusive mystery cults. The emphasis in the civic cults was on customary practices, especially sacrifices. Since the early history of the polis or city state in Greek culture, the public cults played an important role in defining civic identity.



Figure **10.3.1**. Arch of Titus and Colosseum in Rome, late first century CE

As it expanded and assimilated more people, Rome continued to use the public religious experience to define the identity of its citizens. The polytheism of the Romans allowed the assimilation of the gods of the people it had conquered.



Figure **10.3.2**. The Pantheon in Rome, early second century CE

Thus, when the Emperor Hadrian created the Pantheon in the early second century, the building's dedication to all the gods signified the Roman ambition of bringing cosmos or order to the gods, just as new and foreign societies were brought into political order through the spread of Roman imperial authority. The order of Roman authority on earth is a reflection of the divine cosmos.

For most adherents of mystery cults, there was no contradiction in participating in both the public cults and a mystery cult. The different religious experiences appealed to different aspects of life. In contrast to the civic identity which was at the focus of the public cults, the mystery religions appealed to the participant's concerns for personal salvation. The mystery cults focused on a central mystery that would only be known by those who had become initiated into the teachings of the cult.

Monotheism

These are characteristics Christianity shares with numerous other mystery cults. In early Christianity emphasis is placed on Baptism, which marked the initiation of the convert into the secrets or mysteries of the faith. The Christian emphasis on the belief in salvation and an after life is consistent with the other mystery cults. The monotheism of Christianity, though, was a crucial difference from the other cults. The refusal of the early Christians to participate in the civic cults due to their monotheistic beliefs lead to their persecution. Christians were seen as anti-social.

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- Introduction to Early Christianity. **Authored by**: Dr. Allen Farber. **Provided by**: Khan Academy. **Located at**: https://web.archive.org/web/20140215033016/http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/early-christian-art.html. **License**: *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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10.4: Early Christian Art

The beginnings of an identifiable Christian art can be traced to the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century. Considering the Old Testament prohibitions against graven images, it is important to consider why Christian art developed in the first place. The use of images will be a continuing issue in the history of Christianity. The best explanation for the emergence of Christian art in the early church is due to the important role images played in Greco-Roman culture.

As Christianity gained converts, these new Christians had been brought up on the value of images in their previous cultural experience and they wanted to continue this in their Christian experience. For example, there was a change in burial practices in the Roman world away from cremation to inhumation. Outside the city walls of Rome, adjacent to major roads, catacombs were dug into the ground to bury the dead. Families would have chambers or cubicula dug to bury their members. Wealthy Romans would also have sarcophagi or marble tombs carved for their burial. The Christian converts wanted the same things. Christian catacombs were dug frequently adjacent to non-Christian ones, and sarcophagi with Christian imagery were apparently popular with the richer Christians.

Junius Bassus, a Roman praefectus urbi or high ranking government administrator, died in 359 CE. Scholars believe that he converted to Christianity shortly before his death accounting for the inclusion of Christ and scenes from the Bible. (Figure **10.4.1** shows a plaster cast of the original.)



Figure **10.4.1**. Junius Bassus Sarcophagus

Themes of Death and Resurrection (Borrowed from the Old Testament)

A striking aspect of the Christian art of the third century is the absence of the imagery that will dominate later Christian art. We do not find in this early period images of the Nativity, Crucifixion, or Resurrection of Christ, for example. This absence of direct images of the life of Christ is best explained by the status of Christianity as a mystery religion. The story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection would be part of the secrets of the cult.

While not directly representing these central Christian images, the theme of death and resurrection was represented through a series of images, many of which were derived from the Old Testament that echoed the themes. For example, the story of Jonah—being swallowed by a great fish and then after spending three days and three nights in the belly of the beast is vomited out on dry ground—was seen by early Christians as an anticipation or prefiguration of the story of Christ's own death and resurrection. Images of Jonah, along with those of Daniel in the Lion's Den, the Three Hebrews in the Firey Furnace, Moses Striking the Rock, among others, are widely popular in the Christian art of the third century, both in paintings and on sarcophagi.

All of these can be seen to allegorically allude to the principal narratives of the life of Christ. The common subject of salvation echoes the major emphasis in the mystery religions on personal salvation. The appearance of these subjects frequently adjacent to each other in the catacombs and sarcophagi can be read as a visual litany: save me Lord as you have saved Jonah from the belly of the great fish, save me Lord as you have saved the Hebrews in the desert, save me Lord as you have saved Daniel in the Lion's den, etc.

One can imagine that early Christians—who were rallying around the nascent religious authority of the Church against the regular threats of persecution by imperial authority—would find great meaning in the story of Moses of striking the rock to provide water for the Israelites fleeing the authority of the Pharaoh on their exodus to the Promised Land.

Christianity's Canonical Texts and the New Testament

One of the major differences between Christianity and the public cults was the central role faith plays in Christianity and the importance of orthodox beliefs. The history of the early Church is marked by the struggle to establish a canonical set of texts and the establishment of orthodox doctrine.

Questions about the nature of the Trinity and Christ would continue to challenge religious authority. Within the civic cults there were no central texts and there were no orthodox doctrinal positions. The emphasis was on maintaining customary traditions. One accepted the existence of the gods, but there was no emphasis on belief in the gods.

The Christian emphasis on orthodox doctrine has its closest parallels in the Greek and Roman world to the role of philosophy. Schools of philosophy centered around the teachings or doctrines of a particular teacher. The schools of philosophy proposed specific conceptions of reality. Ancient philosophy was influential in the formation of Christian theology. For example, the opening of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God," is unmistakably based on the idea of the *logos* going back to the philosophy of Heraclitus (c. 535–475 BCE). Christian apologists like Justin Martyr writing in the second century understood Christ as the Logos or the Word of God who served as an intermediary between God and the World.

Early Representations of Christian and the Apostles



Figure **10.4.2**. Christ surrounded by his followers

An early representation of Christ found in the Catacomb of Domitilla shows the Figure of Christ flanked by a group of his disciples or students (Figure **10.4.2**). Those experienced with later Christian imagery might mistake this for an image of the Last Supper, but instead this image does not tell any story. It conveys rather the idea that Christ is the true teacher.

Christ draped in classical garb holds a scroll in his left hand while his right hand is outstretched in the so-called *ad locutio* gesture, or the gesture of the orator. The dress, scroll, and gesture all establish the authority of Christ, who is placed in the center of his disciples. Christ is thus treated like the philosopher surrounded by his students or disciples.



Figure 10.4.3. (left) An early painting of Paul; (right) a later sculpture of Paul

Comparably, an early representation of the apostle Paul, identifiable with his characteristic pointed beard and high forehead, is based on the convention of the philosopher, as exemplified by a Roman copy of a late fourth century BCE portrait of the fifth century BCE playwright Sophocles.

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10.5: After Constantine

By the beginning of the fourth century Christianity was a growing mystery religion in the cities of the Roman world. It was attracting converts from different social levels. Christian theology and art was enriched through the cultural interaction with the Greco-Roman world. But Christianity would be radically transformed through the actions of a single man.

Rome becomes Christian: Constantine Builds Churches

In 312, the Emperor Constantine defeated his principal rival Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Accounts of the battle describe how Constantine had seen a sign in the heavens portending his victory. Eusebius, Constantine's principal biographer, describes the sign as the Chi Rho, the first two letters in the Greek spelling of the name Christos. After that victory Constantine became the principal patron of Christianity. In 313 he issued the Edict of Milan which granted religious toleration. Although Christianity would not become the official religion of Rome until the end of the fourth century, Constantine's imperial sanction of Christianity transformed its status and nature. Neither imperial Rome or Christianity would be the same after this moment. Rome would become Christian, and Christianity would take on the aura of imperial Rome.

The transformation of Christianity is dramatically evident in a comparison between the architecture of the pre-Constantinian church and that of the Constantinian and post-Constantinian church. During the pre-Constantinian period, there was not much that distinguished the Christian churches from typical domestic architecture. A striking example of this is presented by a Christian community house, from the Syrian town of Dura-Europos. Here a typical home has been adapted to the needs of the congregation. A wall was taken down to combine two rooms: this was undoubtedly the room for services. It is significant that the most elaborate aspect of the house is the room designed as a baptistry. This reflects the importance of the sacrament of Baptism to initiate new members into the mysteries of the faith. Otherwise this building would not stand out from the other houses. This domestic architecture obviously would not meet the needs of Constantine's architects.

Emperors for centuries had been responsible for the construction of temples throughout the Roman Empire. We have already observed the role of the public cults in defining one's civic identity, and Emperors understood the construction of temples as testament to their pietas, or respect for the customary religious practices and traditions. So it was natural for Constantine to want to construct edifices in honor of Christianity. He built churches in Rome including the Church of St. Peter, he built churches in the Holy Land, most notably the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and he built churches in his newly-constructed capital of Constantinople.

The Basilica

In creating these churches, Constantine and his architects confronted a major challenge: what should be the physical form of the church? Clearly the traditional form of the Roman temple would be inappropriate both from associations with pagan cults but also from the difference in function. Temples served as treasuries and dwellings for the cult; sacrifices occurred on outdoor altars with the temple as a backdrop. This meant that Roman temple architecture was largely an architecture of the exterior. Since Christianity was a mystery religion that demanded initiation to participate in religious practices, Christian architecture put greater emphasis on the interior. The Christian churches needed large interior spaces to house the growing congregations and to mark the clear separation of the faithful from the unfaithful. At the same time, the new Christian churches needed to be visually meaningful. The buildings needed to convey the new authority of Christianity. These factors were instrumental in the formulation during the Constantinian period of an architectural form that would become the core of Christian architecture to our own time: the Christian Basilica.

The basilica was not a new architectural form. The Romans had been building basilicas in their cities and as part of palace complexes for centuries. A particularly lavish one was the so-called Basilica Ulpia constructed as part of the Forum of the Emperor Trajan in the early second century. Basilicas had diverse functions but essentially they served as formal public meeting places. One of the major functions of the basilicas was as a site for law courts. These were housed in an architectural form known as the apse. In the Basilica Ulpia, these semi-circular forms project from either end of the building, but in some cases, the apses would project off of the length of the building. The magistrate who served as the representative of the authority of the Emperor would sit in a formal throne in the apse and issue his judgments. This function gave an aura of political authority to the basilicas.



Figure **10.5.1**. Inner view of the Basilica at Trier, facing north

Basilicas also served as audience halls as a part of imperial palaces. A well-preserved example is found in the northern German town of Trier. Constantine built a basilica as part of a palace complex in Trier which served as his northern capital. Although a fairly simple architectural form and now stripped of its original interior decoration, the basilica must have been an imposing stage for the emperor. Imagine the emperor dressed in imperial regalia marching up the central axis as he makes his dramatic adventus or entrance along with other members of his court. This space would have humbled an emissary who approached the enthroned emperor seated in the apse.

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10.6: Santa Maria Antiqua Sarcophagus

Early Christian Art Borrows Forms from Roman (Pagan) Art

This third century sarcophagus (Figure 10.6.1) from the Church of Santa Maria was undoubtedly made to serve as the tomb of a relatively prosperous third century Christian. As we will see below, Early Christian art borrowed many forms from pagan art.



Figure 10.6.1. Sarcophagus in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua (Rome)

The male philosopher type that we see in Figure 10.6.2 is easily identifiable with the same type in another third century sarcophagus, but in this case a non-Christian one.

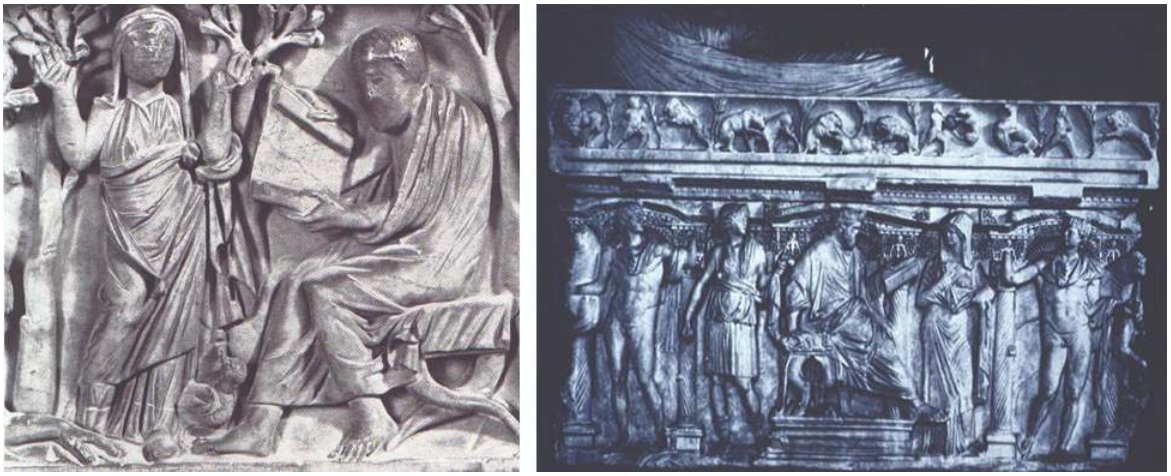


Figure 10.6.2. (left) Santa Maria Antiqua Sarcophagus; (right) 3rd century non-Christian sarcophagus



Figure 10.6.3. Dioscorides and a muse

The female Figure beside him who holds her arms outstretched combines two different conventions. The outstretched hands in Early Christian art represent the so-called *orant* or praying Figure. This is the same gesture found in the catacomb paintings of Jonah being vomited from the great fish, the Hebrews in the Furnace, and Daniel in the Lions den.

The juxtaposition of this female Figure with the philosopher Figure associates her with the convention of the muse, or source of inspiration for the philosopher. This convention is illustrated in a later sixth century miniature showing the Figure of Dioscorides, an ancient Greek physician, pharmacologist, and botanist (Figure **10.6.3**).

In the left side of the sarcophagus, **Jonah** is represented sleeping under the ivy after being vomited from the great fish, shown on the left. The pose of the reclining Jonah with his arm over his head is based on the Greek (pagan) mythological Figure of **Endymion**, whose wish to sleep for ever—and thus become ageless and immortal—explains the popularity of this subject on non-Christian sarcophagi (see Figure **10.6.4** for a comparison).



Figure **10.6.4**. (left) Jonah sleeping under the ivy; (right) Endymion wishing for sleep



Figure **10.6.5**. "The Good Shepherd" from the Santa Maria Antiqua sarcophagus

On the right hand side of the Santa Maria Antiqua sarcophagus, another popular Early Christian image appears, known as **the Good Shepherd** (see Figure **10.6.5**). While echoing the New Testament parable of the Good Shepherd and the Psalms of David, the motif had clear parallels in Greek and Roman art, going back at least to Archaic Greek art, as exemplified by the so-called *Moschophoros*, or calf-bearer, from the early sixth century BCE (see Figure **10.6.6**).



Figure **10.6.6**. Moschophoros, or calf-bearer

On the very right appears an image of the **Baptism of Christ**. The inclusion of this relatively rare representation of Christ probably refers to the importance of the sacrament of Baptism, which signified death and rebirth into a new Christian life.

A curious detail about the male and female Figures at the center of the Santa Maria Antiqua sarcophagus is that their faces are unfinished. This suggests that this tomb was not made with a specific patron in mind. Rather, it was fabricated on a speculative basis, with the expectation that a patron would buy it and have his and presumably his wife's likenesses added. If this is true, it says a lot about the nature of the art industry and the status of Christianity at this period. To produce a sarcophagus like this meant a serious commitment on the part of the maker. The expense of the stone and the time taken to carve it were considerable. A craftsman would not have made a commitment like this without a sense of certainty that someone would purchase it.

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10.7: Santa Pudenziana

The opulent interior of the Constantinian basilicas would have created an effective space for increasingly elaborate rituals. Influenced by the splendor of the rituals associated with the emperor, the liturgy placed emphasis on the dramatic entrances and the stages of the rituals. For example, the *introit* or entrance of the priest into the church was influenced by the *adventus*or arrival of the emperor.

The culmination of the entrance as well as the focal point of the architecture was the apse. It was here that the sacraments would be performed, and it was here that the priest would proclaim the word. In Roman civic and imperial basilicas, the apse had been the seat of authority. In the civic basilicas this is where the magistrate would sit adjacent to an imperial image and dispense judgment. In the imperial basilicas, the emperor would be enthroned. These associations with authority made the apse a suitable stage for the Christian rituals. The priest would be like the magistrate proclaiming the word of a higher authority.

A late fourth century mosaic in the apse of the Roman church of Santa Pudenziana visualizes this. We see in Figure **10.7.1** a dramatic transformation in the conception of Christ from the pre-Constantinian period.



Figure **10.7.1**. Apsis mosaic, Santa Pudenziana, Rome

From Teacher to the Ruler of Heaven

In the Santa Pudenziana mosaic, Christ is shown in the center seated on a jewel-encrusted throne. He wears a gold toga with purple trim, both colors associated with imperial authority. His right hand is extended in the *ad locutio* gesture conventional in imperial representations. Holding a book in his right hand, Christ is shown proclaiming the word. This is dependent on another convention of Roman imperial art of the so-called *traditio legis*, or the handing down of the law. A silver plate made for the Emperor Theodosius in 388 to mark the tenth anniversary of his accession to power shows the Emperor in the center handing down the scroll of the law. Notably the Emperor Theodosius is shown with a halo much like the Figure of Christ.

While the halo would become a standard convention in Christian art to demarcate sacred Figures, the origins of this convention can be found in imperial representations like the image of Theodosius. Behind the Figure of Christ appears an elaborate city. In the center appears a hill surmounted by a jewel-encrusted Cross. This identifies the city as Jerusalem and the hill as Golgotha, but this is not the earthly city but rather the heavenly Jerusalem. This is made clear by the four Figures seen hovering in the sky around the Cross. These are identifiable as the four beasts that are described as accompanying the lamb in the Book of Revelation. The winged man, the winged lion, the winged ox, and the eagle became in Christian art symbols for the Four Evangelists, but in the context of

the Santa Pudenziana mosaic, they define the realm as outside earthly time and space or as the heavenly realm. Christ is thus represented as the ruler of the heavenly city. The cross has become a sign the triumph of Christ. This mosaic finds a clear echo in the following excerpt from the writings of the early Christian theologian, St. John Chrysostom:

You will see the king, seated on the throne of that unutterable glory, together with the angels and archangels standing beside him, as well as the countless legions of the ranks of the saints. This is how the Holy City appears. . . . In this city is towering the wonderful and glorious sign of victory, the Cross, the victory booty of Christ, the first fruit of our human kind, the spoils of war of our king.

The language of this passage shows the unmistakable influence of the Roman emphasis on triumph. The Cross is characterized as a trophy or victory monument. Christ is conceived of as a warrior king. The order of the heavenly realm is characterized as like the Roman army divided up into legions. Both the text and mosaic reflect the transformation in the conception of Christ. These document the merging of Christianity with Roman imperial authority.

It is this aura of imperial authority that distinguishes the Santa Pudenziana mosaic from the painting of Christ and his disciples from the Catacomb of Domitilla, Christ in the catacomb painting is simply a teacher, while in the mosaic Christ has been transformed into the ruler of heaven. Even his long flowing beard and hair construct Christ as being like Zeus or Jupiter. The mosaic makes clear that all authority comes from Christ. He delegates that authority to his flanking apostles. It is significant that in the Santa Pudenziana mosaic the Figure of Christ is flanked by the Figure of St. Paul on the left and the Figure of St. Peter on the right. These are the principal apostles.

By the fourth century, it was already established that the Bishop of Rome, or the Pope, was the successor of St. Peter, the founder of the Church of Rome. Just as power descends from Christ through the apostles, so at the end of time that power will be returned to Christ. The standing female Figures can be identified as personifications of the major division of Christianity between church of the Jews and that of the Gentiles. They can be seen as offering up their crowns to Christ like the 24 Elders are described as returning their crowns in the Book of Revelation.



Figure **10.7.2**. Missorium of Theodosius, 388, Madrid, Academia de la Historia.

The meaning is clear that all authority comes from Christ just as in the Missorium of Theodosius which shows the transmission of authority from the Emperor to his co-emperors. This emphasis on authority should be understood in the context of the religious debates of the period. When Constantine accepted Christianity, there was not one Christianity but a wide diversity of different versions. A central concern for Constantine was the establishment of Christian orthodoxy in order to unify the church.




Figure 10.7.3. (left) Christ Treading on the Lion and Asp, mosaic from the Archepiscopal Palace in Ravenna late fifth century; (right) Augustus of Primaporta, 13 BCE to 15 CE

Christianity underwent a fundamental transformation with its acceptance by Constantine. The imagery of Christian art before Constantine appealed to the believer's desires for personal salvation, while the dominant themes of Christian art after Constantine emphasized the authority of Christ and His church in the world. Just as Rome became Christian, Christianity and Christ took on the aura of Imperial Rome. A dramatic example of this is presented by a mosaic of Christ in the Archepiscopal palace in Ravenna. Here Christ is shown wearing the cuirass, or the breastplate, regularly depicted in images of Roman Emperors and generals. The staff of imperial authority has been transformed into the cross.

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10.8: Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus

Christianity Becomes Part of the Establishment

By the middle of the fourth century Christianity had undergone a dramatic transformation. Before Emperor Constantine's acceptance, Christianity had a marginal status in the Roman world. Attracting converts in the urban populations, Christianity appealed to the faithful's desires for personal salvation; however, due to Christianity's monotheism (which prohibited its followers from participating in the public cults), Christians suffered periodic episodes of persecution. But by the middle of the fourth century, Christianity under imperial patronage had become a part of the establishment. The elite of Roman society were becoming new converts.

Such an individual was Junius Bassus. He was a member of a senatorial family. His father had held the position of Praetorian prefect, which involved administration of the Western Empire. Junius Bassus held the position of praefectus urbi for Rome. The office of urban prefect was established in the early period of Rome under the kings. It was a position held by members of the most elite families of Rome. In his role as prefect, Junius Bassus was responsible for the administration of the city of Rome. When Junius Bassus died at the age of 42 in the year 359, a sarcophagus was made for him. As recorded in an inscription on the sarcophagus now in the Vatican collection, Junius Bassus had become a convert to Christianity shortly before his death.



Figure **10.8.1**. *Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus*, 359 CE, (Vatican, Grottoes of St. Peter)

Establishing Formulas for Representing Christian Figures

The style and iconography of this sarcophagus reflects the transformed status of Christianity. This is most evident in the image at the center of the upper register. Before the time of Constantine, the Figure of Christ was rarely directly represented, but here on the Junius Bassus sarcophagus we see Christ prominently represented not in a narrative representation from the New Testament but in a formula derived from Roman Imperial art. The *Traditio Legis* ("Giving of the Law") was a formula in Roman art to give visual testament to the emperor as the sole source of the law.

Already at this early period, artists had articulated identifiable formulas for representing Sts. Peter and Paul. Peter was represented with a bowl haircut and a short cropped beard, while the Figure of Paul was represented with a pointed beard and usually a high forehead. In paintings, Peter has white hair and Paul's hair is black. The early establishment of these formulas was undoubtedly a product of the doctrine of apostolic authority in the early church. Bishops claimed that their authority could be traced back to the original Twelve Apostles.



Figure **10.8.2**. Cast of the central sections: *Traditio Legis* and the *Adventus*

Peter and Paul held the status as the principle apostles. The Bishops of Rome have understood themselves in a direct succession back to St. Peter, the founder of the church in Rome and its first bishop. The popularity of the formula of the *traditio legis* (shown in Figure **10.8.2**) in Christian art in the fourth century was due to the importance of establishing orthodox Christian doctrine.

In contrast to the established formulas for representing Sts. Peter and Paul, early Christian art reveals two competing conceptions of Christ. The youthful, beardless Christ, based on representation of Apollo, vied for dominance with the long-haired and bearded Christ, based on representations of Jupiter or Zeus.

The feet of Christ in the Junius Bassus relief rest on the head of a bearded, muscular Figure, who holds a billowing veil spread over his head. This is another formula derived from Roman art. A comparable Figure appears at the top of the cuirass of the Augustus of Primaporta. The Figure can be identified as the Figure of Caelus, or the heavens. In the context of the Augustan statue, the Figure of Caelus signifies Roman authority and its rule of everything earthly, that is, under the heavens. In the Junius Bassus relief, Caelus's position under Christ's feet signifies that Christ is the ruler of heaven.

The lower register directly underneath depicts Christ's Entry into Jerusalem. This image was also based on a formula derived from Roman imperial art. The *adventus* (shown in Figure **10.8.2**) was a formula devised to show the triumphal arrival of the emperor with Figures offering homage.



Figure **10.8.3**. Bas-relief from the Arch of Marcus Aurelius, Rome, now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome.

A relief from the reign of Marcus Aurelius (see Figure **10.8.3**) illustrates this formula. In including the Entry into Jerusalem, the designer of the Junius Bassus sarcophagus did not just use this to represent the New Testament story, but with the *adventus* iconography, this image signifies Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Whereas the *Traditio Legis* above conveys Christ's heavenly authority, it is likely that the Entry into Jerusalem in the form of the adventus was intended to signify Christ's earthly authority. The juxtaposition of the Christ in Majesty and the Entry into Jerusalem suggests that the planner of the sarcophagus had an intentional program in mind.

Old Testament and New Testament Together



Figure **10.8.4**. Adam and Eve

We can determine some intentionality in the inclusion of the Old and New Testament scenes. For example the image of Adam and Eve shown covering their nudity after the Fall was intended to refer to the doctrine of Original Sin that necessitated Christ's entry into the world to redeem humanity through His death and resurrection. Humanity is thus in need of salvation from this world.

The inclusion of the suffering of Job on the left hand side of the lower register conveyed the meaning how even the righteous must suffer the discomforts and pains of this life. Job is saved only by his unbroken faith in God.

The scene of Daniel in the lion's den to the right of the Entry into Jerusalem had been popular in earlier Christian art as another example of how salvation is achieved through faith in God.



Figure **10.8.5**. Sacrifice of Isaac

Salvation is a message in the relief of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac on the left hand side of the upper register. God challenged Abraham's faith by commanding Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac. At the moment when Abraham is about to carry out the sacrifice his hand is stayed by an angel. Isaac is thus saved. It is likely that the inclusion of this scene in the context of the rest of the sarcophagus had another meaning as well. The story of the father's sacrifice of his only son was understood to refer to God's sacrifice of his son, Christ, on the Cross. Early Christian theologians attempting to integrate the Old and New Testaments saw in Old Testament stories prefigurations or precursors of New Testament stories. Throughout Christian art the popularity of Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac is explained by its typological reference to the Crucifixion of Christ.

Martyrdom



Figure **10.8.6**. Cast of Christ's trial before Pilate, with Pilate about to wash his hands.

While not showing directly the Crucifixion of Christ, the inclusion of the Judgment of Pilate in two compartments on the right hand side of the upper register is an early appearance in Christian art of a scene drawn from Christ's Passion. The scene is based on the formula in Roman art of Justitia, illustrated here by a panel made for Marcus Aurelius. Here the emperor is shown seated on the sella curulis dispensing justice to a barbarian Figure. On the sarcophagus Pilate is shown seated also on a sella curulis. The position of Pontius Pilate as the Roman prefect or governor of Judaea undoubtedly carried special meaning for Junius Bassus in his role as praefectus urbi in Rome. Junius Bassus as a senior magistrate would also be entitled to sit on a *sella curulis*.

Just as Christ was judged by Roman authority, Sts. Peter and Paul were martyred under Roman rule. The remaining two scenes on the sarcophagus represent Sts. Peter and Paul being lead to their martyrdoms. Peter and Paul as the principal apostles of Christ are again given prominence. Their martyrdoms witness Christ's own death. The artists seem to be making this point by the visual pairing of the scene of St. Peter being led to his matyrdom and the Figure of Christ before Pilate. In both scenes the principal Figure is flanked by two other Figures.

The importance of Peter and Paul in Rome is made apparent that two of the major churches that Constantine constructed in Rome were the Church of St. Peter and the Church of St. Paul Outside the Walls. The site of the Church of St. Peter has long believed to be the place of St. Peter's burial. The basilica was constructed in an ancient cemetary. Although we can not be certain the the Junius Bassus Sarcophagus was originally intended for this site, it would make sense that a prominent Roman Christian like Junius Bassus would want to be buried in close physical proximity to the burial spot of the founder of the Church of Rome.



Erotes harvesting grapes from the side of the Junius Bassus Sarcophagus.



Erotes harvesting wheat and grapes, third or fourth century

Figure **10.8.6**. Erotes in Christian and Greek art

Competing Styles

At either end of the Junius Bassus sarcophagus appear Erotes harvesting grapes and wheat. A panel with the same subject was probably a part of a pagan sarcophagus made for a child. This iconography is based on images of the seasons in Roman art. Again the artists have taken conventions from Greek and Roman art and converted it into a Christian context. The wheat and grapes of the classical motif would be understood in the Christian context as a reference to the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

While the dumpy proportions are far from the standards of classical art, the style of the relief especially with the rich folds of drapery and soft facial features can be seen as classic or alluding to the classical style. Comparably the division of the relief into different registers and further subdivided by an architectural framework alludes to the orderly disposition of classical art. This choice of a style that alludes to classical art was undoubtedly intentional. The art of the period is marked by a number of competing styles. Just as rhetoricians were taught at this period to adjust their oratorical style to the intended audience, the choice of the classical style was seen as an indication of the high social status of the patron, Junius Bassus. In a similar way, the representation of the Figures in togas was intentional. In Roman art, the toga was traditionally used as a symbol of high social status.

In both its style and iconography, the Junius Bassus Sarcophagus witnesses the adoption of the tradition of Greek and Roman art by Christian artists. Works like this were appealing to patrons like Junius Bassus who were a part of the upper level of Roman society. Christian art did not reject the classical tradition: rather, the classical tradition will be a reoccurring element in Christian art throughout the Middle Ages.

Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus

Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, marble, 359 CE (Treasury of Saint Peter's Basilica). Please note that due to photography restrictions, the images used in the video show the plaster cast on display in the Vatican Museum. Nevertheless, the audio conversation was recorded in the treasury in Saint Peter's Basilica, in front of the original sarcophagus.

Speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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10.9: Santa Sabina

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Basilica of Santa Sabina.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Basilica of Santa Sabina, 422–432, Rome

Santa Sabina, Rome

Basilicas—a type of building used by the ancient Romans for diverse functions including as a site for law courts, is the category of building that Constantine's architects adapted to serve as the basis for the new churches. The original Constantinian buildings are now known only in plan, but an examination of a still extant early fifth century Roman basilica, the Church of Santa Sabina, helps us to understand the essential characteristics of the early Christian basilica. Like the Trier basilica, the Church of Santa Sabina has a dominant central axis that leads from the entrance to the apse, the site of the altar. This central space is known as the nave, and is flanked on either side by side aisles. The architecture is relatively simple with a wooden, truss roof. The wall of the nave is broken by clerestory windows that provide direct lighting in the nave. The wall does not contain the traditional classical orders articulated by columns and entablatures. Now plain, the walls apparently originally were decorated with mosaics.

This interior would have had a dramatically different effect than the classical building. As exemplified by the interior of the Pantheon constructed in the second century by the Emperor Hadrian, the wall in the classical building was broken up into different levels by the horizontals of the entablatures. The columns and pilasters form verticals that tie together the different levels. Although this decor does not physically support the load of the building, the effect is to visualize the weight of the building. The thickness of the classical decor adds solidity to the building.

In marked contrast, the nave wall of Santa Sabina has little sense of weight. The architect was particularly aware of the light effects in an interior space like this. The glass tiles of the mosaics would create a shimmering effect and the walls would appear to float. Light would have been understood as a symbol of divinity. Light was a symbol for Christ. The emphasis in this architecture is on the spiritual effect and not the physical. The opulent effect of the interior of the original Constantinian basilicas is brought out in a Spanish pilgrims description of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem:

The decorations are too marvelous for words. All you can see is gold, jewels and silk. . . . You simply cannot imagine the number and sheer weight of the candles, tapers, lamps and everything else they use for the services. . . . They are beyond description, and so is the magnificent building itself. It was built by Constantine and . . . was decorated with gold, mosaic, and precious marble, as much as his empire could provide.

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10.10: Santa Maria Maggiore

Dr. Steven Zucker and Richard Bowen (of Context Travel) provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.



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Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, fifth century CE.

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10.11: Mausoleum of Galla Placidia

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, 425 CE, Ravenna, Italy

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10.12: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Dura-Europos (Click on Geographical Location, then click on Syria, then click on Dura Europos, then click on Synagogue Frescoes)
- Early Christian Art
- Christian Catacombs

Watch this video:



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Early Medieval, Carolingian, and Ottonian Art

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Early Medieval art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Early Medieval art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Early Medieval art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Early Medieval art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Early Medieval art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

11.1: Overview
11.2: Key Learning Items
11.3: Early Medieval Art
11.4: Fibulae
11.5: Sutton Hoo Ship Burial
11.6: Medieval Manuscripts
11.7: The Bestiary
11.8: The Lindisfarne Gospels
11.9: Carolingian Art
11.10: Lindau Gospels Cover
11.11: St. Michael's Church
11.12: External Resources

Thumbnail: Otto II, by the Gregory Master. (Public Domain; Master of the Registrum Gregorii via Wikipedia)

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11.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Early Medieval art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Early Medieval art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Early Medieval

- **Read:** Early Medieval Art
- **Read:** Fibulae
- **Read:** Sutton Hoo Ship Burial (includes a video—4:23)
- **Read:** Medieval Manuscripts
- **Read:** The Bestiary
- **Read:** The Lindisfarne Gospels

Carolingian

- **Read:** Carolingian Art
- **Watch:** Lindau Gospels Cover (6:01)

Ottonian

- **Read:** St. Michael's Church

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 11 Quiz (5 points)
- **Discuss:** Unit 2 Discussion Essay (30 points)

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11.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the characteristic features of Early Medieval art?
- What types of art were produced in the Early Medieval period?
- What are the characteristic features of Carolingian art?
- How does Carolingian art differ from Early Medieval and Ottonian art?
- What are the characteristic features of Ottonian art?
- How is Ottonian art different from Early Medieval and Carolingian art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- fibulae
- barbarian metalwork
- illuminated manuscripts
- bestiary
- cross-carpet page
- barrel vault
- groin vault
- scriptorium
- repousseé

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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11.3: Early Medieval Art

An Illusion of Reality



Figure **11.3.1**. Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Cnidos, Roman marble copy after fourth century Greek original (Palazzo Altemps, Rome)

Classical art, or the art of ancient Greece and Rome, sought to create a convincing illusion for the viewer. Artists sculpting the images of gods and goddesses tried to make their statues appear like an idealized human Figure. Some of these sculptures, such as the *Aphrodite of Knidos* by Praxiteles, were so lifelike that legends spread about the statues coming to life and speaking to people. After all, a statue of a god or goddess in the ancient world was believed to embody deity.

The Problem for Early Christians

The illusionary quality of classical art posed a significant problem for early Christian theologians. When God dictated the ten commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, God expressly forbade the Israelites from making any "any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4). Early Christians saw themselves as the spiritual progeny of the Israelites and tried to comply with this commandment. Nevertheless, many early Christians were converted pagans who were accustomed to images in religious worship. The use of images in religious ritual was visually compelling and difficult to abandon.

Tertillian Asks: Can Artists be Christians?

Tertullian, an influential early Christian author living in the second and third centuries, wrote a treatise titled *On Idolatry* in which he asks if artists could, in fact, be Christians. In this text, he argues that all illusionary art, or all art that seeks to look like something or someone in nature, has the potential to be worshiped as an idol. Arguing fervently against artists as Christians, he acknowledges that there are many artists who are Christians and indeed some who are even priests. In the end, Tertullian asks artists to quit their work and become craftsmen.

St. Augustine: Illusionary Images are Lies

Another influential early Christian writer, St. Augustine of Hippo, was also concerned about images, but for different reasons. In his Soliloquies (386–87), Augustine observes that illusionary images, like actors, are lying. An actor on a stage lies because he is playing a part, trying to convince you that he is a character in the script when in truth he is not. An image lies because it is not the thing it claims to be. A painting of a cat is not a cat, but the artist tries to convince the viewer that it is. Augustine cannot reconcile these lies with patterns of divine truth and therefore does not see a place for images in Christian practice.[1]

Fortunately for art and history, not everyone agreed with Tertullian and Augustine and the use of images persisted. Nevertheless their style and appearance changed in order to be more compatible with theology.

Towards Abstraction

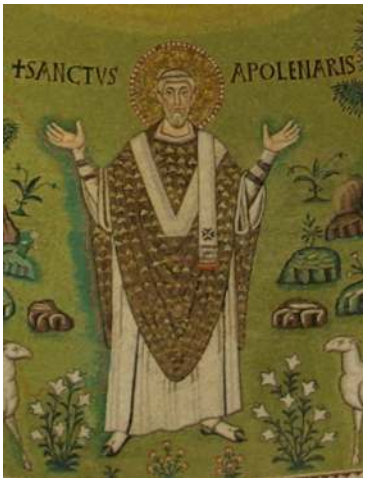


Figure **11.3.2**. Mosaic in the apse of the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, sixth century (Ravenna, Italy)

Christian art, which was initially influenced by the illusionary quality of classical art, started to move away from naturalistic representation and instead pushed toward abstraction. Artists began to abandon classical artistic conventions like shading, modeling and perspective—conventions that make the image appear more real. They no longer observed details in nature to record them in paint, bronze, marble, or mosaic.

Instead, artists favored flat representations of people, animals and objects that only looked nominally like their subjects in real life. Artists were no longer creating the lies that Augustine warned against, as these abstracted images removed at least some of the temptations for idolatry. This new style, adopted over several generations, created a comfortable distance between the new Christian empire and its pagan past.

In Western Europe, this approach to the visual arts dominated until the imperial rule of Charlemagne (800–814) and the accompanying Carolingian Renaissance. This controversy over the legitimacy and orthodoxy of images continued and intensified in the Byzantine Empire. The issue was eventually resolved, in favor of images, during the Second Council of Nicaea in 787.

---

1. There is some irony here since Augustine's position echoes, to some extent, the writing of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. In book X of *The Republic* (c. 360 BCE), Plato describes a true thing as having been made by God, while in the earthly sphere, a carpenter, for example, can only build a replica of this truth (Plato uses a bed to illustrate his point). Plato states that a painter who renders the carpenter's bed creates an illusion that is two steps from the truth of God. ↵

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11.4: Fibulae



Figure **11.4.1**. Byzantine Fibula, c. 430 (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Fibulae (singular: fibula) are brooches that were made popular by Roman military campaigns. They all consist of a body, a pin, and a catch. Ornate fibulae became all the rage in the early middle ages, and are one of the most commonly found objects in barbarian[1] grave sites. Grave goods like fibulae provide the most concrete cultural information about barbarians, due to the sparse amount of written documentation about them. The diverse ethnic groups were constantly borrowing from one another, while putting their own spin on things.

The example seen in Figure **11.4.1** was a very popular style of fibula, and is called a “crossbow” fibula because of its resemblance to the weapon. Unscrewing the left knob at the end of this “crossbow” would release the pin, which is visible in this photograph. The detailed incising on the body is called pierced openwork, and bears a Christian cross amongst a circular leaf motif. The Byzantines were a part of the eastern Roman empire, their capital being Constantinople. Their empire was a continuation of the Roman empire during the middle ages, while the majority of modern-day Italy was overtaken by barbarian tribes. Although precious and intricate, it is a relatively simple design, indicative of the Byzantine/Roman fibulae style.



Figure **11.4.2**. Lombardic Fibula, mid-sixth century (National Museum of Slovenia)

The Lombardic piece in Figure **11.4.2** provides a good comparison, because it is a stylized variation of the crossbow fibula. It is gilded and inlaid with niello, a black metal alloy. The incisions are hatched lines, a popular decoration technique in Lombardic fibulae. The Lombards (or Langobards, from the Latin Langobardi) are thought to be of Germanic origin, although their background is still contested. They established their kingdom in Italy in 558 by conquering Byzantine land, and were defeated themselves by Charlemagne, king of the Franks, in 774. Over these centuries they assimilated into Roman culture, adopting Catholicism, and left their own administrative legal procedures behind. This piece shows the adoption of the crossbow fibula style, but with a small Lombardic “twist.”



Figure **11.4.3**. Merovingian (Frankish) Looped Fibulae, mid-sixth century, silver gilt worked in filigree with inlaid garnet and other stones (Musée des Antiquities Nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye)

The pair of Frankish fibulae in Figure **11.4.3** is a great example of cloisonné, a technique that was popular in barbarian art. This technique is characterized by inlaid semi-precious stones. In fact, the word cloisonné literally means "partitioned" in French. The artisan would solder wires onto a metal base and fill the areas those wires created with stones (to be distinguished with cloisonné enamel, which has colored enamel baked *within* these partitions). This example also shows a popular motif in barbarian art of the middle ages: eagles! The eagle, originally a pagan symbol of the sun, was used by Imperial Rome, and would later become an emblem to St. John. The end of these fibulae are in the shape of Eagle heads, and little fish are shown on the main body of the brooches. Garnets were used to decorate the eyes of the eagles, and a wide range of gems were used to decorate the rest of the fibulae. These stunning pieces demonstrate the proficiency of barbarian metal workers during the middle ages.



Figure **11.4.4**. Visigothic Pair of Eagle Fibulae, sixth century (Walters Art Museum)

The pair of Visigothic fibulae in Figure **11.4.4** is another great example of barbarian metalwork and cloisonné. These were decorated with garnets, amethyst, and colored glass. Pendants could have been hung from the small loops on the bottom on each fibulae. It is easy to see how these ornate fibulae are different from the Byzantine example discussed earlier. This pair was found at a Visigothic grave site in Spain, and were made over a century later than the Byzantine crossbow fibula. While both examples are fibulae and had the same functional purpose, the way in which they were decorated differed because of the culture producing them.

After all, when commissioning such expensive objects, the owners are going to want an object that resonates with their identity. For such a widespread object as the fibula, it is normal for similar groups to have similar artistic styles, and for more diverse groups to have less in common. These extraordinary examples of fibulae are proof of the diverse and distinct cultures living within larger empires and kingdoms, a social situation that was common during the middle ages.

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1. The word *barbarian* did not originally carry the same connotations as it does today. It comes from the Greek word *barbaros*, meaning "foreign." So for our purposes *barbarian* will be used here as a blanket term for non-Roman, nomadic, and illiterate groups traveling throughout Europe during the middle ages. The cultural exchange that occurred in Europe after antiquity can be seen through artwork, among other things; Romans borrowed from "Barbarian" aesthetic, and vice versa. ↵

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11.5: Sutton Hoo Ship Burial

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial and objects found within.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Sutton Hoo Ship Burial, c. 700 (British Museum, London) Multiple bronze, gold and silver objects of Anglo Saxon origin, found in Suffolk, England, including a helmet, sceptre, sword, hanging bowl, bowls and spoons, shoulder clasps, a belt buckle, and purse lid.

The History

Shortly before World War II, archaeologists uncovered a remarkable find in East Anglia: an apparently early seventh century grave monument made for an Anglo Saxon king. The monument was in the form of a long boat measuring approximately 86 feet. The absence of bones has led archaeologists to identify the monument as a cenotaph, or memorial. Scholars have long pointed to the parallels between this find and the following descriptions of funerary practices in the Old English poem Beowulf.

The following passage describes the funeral of Beowulf himself:

> Then, on the headland, the Geats prepared a mighty pyre
> for Beowulf, hung round with helmets and shields
> and shining mail, in accordance with his wishes;
> and then the mourning warriors laid
> their dear lord, the famous prince upon it.
> And there, on Whaleness, the heroes kindled
> the most might of pyres; the dark wood-smoke
> soared over the fire, the roaring flames
> mingled with weeping—the winds' tumult subsided—
> until the body became ash, consumed even
> to its core…
> Then the Geats built a barrow on the headland—
> it was high and broad, visible from far
> to all seafarers; in ten days they built the beacon
> for that courageous man; and they constructed
> as noble an enclosure as wise men
> could devise, to enshrine the ashes.
> They buried rings and brooches in the barrow,
> all those adornments that brave men
> had brought out from the hoard after Beowulf died.

They bequeathed the gleaming gold, treasure of men,
to the earth, and there it was before.
Then twelve brave warriors, sons of heroes,
rode round the barrow, sorrowing;
they mourned their king, chanted
an elegy, spoke about that great man:
They exalted his heroic life, lauded
his daring deeds/
Thus the Geats, his hearth-companions,
grieved over the death of their lord;
they said that of all kings on earth
he was the kindest, the most gentle,
the most just to his people, the most eager for fame.

Included among the objects was a cloisonné purse. This purse contained avariety of coins that have allowed numismatists to date the monument tothe second quarter of the seventh century. The dating of the coins to about 625 have led scholars to propose the identification of the East Anglian king as Raedwald who died about 624 and 625.

Bede in his *History of the English Church and People* identifies Raedwaldas as the first East Anglian king to have converted to Christianity. This would be consistent with a pair of spoons found in the ship burial. One is inscribed with the name Saul and the other with Paul. These were apparently christening spoons referring to Saul who became Paul after his conversion to Christianity. What we know of Raedwald is that he subsequently relapsed into paganism and apparently kept shrines to both Christian and pagan dieties. Bede (History of the English Church and People, II, 15) presents the following account of Raedwald:

EDWIN was so zealous for the worship of truth, that he likewise persuaded Eorpwald, king of the East Saxons, and son of Redwald, to abandon his idolatrous superstitions, and with his whole province to receive the faith and sacraments of Christ. And indeed his father Redwald had long before been admitted to the sacrament of the Christian faith in Kent, but in vain; for on his return home, he was seduced by his wife and certain perverse teachers, and turned back from the sincerity of the faith; and thus his latter state was worse than the former; so that, like the ancient Samaritans, he seemed at the same time to serve Christ and the gods whom he had served before; and in the same temple he had an altar to sacrifice to Christ, and another small one to offer victims to devils.

Included in the treasure are some of the finest pieces of barbarian metalwork that have come down to us.

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11.6: Medieval Manuscripts

More medieval books survive from the Middle Ages than any other artistic medium. Scholars refer to the hand-made books of the Middles Ages as manuscripts. Books that contain artistic decoration are called illuminated manuscripts. Manuscripts that survive from the European Middle Ages are generally religious books that reflect the canon, doctrine and practices of Christianity, though there are Jewish and Muslim books and other types of books that survive from this time period as well.



Figure **11.6.1**. Full-page miniature of St. Luke as an evangelist, 6th century. This page prefaces the Gospel of Luke in the St. Augustine Gospels (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 286).

A medieval manuscript is a codex (pl. codices), meaning a book made of pages bound between two boards. Ancient scribes wrote on scrolls that were stored in boxes. These ancient scrolls only survive in occasional fragments, as a scroll is especially vulnerable to physical degradation. The pages of codices, on the other hand, are protected by their covers and have a much greater chance for survival. Thus, medieval books survive in large numbers.

The Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris and the British Library in London house the world's largest collections of medieval manuscripts. Though normally only available to scholars, many museums and libraries put some of their manuscript treasures on display. Digitizing, or creating high quality digital images of manuscripts, is increasingly common and these images are normally available on the Internet, furthering the study of these medieval books.

The original manuscripts of the Bible, the works of Aristotle and Plato and other ancient writers do not survive. They are known today because medieval scribes diligently copied them.

Recording and disseminating information is quick and easy today, but in the Middle Ages this process was slow and laborious. Monastery libraries housed most books and all books were copied by hand, usually by monks. This process of copying and disseminating books was essential to the preservation of knowledge.

Some monks traveled to distant monasteries to view and copy books to bring back to their own monastery's library. Fires destroyed many medieval libraries and the books they housed. Because of this and other accidents of history, not all texts survived the Middle Ages. The *Name of the Rose*, a novel by Umberto Eco, imagines such a fate for Aristotle's lost work on poetics.

Books were essential to the practice of Christianity. Medieval Christian missionaries, such as St. Augustine of Canterbury, brought books with them as they traveled from place to place preaching and establishing new churches. The Gospel Book of St. Augustine survives today in the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It contains the text of the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John of the New Testament—an essential work for teaching potential converts about the life of Christ. A series of images illustrating the life of Christ prefaces the text and each book of the gospels begins with an illustration detailing the events unique to that gospel, though some of these are now lost.

The oldest illuminated manuscripts are among the oldest manuscripts in existence. The illustration of books was functional as well as decorative. Illuminated initials and painted miniatures marked the beginnings of important sections in the text and allowed

readers to navigate the book.

Prefatory image cycles prepared the mind of the reader to engage with the text. Some illustrations elaborate doctrines, record events or simply tells stories. Even readers' doodles are intriguing to contemporary scholars.

In illuminated manuscripts, words and images worked together to inform the medieval reader and occasionally these readers left their own mark. These books are highly interactive. Nearly all medieval manuscripts provide ample space in the margins for readers' notes and comments. In this way, illuminated manuscripts are different from other types of media in that they provided spaces for readers to record their reactions to image and text.

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11.7: The Bestiary

A Book of Beasts



Figure **11.7.1**. The phoenix from folio 56 recto of the Aberdeen Bestiary, written and illuminated in England around 1200. The Bestiary describes this magical bird as building its own funeral pyre and then rising from the ashes.

Have you ever heard that elephants are afraid of mice? Or that foxes are deceptive? These characterizations of animals come from a medieval book called the Bestiary, or Book of Beasts. Though these books are not known to many today, you are likely familiar with some of their content. The magical beasts in the *Harry Potter* series come directly from medieval bestiaries. Descriptions of unicorns, phoenixes, basilisks, and centaurs are all included in the text, but misspell "bestiary" in a Google search and you will likely regret it.

The Bestiary is a medieval encyclopedia that identifies a selection of animals, plants, and precious stones. Some really exist in nature and others do not. Each entry includes a physical description, an overview of the animal's supposed characteristics, and a run-down of its moral qualities. Many versions of these books include illustrations. Its worth keeping in mind that Bestiaries pre-date the printing press. They were copied by hand at different times and places, resulting in a wide range of variations.

From a Christian Perspective



Figure **11.7.2**. The beaver from folio 11 recto of the Aberdeen Bestiary, written and illuminated in England around 1200. The beaver shows off his testicles to escape the hunters.

The lack of scientific information in each entry makes them entertaining to read. For example, the Bestiary text describes the beaver as a gentle animal whose testicles are valued for their medicinal properties. If a beaver senses that he is being hunted, he will bite off his testicles and throw them to the hunter to save his own life. If a beaver has already done this and is hunted again, he will stand on his hind legs and show the hunter that his testicles are already missing and the hunter will let him go. The text then goes on to give a Christian moralization of the beaver, stating that "every man who heeds God's commandment and wishes to live chastely should cut off all his vices and shameless acts, and cast them from him into the face of the devil."[1]

Sources

The Bestiary text is made up of several components. The bulk of the text comes from the Physiologus, a second century Greek text by an anonymous author. Relevant comments by other ancient authors such as Aristotle, Herodotus, Pliny the Elder, and Aelian are

also included. The Etymologiae of Isidore of Seville, the late fifth and sixth century Archbishop, constitute a significant portion of the text. Layers of Christian commentary and moralizations were added to those earlier texts.

Content



Figure **11.7.3**. Adam names the animals from folio 5 recto of the Aberdeen Bestiary, written and illuminated in England around 1200.

The Bestiary begins with a retelling of the creation story from Genesis. An important event is Adam, the first man, naming all of the animals. This scene is often included in illustrated Bestiaries. Isidore of Seville believed that the names of animals were significant. He believed that an etymological study of each animal's name would reveal something about the nature of each animal.

The content of the Bestiary, particularly the moralizations on the animals, is echoed in many medieval texts, from sermons to stories. Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale," an animal story from the *Canterbury Tales*, makes use of the Bestiary. The main characters are a sly, deceptive fox and Chanticleer, a foolish and egotistical rooster.

Illustrations

The Bestiary was an enormously popular book in the Middle Ages and more than 130 medieval copies survive today. These copies come from all over Western Europe. The earliest manuscripts date from the tenth century and many survive from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Many illustrations were drawn by artists who had never seen the relevant animal, but used the physical descriptions as a guide. The Bestiary text was influential, but these portable illustrations of animals were equally influential and likely served as models for animals in other manuscript illustrations, stone carving, wall painting, stained glass, and other media.

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1. "Folio 11r Translation and Transcription," *The Aberdeen Bistiary.*↵

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11.8: The Lindisfarne Gospels

A medieval monk takes up a quill pen, fashioned from a goose feather, and dips it into a rich, black ink made from soot. Seated on a wooden chair in the scriptorium of Lindisfarne, an island off the coast of Northumberland in England, he stares hard at the words from a manuscript made in Italy. This book is his exemplar, the codex (a bound book, made from sheets of paper or parchment) from which he is to copy the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. For about the next six years, he will copy this Latin. He will illuminate the gospel text with a weave of fantastic images—snakes that twist themselves into knots or birds, their curvaceous and overlapping forms creating the illusion of a third dimension into which a viewer can lose him or herself in meditative contemplation.

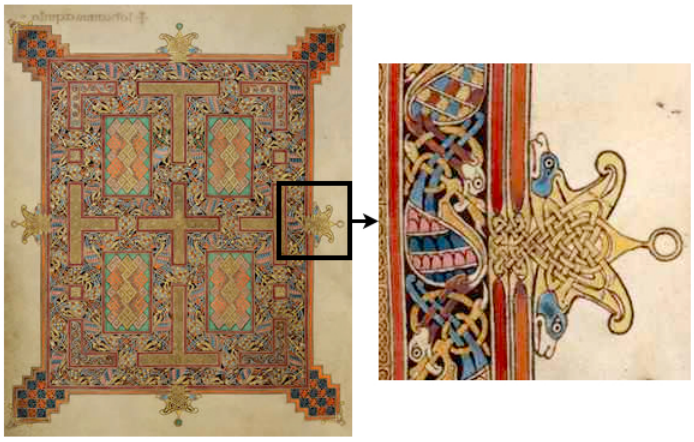


Figure 11.8.1. Lindisfarne Gospels, John cross-carpet page f 210v (British Museum)

The book is a spectacular example of Insular or Hiberno-Saxon art—works produced in the British Isles between 500–900 CE, a time of devastating invasions and political upheavals. Monks read from it during rituals at their Lindisfarne Priory on Holy Island, a Christian community that safeguarded the shrine of St Cuthbert, a bishop who died in 687 and whose relics were thought to have curative and miracle-working powers.

A Northumbrian monk, very likely the bishop Eadfrith, illuminated the codex in the early eighth century. Two-hundred and fifty-nine written and recorded leaves include full-page portraits of each evangelist; highly ornamental “cross-carpet” pages, each of which features a large cross set against a background of ordered and yet teeming ornamentation; and the Gospels themselves, each introduced by an historiated initial. The codex also includes sixteen pages of canon tables set in arcades. Here correlating passages from each evangelist are set side-by-side, enabling a reader to compare narrations.

In 635 CE Christian monks from the Scottish island of Iona built a priory in Lindisfarne. More than a hundred and fifty years later, in 793, Vikings from the north attacked and pillaged the monastery, but survivors managed to transport the Gospels safely to Durham, a town on the Northumbrian coast about 75 miles west of its original location.

We glean this information from the manuscript itself, thanks to Aldred, a tenth-century priest from a priory at Durham. Aldred’s colophon—an inscription that relays information about the book’s production—informs us that Eadfrith, a bishop of Lindisfarne in 698 who died in 721, created the manuscript to honor God and St. Cuthbert. Aldred also inscribed a vernacular translation between the lines of the Latin text, creating the earliest known Gospels written in a form of English.



Figure **11.8.2**. Lindisfarne Gospels, St Matthew, Cross-Carpet page, f.26v

Matthew's cross-carpet page (f.26v) exemplifies Eadfrith's exuberance and genius. A mesmerizing series of repetitive knots and spirals is dominated by a centrally-located cross. One can imagine devout monks losing themselves in the swirls and eddies of color during meditative contemplation of its patterns.

Compositionally, Eadfrith stacked wine-glass shapes horizontally and vertically against his intricate weave of knots. On closer inspection many of these knots reveal themselves as snake-like creatures curling in and around tubular forms, mouths clamping down on their bodies. Chameleon-like, their bodies change colors: sapphire blue here, verdigris green there, and sandy gold in between. The sanctity of the cross, outlined in red with arms outstretched and pressing against the page edges, stabilizes the background's gyrating activity and turns the repetitive energy into a meditative force.



Figure **11.8.3**. Lindisfarne Gospels, St Luke, incipit page, f.139

Likewise, Luke's incipit (incipit: it begins) page teems with animal life, spiraled forms, and swirling vortexes. In many cases Eadfrith's characteristic knots reveal themselves as snakes that move stealthily along the confines of a letter's boundaries.

Blue pin-wheeled shapes rotate in repetitive circles, caught in the vortex of a large Q that forms Luke's opening sentence—Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem. (Translation: As many have taken it in hand to set forth in order.)



Figure 11.8.4. Lindisfarne Gospels, St Luke, incipit page, f.139

Birds also abound. One knot enclosed in a tall rectangle on the far right unravels into a blue heron's chest shaped like a large comma. Eadfrith repeats this shape vertically down the column, cleverly twisting the comma into a cat's forepaw at the bottom. The feline, who has just consumed the eight birds that stretch vertically up from its head, presses off this appendage acrobatically to turn its body 90 degrees; it ends up staring at the words RENARRATIONEM (part of the phrase -re narrationem).

Eadfrith also has added a host of tiny red dots that envelop words, except when they don't—the letters "NIAM" of "quoniam" are composed of the vellum itself, the negative space now asserting itself as four letters.



Figure 11.8.5. Lindesfarne Gospels, St. Luke, portrait page (137v)

Luke's incipit page is in marked contrast to his straightforward portrait page. Here Eadfrith seats the curly-haired, bearded evangelist on a red-cushioned stool against an unornamented background. Luke holds a quill in his right hand, poised to write words on a scroll unfurling from his lap. His feet hover above a tray supported by red legs. He wears a purple robe streaked with red, one that we can easily imagine on a late fourth or fifth century Roman philosopher.

The gold halo behind Luke's head indicates his divinity. Above his halo flies a blue-winged calf, its two eyes turned toward the viewer with its body in profile. The bovine clasps a green parallelogram between two forelegs, a reference to the Gospel. According to the early eighth century Northumbrian monk Bede from the nearby monastery in Monkwearmouth (d. 735), this calf, or ox, symbolizes Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

According to the historian Bede from the nearby monastery in Monkwearmouth (d. 735), this calf, or ox, symbolizes Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Bede assigns symbols for the other three evangelists as well, which Eadfrith duly includes in their respective

portraits: Matthew's is a man, suggesting the human aspect of Christ; Mark's the lion, symbolizing the triumphant and divine Christ of the Resurrection; and John's the eagle, referring to Christ's second coming.

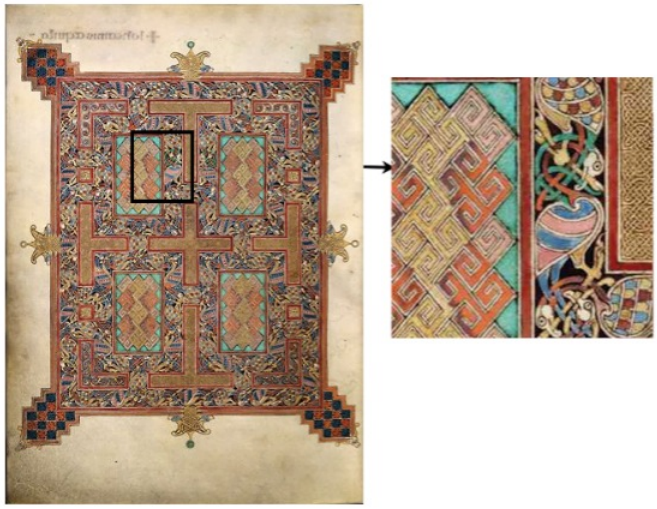


Figure **11.8.6**. Lindisfarne Gospels, John's cross-carpet page, folio 210v.

A dense interplay of stacked birds teem underneath the crosses of the carpet page that opens John's Gospel. One bird, situated in the upper left-hand quadrant, has blue-and-pink stripes in contrast to others that sport registers of feathers. Stripes had a negative eassociation to the medieval mind, appearing chaotic and disordered. The insane wore stripes, as did prostitutes, criminals, jugglers, sorcerers, and hangmen. Might Eadfrith be warning his viewers that evil lurks hidden in the most unlikely of places? Or was Eadfrith himself practicing humility in avoiding perfection?

All in all, the variety and splendor of the Lindisfarne Gospels are such that even in reproduction, its images astound. Artistic expression and inspired execution make this codex a high point of early medieval art.

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11.9: Carolingian Art

Charlemagne, King of the Franks and later Holy Roman Emperor, instigated a cultural revival known as the Carolingian Renaissance. This revival used Constantine's Christian empire as its model, which flourished between 306 and 337. Constantine was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity and left behind an impressive legacy of military strength and artistic patronage.

Charlemagne saw himself as the new Constantine and instigated this revival by writing his*Admonitio generalis* (789) and *Epistola de litteris colendis* (c.794–797). In the *Admonitio generalis*, Charlemagne legislates church reform, which he believes will make his subjects more moral and in the *Epistola de litteris colendis*, a letter to Abbot Baugulf of Fulda, he outlines his intentions for cultural reform. Most importantly, he invited the greatest scholars from all over Europe to come to court and give advice for his renewal of politics, church, art and literature.

Carolingian art survives in manuscripts, sculpture, architecture and other religious artifacts produced during the period 780-900. These artists worked exclusively for the emperor, members of his court, and the bishops and abbots associated with the court. Geographically, the revival extended through present-day France, Switzerland, Germany and Austria.



Figure **11.9.1**. Odo of Metz, Palatine Chapel Interior, Aachen, 805

Charlemagne commissioned the architect Odo of Metz to construct a palace and chapel in Aachen, Germany. The chapel was consecrated in 805 and is known as the Palatine Chapel. This space served as the seat of Charlemagne's power and still houses his throne today.

The Palatine Chapel is octagonal with a dome, recalling the shape of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy (completed in 548), but was built with barrel and groin vaults, which are distinctively late Roman methods of construction. The chapel is perhaps the best surviving example of Carolingian architecture and probably influenced the design of later European palace chapels.

Charlemagne had his own scriptorium, or center for copying and illuminating manuscripts, at Aachen. Under the direction of Alcuin of York, this scriptorium produced a new script known as Carolingian miniscule. Prior to this development, writing styles or scripts in Europe were localized and difficult to read. A book written in one part of Europe could not be easily read in another, even when the scribe and reader were both fluent in Latin. Knowledge of Carolingian miniscule spread from Aachen was universally adopted, allowing for clearer written communication within Charlemagne's empire. Carolingian miniscule was the most widely used script in Europe for about 400 years.

Figurative art from this period is easy to recognize. Unlike the flat, two-dimensional work of Early Christian and Early Byzantine artists, Carolingian artists sought to restore the third dimension. They used classical drawings as their models and tried to create more convincing illusions of space.



Figure **11.9.2**. St. Mark from the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary, folio 1v., c. 781-83

This development is evident in tracing author portraits in illuminated manuscripts. *The Godescalc Gospel Lectionary*, commisioned by Charlemagne and his wife Hildegard, was made circa 781–83 during his reign as King of the Franks and before the beginning of the Carolingian Renaissance. In the portrait of St. Mark, the artist employs typical Early Byzantine artistic conventions. The face is heavily modeled in brown, the drapery folds fall in stylized patterns and there is little or no shading. The seated position of the evangelist would be difficult to reproduce in real life, as there are spatial inconsistencies. The left leg is shown in profile and the other leg is show straight on. This author portrait is typical of its time.



Figure **11.9.3**. St. Mark from the Ebbo Gospels, folio 18v., c. 816–35

The Ebbo Gospels were made c. 816–35 in the Benedictine Abbey of Hautvillers for Ebbo, Archbishop of Rheims. The author portrait of St. Mark is characteristic of Carolingian art and the Carolingian Renaissance. The artist used distinctive frenzied lines to create the illusion of the evangelist's body shape and position. The footstool sits at an awkward unrealistic angle, but there are numerous attempts by the artist to show the body as a three-dimensional object in space. The right leg is tucked under the chair and the artist tries to show his viewer, through the use of curved lines and shading, that the leg has form. There is shading and consistency of perspective. The evangelist sitting on the chair strikes a believable pose.

Charlemagne, like Constantine before him, left behind an almost mythic legacy. The Carolingian Renaissance marked the last great effort to revive classical culture before the Late Middle Ages. Charlemagne's empire was led by his successors until the late ninth century. In early tenth century, the Ottonians rose to power and espoused different artistic ideals.

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11.10: Lindau Gospels Cover

Dr. Nancy Ross and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a jeweled upper cover of the *Lindau Gospels*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Jeweled upper cover of the *Lindau Gospels*, c. 880, Court School of Charles the Bald, 350 × 275 mm, (Morgan Library and Museum, New York). The cover may have been made in the Royal Abbey of St. Denis.

External Link

View this painting up close in the Google Art Project.

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11.11: St. Michael's Church



Figure **11.11.1**. St. Michael's Church, Hildesheim (1001–1031)

After Charlemagne's legacy had begun to die out, the warlike tribes in what is now Germany (then Saxony) banded together to elect a king from among their nobility. In 919 C.E., they chose Henry the Liudolfing, the son of a high-ranking duke, a brilliant military strategist and a well-respected leader. Henry, dubbed "the Fowler" because of his hobby of bird hunting, led the Saxon armies to a number of decisive victories against the Magyars and the Danes. These newly secured borders ushered in a period of immense prosperity and artistic productivity for the Saxon empire.

Henry's son Otto I (who became emperor in 962) lends his name to the "Ottonian" period. He forged an important alliance with the Pope, which allowed him to be crowned the first official Holy Roman Emperor since 924. This contact with Rome was extremely important to Ottonian artistic development, since each Ottonian king was determined to define himself as a Roman Emperor in the style of Constantine and Charlemagne. This meant perpetuating a highly intellectual court and creating an extensive artistic legacy.

Ottonian art takes a number of traditional medieval forms, including elegantly illuminated manuscripts, lavish metalwork, intricate carving, and Romanesque churches and cathedrals. Perhaps the most famous of the Ottonian artistic innovations is the Saxon Romanesque architecture style, which is marked by a careful attention to balance and mathematical harmony. This focus on geometry is based on the texts de Arithmatica and Ars Geometriae by the 6th century philosopher Boethius. The Ottonians held mathematical sciences in high regard and this is reflected in many of their artistic productions.



Figure **11.11.2**. Uta Codex (Uta Presents the Codex to Mary), c. 1020, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 13601, folio 2, recto

The illuminated manuscripts produced by Ottonian "scriptoria," or monastery painting and writing schools, provide documentation of both Ottonian religious and political customs and the stylistic preferences of the period. Manuscripts were most often produced

of religious texts, and usually included a dedication portrait commemorating the book's creation. The royal or religious donor is usually shown presenting the book to the saint of his or her choice.

Here we see a powerful abbess, Uta, presenting her codex to St. Mary. Many manuscripts also included a page depicting the artist or scribe of the work, acknowledging that the production of a book required not only money but also artistic labor.



Figure **11.11.3**. Hillinus Codex (Hillinus Presents the Codex to St. Peter), c.1020, Cologne Dombibliothek, folio 16, verso, manuscript 12

In the *Hillinus Codex*, a monk presents the codex that he has written or painted (or both!) to St. Peter. The work of the artist and scribe were often one and the same, as can be seen in many of the fantastic decorated initials that begin books or chapters in Ottonian Manuscripts. As you can see from the dedication pictures, the manuscripts in question are often depicted as they were frequently displayed, that is with the text securely enclosed between lavish metal covers.

Ottonian metalwork took many forms, but one of the most common productions was bejeweled book covers for their precious manuscripts. This cover is one of the most expensive that survives; it includes not only numerous jewels, but an ivory carving of the death of the Virgin Mary.



Figure **11.11.4**. (left) Cover, “Dormition of the Virgin,” Gospels of Otto III, c. 998–1001, Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4453 ; (right) Doors of the Hildesheim Church, c. 1015

On a larger scale, clerics like Bernward of Hildesheim, who designed the church we saw earlier, cast his 15′ doors depicting the fall and redemption of mankind out of single pieces of metal. This was an enormous undertaking, and the process was so complex that it would not be replicated until the Renaissance.

For a modern viewer, Ottonian art can be a little difficult to understand. The depictions of people and places don’t conform to a naturalistic style, and the symbolism is often obscure. When you look at Ottonian art, keep in mind that the aim for these artists was not to create something that looked “realistic,” but rather to convey abstract concepts, many of which are deeply philosophical in nature. The focus on symbolism can also be one of the most fascinating aspects of studying Ottonian art, since you can depend on each part of the compositions to mean something specific. The more time you spend on each composition, the more rewarding discoveries emerge.

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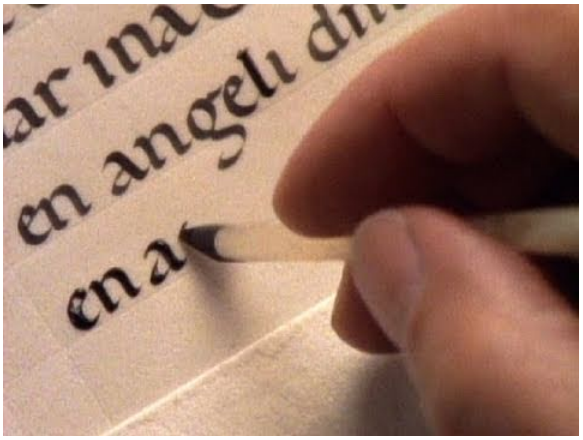
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11.12: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- The Walters Museum Early Medieval Art Exhibition
- Carolingian art at the Met
- Ottonian Art Explored

Watch these videos:



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Byzantine Art

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Byzantine art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Byzantine art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Byzantine art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Byzantine art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Byzantine art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

12.1: Module 12 Overview
12.2: Key Learning Items
12.3: San Vitale
12.4: Iconoclasm
12.5: Hagia Sophia
12.6: Ivory Panel with Archangel
12.7: Icon of Saint George
12.8: Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy
12.9: External Resources

Thumbnail: One of the most famous of the surviving Byzantine mosaics of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople – the image of Christ Pantocrator on the walls of the upper southern gallery. (CC BY-SA 3.0; unknown via Wikipedia)

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12.1: Module 12 Overview

What You'll Learn To Do: Examine Byzantine art and understand its impact on later art.

In Module 12 we will examine Byzantine art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Byzantine art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:



- **Read:** Key Learning Items

Byzantine Art

- **Watch:** San Vitale (10:17)
- **Read:** Iconoclasm
- **Read:** Hagia Sophia
- **Watch:** Ivory Panel with Archangel (4:24)
- **Watch:** Icon of Saint George (4:10)
- **Watch:** Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy (6:20)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 12 Quiz (5 points)

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12.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the characteristic features of Byzantine art?
- How does Byzantine art look different from Early Christian art and Greco-Roman art?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- apse mosaic
- orb
- icon
- Iconoclasm
- Pantocrator
- diptych
- tempera

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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12.3: San Vitale

San Vitale is one of the most important surviving examples of Byzantine architecture and mosaic work. It was begun in 526 or 527 under Ostrogothic rule. It was consecrated in 547 and completed soon after. Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the church.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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12.4: Iconoclasm



Figure 12.4.1. *Apa Abraham*, c. 590–600, watercolor on panel, Egyptian (Bode Museum, Berlin)

The word *icon* refers to many different things today. For example, we use this word to refer to the small graphic symbols in our software and to powerful cultural Figures (here's a list of 300 "Cultural Icons").

Nevertheless, these different meanings retain a connection to the word's original meaning. *Icon* is Greek for "image" or "painting" and during the medieval era, this meant a religious image on a wooden panel used for prayer and devotion. More specifically, icons came to typify the art of the Orthodox Christian Church.

Iconoclasm refers to the destruction of images or hostility toward visual representations in general. In a more specificly, the word is used for the Iconoclastic Controversy that shook the Byzantine Empire for more than 100 years.



Figure 12.4.2. *Christ Pantocrator (The Ruler of the Universe)*, Catacombs of Commodilla, fourth century

Open hostility toward religious representations began in 726 when Emperor Leo III publicly took a position against icons; this resulted in their removal from churches and their destruction. There had been many previous theological disputes over visual representations, their theological foundations and legitimacy. However, none of these caused the tremendous social, political and cultural upheaval of the Iconoclastic Controversy.

Some historians believe that by prohibiting icons, the Emperor sought to integrate Muslim and Jewish populations. Both Muslims and Jews perceived Christian images (that existed from the earliest times of Christianity) as idols and in direct opposition to the Old Testament prohibition of visual representations. The first commandment states,

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. You shall not adore them, nor serve them (Exodus 20:3–5).

Another theory suggests that the prohibition was an attempt to restrain the growing wealth and power of the monasteries. They produced the icons and were a primary target of the violence of the Iconoclastic Controversy. Other scholars offer a less political motive, suggesting that the prohibition was primarily religious, an attempt to correct the wayward practice of worshiping images.

The trigger for Leo III's prohibition may have even been the huge volcanic eruption in 726 in the Aegean Sea interpreted as a sign of God's anger over the veneration of icons. There is no one simple answer to this complex event. What we do know is that the prohibition essentially caused a civil war which shook the political, social and religious spheres of the empire. The conflict pitted

the emperor and certain high church officials (patriarchs, bishops) who supported iconoclasm, against other bishops, lower clergy, laity and monks, who defended the icons.



Figure **12.4.3**. *Khludov Psalter (detail)*, 9th century. The image represents the Iconoclast theologian, John the Grammarian, and an iconoclast bishop destroying an image of Christ. (State Historical Museum, Moscow)

The original theological basis for iconoclasm was fairly weak. Arguments relied mostly on the Old Testament prohibition (quoted above). But it was clear that this prohibition was not absolute since God also instructs how to make three dimensional representations of the Cherubim (heavenly spirits or angels) for the Ark of the Covenant, which is also quoted in the Old Testament, just a couple of chapters after the passage that prohibits images (Exodus 25:18–20).

Emperor Constantine V gave a more nuanced theological rationale for iconoclasm. He claimed that each visual representation of Christ necessarily ends in a heresy since Christ, according to generally accepted Christian dogmas, is simultaneously God and man, united without separation, and any visual depiction of Christ either separates these natures, representing Christ's humanity alone, or confuses them.



Figure **12.4.4**. *Madonna with Christ*, 9th century, mosaic, Hagia Sophia (Istanbul). This mosaic follows the iconoclastic crisis and revives stylistic elements from early Christian art.

The iconophile (pro-icon) counter-argument was most convincingly articulated by St. John of Damascus and St. Theodore the Studite. They claimed that the iconoclast arguments were simply confused. Images of Christ do not depict natures, being either Divine or human, but a concrete person—Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. They claimed that in Christ the meaning of the Old Testament prohibition is revealed: God prohibited any representation of God (or anything that could be worshiped as a god) because it was impossible to depict the invisible God. Any such representation would thus be an idol, essentially a false representation or false god. But in Christ's person, God became visible, as a concrete human being, so painting Christ is necessary as a proof that God truly, not seemingly, became man. The fact that one can depict Christ witnesses God's incarnation.

The first phase of iconoclasm ended in 787, when the Seventh Ecumenical (universal) Council of bishops, met in Nicaea. This council affirmed the view of the iconophiles, ordering all right-believing (orthodox) Christians to respect holy icons, prohibiting at the same time their adoration as idolatry. Emperor Leo V initiated a second period of iconoclasm in 814, but in 843, Empress of

Theodora proclaimed the restoration of icons and affirmed the decisions of the Seventh Ecumenical council. This event is still celebrated in the Orthodox Church as the Feast of Orthodoxy.

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12.5: Hagia Sophia



Figure **12.5.1**. *Constantine the Great presents the city (Constantinople) and Justinian the Great presents Hagia Sophia to the Virgin*, mosaic, probably tenth century, Southwestern Entrance, Hagia Sophia

The great church of the Byzantine capital Constantinople (Istanbul) took its current structural form under the direction of the Emperor Justinian I. The church was dedicated in 537, amid great ceremony and the pride of the emperor (who was sometimes said to have seen the completed building in a dream). The daring engineering feats of the building are well known. Numerous medieval travelers praise the size and embellishment of the church. Tales abound of miracles associated with the church. Hagia Sophia is the symbol of Byzantium in the same way that the Parthenon embodies Classical Greece or the Eiffel Tower typifies Paris.



Figure **12.5.2**. Isidore of Miletus & Anthemius of Tralles for Emperor Justinian, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, 532–37

Each of those structures express values and beliefs: perfect proportion, industrial confidence, a unique spirituality. By overall impression and attention to detail, the builders of Hagia Sophia left the world a mystical building. The fabric of the building denies that it can stand by its construction alone. Hagia Sophia's being seems to cry out for an other-worldly explanation of why it stands because much within the building seems dematerialized, an impression that must have been very real in the perception of the medieval faithful. The dematerialization can be seen in as small a detail as a column capital or in the building's dominant feature, its dome.

Let us start with a look at a column capital (Figure **12.5.3**).



Figure **12.5.3**. Basket Capital, Hagia Sophia

The capital is a derivative of the Classical Ionic order via the variations of the Roman composite capital and Byzantine invention. Shrunken volutes appear at the corners decorative detailing runs the circuit of lower regions of the capital. The column capital does important work, providing transition from what it supports to the round column beneath. What we see here is decoration that makes the capital appear light, even insubstantial. The whole appears more as filigree work than as robust stone capable of supporting enormous weight to the column.



Figure **12.5.4**. Ionic Capital, North Porch of the Erechtheion, Acropolis, Athens, marble, 421–407 BCE, British Museum

Compare the Hagia Sophia capital with a Classical Greek Ionic capital. Figure **12.5.4** shows one from the Greek Erechtheum on the Acropolis, Athens. The capital has abundant decoration but the treatment does not diminish the work performed by the capital. The lines between the two spirals dip, suggesting the weight carried while the spirals seem to show a pent-up energy that pushes the capital up to meet the entablature, the weight it holds. The capital is a working member and its design expresses the working in an elegant way.



Figure 12.5.5. Directly compare the basket and ionic capitals

A capital fragment on the grounds of Hagia Sophia illustrates the carving technique (Figure 12.5.6). The stone is deeply drilled, creating shadows behind the vegetative decoration. The capital surface appears thin. The capital contradicts its task rather than expressing it.



Figure 12.5.6. Deep Carving of Capital Fragment, Hagia Sophia

This deep carving appears throughout Hagia Sophia's capitals, spandrels, and entablatures. Everywhere we look stone visually denying its ability to do the work that it must do. The important point is that the decoration suggests that something other than sound building technique must be at work in holding up the building.

We know that the faithful attributed the structural success of Hagia Sophia to divine intervention. Nothing is more illustrative of the attitude than descriptions of the dome of Hagia Sophia. Procopius, biographer of the Emperor Justinian and author of a book on the buildings of Justinian is the first to assert that the dome hovered over the building by divine intervention.

The huge spherical dome [makes] the structure exceptionally beautiful. Yet it seems not to rest upon solid masonry, but to cover the space with its golden dome suspended from Heaven. (from "The Buildings" by Procopius, Loeb Classical Library, 1940, online at the University of Chicago Penelope project)

The description became part of the lore of the great church and is repeated again and again over the centuries. A look at the base of the dome helps explain the descriptions.



Figure 12.5.7. Hagia Sophia Dome, Semi-Dome and Cherubim

The windows at the bottom of the dome are closely spaced, visually asserting that the base of the dome is insubstantial and hardly touching the building itself. The building planners did more than squeeze the windows together, they also lined the jambs or sides of the windows with gold mosaic. As light hits the gold it bounces around the openings and eats away at the structure and makes room for the imagination to see a floating dome.



Figure 12.5.8. Windows at the Base of the Dome, Hagia Sophia

It would be difficult not to accept the fabric as consciously constructed to present a building that is dematerialized by common constructional expectation. Perception outweighs clinical explanation. To the faithful of Constantinople and its visitors, the building used divine intervention to do what otherwise would appear to be impossible. Perception supplies its own explanation: the dome is suspended from heaven by an invisible chain.

An old story about Hagia Sophia, a story that comes down in several versions, is a pointed explanation of the miracle of the church. So goes the story: A youngster was among the craftsmen doing the construction. Realizing a problem with continuing work, the crew left the church to seek help (some versions say they sought help from the Imperial Palace). The youngster was left to guard the tools while the workmen were away. A Figure appeared inside the building and told the boy the solution to the problem and told the boy to go to the workmen with the solution. Reassuring the boy that he, the Figure, would stay and guard the tools until the boy

returned, the boy set off. The solution that the boy delivered was so ingenious that the assembled problem solvers realized that the mysterious Figure was no ordinary man but a divine presence, likely an angel. The boy was sent away and was never allowed to return to the capital. Thus the divine presence had to remain inside the great church by virtue of his promise and presumably is still there. Any doubt about the steadfastness of Hagia Sophia could hardly stand in the face of the fact that a divine guardian watches over the church.[1]

Hagia Sophia sits astride an earthquake fault. The building was severely damaged by three quakes during its early history. Extensive repairs were required. Despite the repairs, one assumes that the city saw the survival of the church, amid city rubble, as yet another indication of divine guardianship of the church.

Extensive repair and restoration are ongoing in the modern period. We likely pride ourselves on the ability of modern engineering to compensate for daring 6th Century building technique. Both ages have their belief systems and we are understandably certain of the rightness of our modern approach to care of the great monument. But we must also know that we would be lesser if we did not contemplate with some admiration the structural belief system of the Byzantine Age.

Historical Outline

Isidore and Anthemius replaced the original 4th-century church commisioned byEmperor Constantine and a 5th-century structure that was destroyed during the Nika revolt of 532. The present Hagia Sophia or the Church of Holy Wisdom became a mosque in 1453 following the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans under Sultan Mehmed II. In 1934, Atatürk, founder of Modern Turkey, converted the mosque into a museum.

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1. Helen C. Evans, Ph.D., "Byzantium Revisited: The Mosaics of Hagia Sophia in the Twentieth Century," Fourth Annual Pallas Lecture, University of Michigan, 2006. ↵

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12.6: Ivory Panel with Archangel

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of an ivory panel of a Byzantine archangel. The British Museum translates the text at the top of the panel as: “Receive the suppliant before you, despite his sinfulness.”



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Byzantine panel with archangel, Ivory leaf from diptych, c. 525–50, 16.8 × 5.6 × 0.35 in. (42.8 × 14.3 × 0.9 cm), probably from Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey), (British Museum, London)

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12.7: Icon of Saint George

Pippa Couch and Rachel Ropeik provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *Icon of Saint George (the "Black George").*



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Icon of Saint George (the "Black George"), late fourteenth Century, tempera, gesso on linden (?) panel, 77.4 × 57 cm (British Museum, London).

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12.8: Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy

Pippa Couch and Rachel Ropeik provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy (Byzantine), c. 1400, tempera and gold on wood, 39 cm × 31 cm (British Museum, London)

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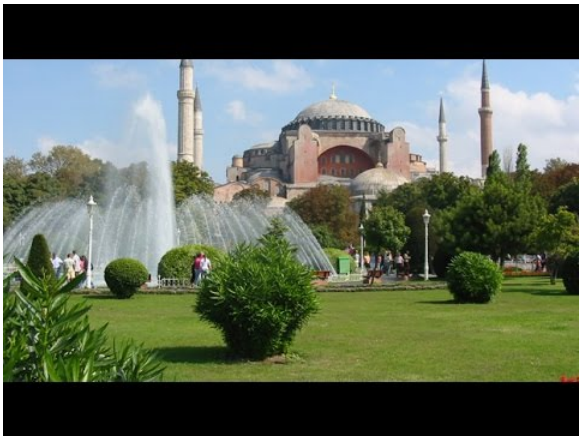
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12.9: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Virtual Gallery Walk
- Icons and Iconoclasm in Byzantium
- Virtual Tour of Hagia Sophia

Watch these videos:



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: The Arts of the Islamic World

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Islamic art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Islamic art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Islamic art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Islamic art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Islamic art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

13.1: Overview
13.2: Key Learning Items
13.3: Introduction to Islamic Art
13.4: Mosque Architecture
13.5: The Early Period
13.6: Dome of the Rock
13.7: Great Mosque of Cordoba
13.8: Medieval Period
13.9: Pyxis of Al-Mughira
13.10: The Alhambra
13.11: Ilkhanid Mihrab
13.12: Later Period
13.13: Qa'a- The Damascus Room
13.14: External Resources

Thumbnail: Pyxis of al-Mughira, possibly from Madinat al-Zahra, AH 357/ 968 CE, carved ivory with traces of jade, 16cm × 11.8 cm (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

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13.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Islamic art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Islamic art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Islamic Art

- **Read:** Introduction to Islamic Art
- **Read:** Mosque Architecture

The Early Period

- **Read:** The Early Period
- **Read:** Dome of the Rock (includes a video—2:34)
- **Read:** Great Mosque of Cordoba

The Medieval Period

- **Read:** Medieval Period
- **Read:** Pyxis of Al-Mughira
- **Read:** The Alhambra
- **Watch:** Ilkhanid Mihrab (5:40)

The Later Period

- **Read:** Later Period
- **Watch:** Qa'a: The Damascus Room (6:39)

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 13 Quiz (5 points)
- **Submit:** Museum Project (100 points)

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13.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the characteristic features of Islamic art?
- How is Islamic art unique and how was it influenced by European developments?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- calligraphy
- Kufic
- arabesque
- mosque
- hypostyle hall
- mihrab
- minaret
- horseshoe arch

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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13.3: Introduction to Islamic Art

The Problem of Islamic Art

The Dome of the Rock, the Taj Mahal, a Mina'i ware bowl, a silk carpet, a Qur'an: all of these are examples of Islamic Art. But what is Islamic Art?

Islamic Art is a modern concept, created by art historians in the nineteenth century to categorize and study the material first produced under the Islamic peoples that emerged from Arabia in the seventh century.

Today Islamic Art describes all of the arts that were produced in the lands where Islam was the dominant religion or the religion of those who ruled. Unlike the terms Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist art, which refer only to religious art of these faiths, Islamic art is not used merely to describe religious art or architecture, but applies to all art forms produced in the Islamic World.

Thus, Islamic Art refers not only to works created by Muslim artists, artisans, and architects or for Muslim patrons. It encompasses the works created by Muslim artists for a patron of any faith, including Christians, Jews, or Hindus, and the works created by Jews, Christians, and others, living in Islamic lands, for patrons, Muslim and otherwise.

One of the most famous monuments of Islamic Art is the Taj Mahal, a royal mausoleum, located in Agra, India. Hinduism is majority religion in India; however, because Muslim rulers—most famously the Mughals—dominated large areas of modern-day India for centuries, India has a vast range of Islamic art and architecture.



Figure **13.3.1**. Taj Mahal, Agra, India

The Great Mosque of Xian, China, is one of the oldest and best preserved mosques in China. First constructed in 742 CE, the mosque's current form dates to the fifteenth century CE and follows the plan and architecture of a contemporary Buddhist temple. In fact, much Islamic art and architecture was—and still is—created through a synthesis of local traditions and more global ideas.



Figure **13.3.2**. View of the Great Mosque of Xi'an

Islamic Art is not a monolithic style or movement; it spans 1,300 years of history and has incredible geographic diversity—Islamic empires and dynasties controlled territory from Spain to western China at various points in history. However, few if any of these various countries or Muslim empires would have referred to their art as Islamic. An artisan in Damascus thought of his work as Syrian or Damascene—not as Islamic.

As a result of thinking about the problems of calling such art Islamic, certain scholars and major museums, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have decided to omit the term Islamic when they renamed their new galleries of Islamic Art. Instead, they are called "Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia," thereby stressing the regional styles and individual cultures. Thus, when using the phrase, Islamic Art, one should know that it is a useful, but artificial, concept.

In some ways, Islamic Art is a bit like referring to the Italian Renaissance. During the Renaissance, there was no unified Italy; it was a land of independent city-states. No one would have thought of one's self as an Italian, or of the art they produced as Italian, rather one conceived of one's self as a Roman, a Florentine, or a Venetian. Each city developed a highly local, remarkable style. At the same time, there are certain underlying themes or similarities that unify the art and architecture of these cities and allow scholars to speak of an Italian Renaissance.

Themes

Similarly, there are themes and types of objects that link the arts of the Islamic World together. Calligraphy is a very important art form in the Islamic World. The Qur'an, written in elegant scripts, represents Allah's (or God's) divine word, which Muhammad received directly from Allah during his visions. Quranic verses, executed in calligraphy, are found on many different forms of art and architecture. Likewise, poetry can be found on everything from ceramic bowls to the walls of houses. Calligraphy's omnipresence underscores the value that is placed on language, specifically Arabic.

Geometric and vegetative motifs are very popular throughout the lands where Islam was once or still is a major religion and cultural force, appearing in the private palaces of buildings such as the Alhambra (in Spain) as well as in the detailed metal work of Safavid Iran. Likewise, certain building types appear throughout the Muslim world: mosques with their minarets, mausolea, gardens, and madrasas (religious schools) are all common. However, their forms vary greatly.



Figure 13.3.3. View of the minarets of the Blue Mosque, Istanbul

One of the most common misconceptions about the art of the Islamic World is that it is aniconic; that is, the art does not contain representations of humans or animals. Religious art and architecture, almost from the earliest examples, such as the Dome of the Rock, the Aqsa Mosque (both in Jerusalem), and the Great Mosque of Damascus, built under the Umayyad rulers, did not include human Figures and animals. However, the private residences of sovereigns, such as Qasr ‘Amra or Khirbat Mafjar, were filled with vast figurative paintings, mosaics, and sculpture.



Figure 13.3.4. Minarets of Al-Azhar Mosque, Cairo, Egypt

The study of the arts of the Islamic World has also lagged behind other fields in Art History. There are several reasons for this. First, many scholars are not familiar with Arabic or Farsi (the dominant language in Iran). Calligraphy, particularly Arabic calligraphy, as noted above, is a major art form and appears on almost all types of architecture and arts. Second, the art forms and objects prized in the Islamic world do not correspond to those traditionally valued by art historians and collectors in the Western world. The so-called decorative arts—carpets, ceramics, metalwork, and books—are types of art that Western scholars have traditionally valued less than painting and sculpture. However, the last fifty years has seen a flourishing of scholarship on the arts of the Islamic World.

Arts of the Islamic World

Here, we have decided to use the phrase “Arts of the Islamic World” to emphasize the art that was created in a world where Islam was a dominant religion or a major cultural force, but was not necessarily religious art. Often when the word “Islamic” is used

today, it is used to describe something religious; thus using the phrase, Islamic Art, potentially implies, mistakenly, that all of this art is religious in nature. The phrase, “Arts of the Islamic World,” also acknowledges that not all of the work produced in the “Islamic World” was for Muslims or was created by Muslims.

Note on Organization from the Contributing Editor

We have organized the material in this section into three chronological periods: Early, Medieval and Late. When starting to learn about a new area of art, chronological organization often enables students to grasp the material and its fundamentals before going on to more complex analysis, like comparing building types or styles. Within each of these chronological groups, we have focused on creating geographic groups or groupings to organize the material further. The Islamic World was only unified very briefly in its history under the Umayyads (661–750 CE) and the early Abbasids (750–932 CE). Soon various dynasties or rulers simultaneously commanded sections of territory, many of which had no cultural commonalities, aside from their religion.

We are also planning to upload a series of introductory essays on major types of art and architecture from the Islamic World, including carpets and mosques, in addition to essays and videos about specific works of art and architecture. These are forthcoming.

Arabic, Persian and Turkish are complex languages whose transcription from their respective scripts to English has changed considerably over time. For the sake of ease, we have used the most common forms today, omitting the vocalizations. While we have aimed for consistency, we have also tried to use the simplest forms for those who are new to the arts of the Islamic World.

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13.4: Mosque Architecture

From Indonesia to the United Kingdom, the mosque in its many forms is the quintessential Islamic building. The mosque, *masjid* in Arabic, is the Muslim gathering place for prayer.*Masjid* simply means “place of prostration.” Though most of the five daily prayers prescribed in Islam can take place anywhere, all men are required to gather together at the mosque for the Friday noon prayer.



Figure **13.4.1**. Mimar Sinan, courtyard of the Süleymaniye Mosque, İstanbul, 1558

Mosques are also used throughout the week for prayer, study, or simply as a place for rest and reflection. The main mosque of a city, used for the Friday communal prayer, is called a *jami masjid*, literally meaning “Friday mosque,” but it is also sometimes called a congregational mosque in English. The style, layout, and decoration of a mosque can tell us a lot about Islam in general, but also about the period and region in which the mosque was constructed.

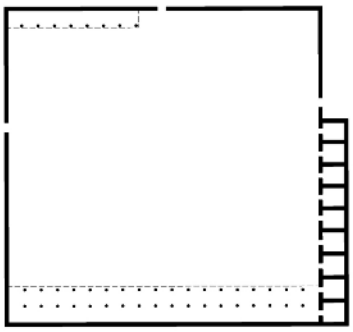


Figure **13.4.2**. Diagram reconstruction of the Prophet’s House, Medina, Saudi Arabia

The home of the Prophet Muhammad is considered the first mosque. His house, in Medina in modern-day Saudi Arabia, was a typical seventh-century Arabian style house, with a large courtyard surrounded by long rooms supported by columns. This style of mosque came to be known as a hypostyle mosque, meaning “many columns.” Most mosques built in Arab lands utilized this style for centuries.

Common Features

The architecture of a mosque is shaped most strongly by the regional traditions of the time and place where it was built. As a result, style, layout, and decoration can vary greatly. Nevertheless, because of the common function of the mosque as a place of congregational prayer, certain architectural features appear in mosques all over the world.

Sahn (Courtyard)

The most fundamental necessity of congregational mosque architecture is that it be able to hold the entire male population of a city or town (women are welcome to attend Friday prayers, but not required to do so). To that end congregational mosques must have a large prayer hall. In many mosques this is adjoined to an open courtyard, called a *sahn*. Within the courtyard one often finds a fountain, its waters both a welcome respite in hot lands, and important for the ablutions (ritual cleansing) done before prayer.



Figure **13.4.3**. Mihrab & minbar, Mosque of Sultan Hassan, Cairo, 1356–63 (photo: Dave Berkowitz, CC BY 2.0)

Mihrab (Niche)

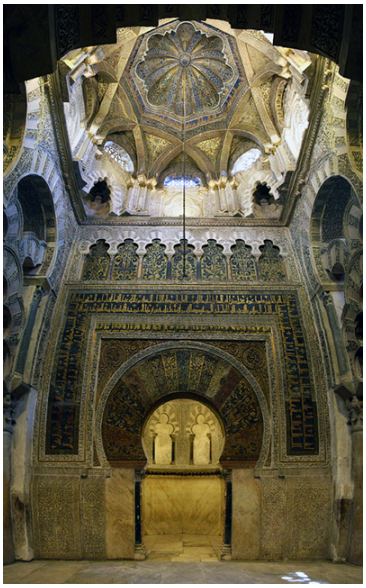


Figure **13.4.4**. Mihrab, Great Mosque of Cordoba, c. 786 (photo: Bongo Vongo, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Another essential element of a mosque's architecture is a *mihrab*—a niche in the wall that indicates the direction of Mecca, towards which all Muslims pray. Mecca is the city in which the Prophet Muhammad was born, and the home of the most important Islamic shrine, the Kaaba. The direction of Mecca is called the *qibla*, and so the wall in which the *mihrab* is set is called the *qibla* wall. No matter where a mosque is, its mihrab indicates the direction of Mecca (or as near that direction as science and geography were able to place it). Therefore, a *mihrab* in India will be to the west, while a one in Egypt will be to the east. A *mihrab* is usually a relatively shallow niche, as in the example from Egypt, above. In the example from Spain, shown right, the *mihrab*'s niche takes the form of a small room, this is more rare.

Minbar (Pulpit)

The *minbar* is often located on the *qibla* wall to the right of the *mihrab*. A *minbar* is a pulpit from which the Friday sermon is delivered. Simple *minbars* consist of a short flight of stairs, but more elaborate examples may enclose the stairway with ornate panels, doors, and a covered pulpit at the top.

Minaret (Tower)

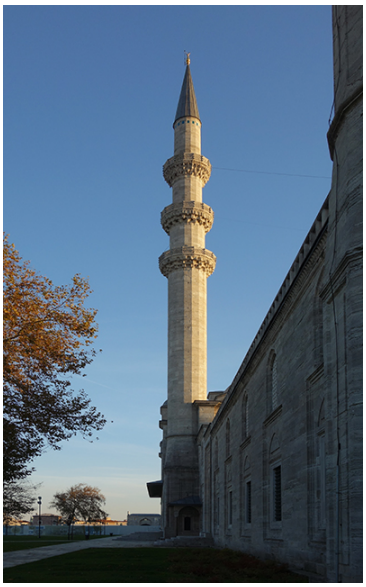


Figure **13.4.5**. Mimar Sinan, Minaret, Süleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul, 1558

One of the most visible aspects of mosque architecture is the *minaret*, a tower adjacent or attached to a mosque, from which the call to prayer is announced. Minarets take many different forms—from the famous spiral minaret of Samarra, to the tall, pencil minarets of Ottoman Turkey. Not solely functional in nature, the minaret serves as a powerful visual reminder of the presence of Islam.

Qubba (Dome)

Most mosques also feature one or more domes, called *qubba* in Arabic. While not a ritual requirement like the mihrab, a dome does possess significance within the mosque—as a symbolic representation of the vault of heaven. The interior decoration of a dome often emphasizes this symbolism, using intricate geometric, stellate, or vegetal motifs to create breathtaking patterns meant to awe and inspire. Some mosque types incorporate multiple domes into their architecture (as in the Ottoman Süleymaniye Mosque pictured at the top of the page), while others only feature one. In mosques with only a single dome, it is invariably found surmounting the qibla wall, the holiest section of the mosque. The Great Mosque of Kairouan, in Tunisia (not pictured) has three domes: one atop the *minaret*, one above the entrance to the prayer hall, and one above the *qibla* wall.

Because it is the directional focus of prayer, the *qibla* wall, with its *mihrab* and *minbar*, is often the most ornately decorated area of a mosque. The rich decoration of the *qibla* wall is apparent in this image of the *mihrab* and *minbar* of the Mosque of Sultan Hasan in Cairo, Egypt (see image higher on the page).



Figure **13.4.6**. Mosque lamp, 14th century, Egypt or Syria, blown glass, enamel, gilding, 31.8 × 23.2 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

There are other decorative elements common to most mosques. For instance, a large calligraphic frieze or a cartouche with a prominent inscription often appears above the *mihrab*. In most cases the calligraphic inscriptions are quotations from the *Qur'an*, and often include the date of the building's dedication and the name of the patron. Another important feature of mosque decoration are hanging lamps, also visible in the photograph of the Sultan Hasan mosque. Light is an essential feature for mosques, since the first and last daily prayers occur before the sun rises and after the sun sets. Before electricity, mosques were illuminated with oil lamps. Hundreds of such lamps hung inside a mosque would create a glittering spectacle, with soft light emanating from each, highlighting the calligraphy and other decorations on the lamps' surfaces. Although not a permanent part of a mosque building, lamps, along with other furnishings like carpets, formed a significant—though ephemeral—aspect of mosque architecture.

Mosque Patronage

Most historical mosques are not stand-alone buildings. Many incorporated charitable institutions like soup kitchens, hospitals, and schools. Some mosque patrons also chose to include their own mausoleum as part of their mosque complex. The endowment of charitable institutions is an important aspect of Islamic culture, due in part to the third pillar of Islam, which calls for Muslims to donate a portion of their income to the poor.

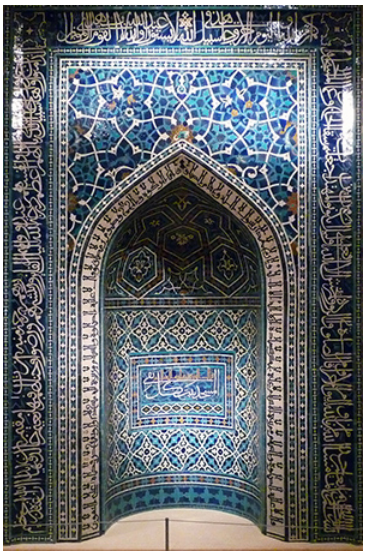


Figure **13.4.7**. Mihrab, 1354–55, just after the Ilkhanid period, Madrasa Imami, Isfahan, Iran, polychrome glazed tiles, 343.1 × 288.7 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The commissioning of a mosque would be seen as a pious act on the part of a ruler or other wealthy patron, and the names of patrons are usually included in the calligraphic decoration of mosques. Such inscriptions also often praise the piety and generosity of the patron. For instance, the mihrab now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, bears the inscription:

> And he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, said: "Whoever builds a mosque for God, even the size of a sand-grouse nest, based on piety, [God will build for him a palace in Paradise]."

The patronage of mosques was not only a charitable act therefore, but also, like architectural patronage in all cultures, an opportunity for self-promotion. The social services attached the mosques of the Ottoman sultans are some of the most extensive of their type. In Ottoman Turkey the complex surrounding a mosque is called a *kulliye*. The *kulliye* of the Mosque of Sultan Suleyman, in Istanbul, is a fine example of this phenomenon, comprising a soup kitchen, a hospital, several schools, public baths, and a *caravanserai* (similar to a hostel for travelers). The complex also includes two mausoleums for Sultan Suleyman and his family members.



Figure **13.4.8**. Süleymaniye Kulliyesi (view of kitchens and caravanserai), Istanbul

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13.5: The Early Period

Islamic Art: The Caliphates

The umbrella term “Islamic art” casts a pretty big shadow, covering several continents and more than a dozen centuries. So to make sense of it, we first have to first break it down into parts. One way is by medium—say, ceramics or architecture—but this method of categorization would entail looking at works that span three continents. Geography is another means of organization, but modern political boundaries rarely match the borders of past Islamic states.

A common solution is to consider instead, the historical caliphates (the states ruled by those who claimed legitimate Islamic rule) or dynasties. Though these distinctions are helpful, it is important to bear in mind that these are not discrete groups that produced one particular style of artwork. Artists throughout the centuries have been affected by the exchange of goods and ideas and have been influenced by one another.

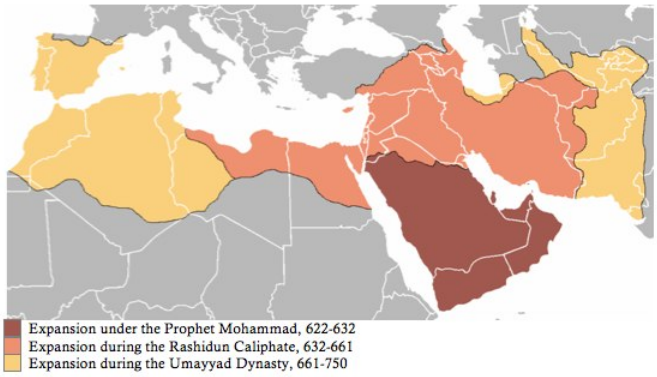


Figure **13.5.1**. Expansion under different leaders

Umayyad (661–750)

Four leaders, known as the Rightly Guided Caliphs, continued the spread of Islam immediately following the death of the Prophet. It was following the death of the fourth caliph that Mu’awiya seized power and established the Umayyad caliphate, the first Islamic dynasty. During this period, Damascus became the capital and the empire expanded West and East.



Figure **13.5.2**. Dome of the Rock, 687, Jerusalem (photo: G. Barlow)

The first years following the death of Muhammad were, of course, formative for the religion and its artwork. The immediate needs of the religion included places to worship (mosques) and holy books (Korans) to convey the word of God. So, naturally, many of the first artistic projects included ornamented mosques where the faithful could gather and Korans with beautiful calligraphy. Because Islam was still a very new religion, it had no artistic vocabulary of its own, and its earliest work was heavily influenced by older styles in the region. Chief among these sources were the Coptic tradition of present-day Egypt and Syria, with its scrolling vines and geometric motifs, Sassanian metalwork and crafts from what is now Iraq with their rhythmic, sometimes abstracted qualities, and naturalistic Byzantine mosaics depicting animals and plants.

These elements can be seen in the earliest significant work from the Umayyad period, the most important of which is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. This stunning monument incorporates Coptic, Sassanian, and Byzantine elements in its decorative program and remains a masterpiece of Islamic architecture to this day.

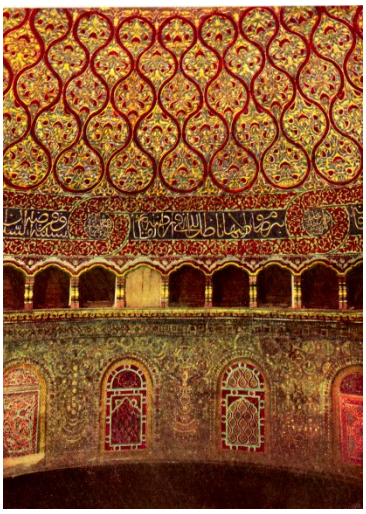
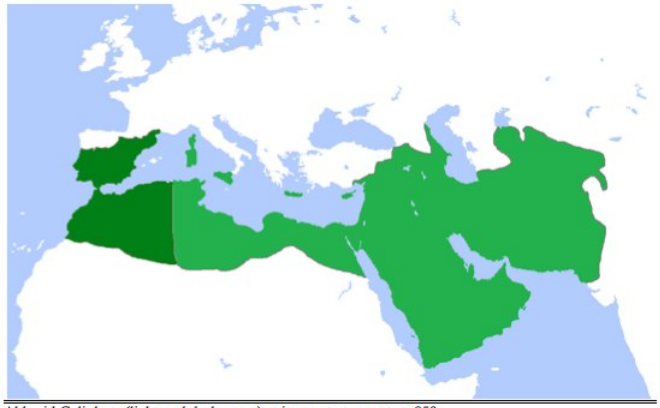


Figure **13.5.3**. Interior of the base of the dome, Dome of the Rock

Remarkably, just one generation after the religion's inception, Islamic civilization had produced a magnificent, if singular, monument. While the Dome of the Rock is considered an influential work, it bears little resemblance to the multitude of mosques created throughout the rest of the caliphate. It is important to point out that the Dome of the Rock is not a mosque. A more common plan, based on the house of the Prophet, was used for the vast majority of mosques throughout the Arab peninsula and the Maghreb. Perhaps the most remarkable of these is the Great Mosque of Córdoba (784–786) in Spain, which, like the Dome of the Rock, demonstrates an integration of the styles of the existing culture in which it was created.

Abbasid (750–1258)

The Abbasid revolution in the mid-eighth century ended the Umayyad dynasty, resulted in the massacre of the Umayyad caliphs (a single caliph escaped to Spain, prolonging Umayyad work after dynasty) and established the Abbasid dynasty in 750. The new caliphate shifted its attention eastward and established cultural and commercial capitals at Baghdad and Samarra.



Abbasid Caliphate (light and dark green) at its greatest extent, c. 850.
Territories in dark green were lost early on.

Figure **13.5.4**. Abbasid territories



Figure **13.5.5**. Bowl, ninth century, Susa, Iran, Earthenware, metal lustre overglaze decoration, opaque glaze

The Umayyad dynasty produced little of what we would consider decorative arts (like pottery, glass, metalwork), but under the Abbasid dynasty production of decorative stone, wood and ceramic objects flourished. Artisans in Samarra developed a new method for carving surfaces that allowed for curved, vegetal forms (called arabesques) which became widely adopted. There were also developments in ceramic decoration. The use of luster painting (which gives ceramic ware a metallic sheen) became popular in surrounding regions and was extensively used on tile for centuries. Overall, the Abbasid epoch was an important transitional period that disseminated styles and techniques to distant Islamic lands.

The Abbasid empire weakened with the establishment and growing power of semi-autonomous dynasties throughout the region, until Baghdad was finally overthrown in 1258. This dissolution signified not only the end of a dynasty, but marked the last time that the Arab-Muslim empire would be united as one entity.

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13.6: Dome of the Rock



Figure **13.6.1**. The Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhra), Umayyad, stone masonry, wooden roof, decorated with glazed ceramic tile, mosaics, and gilt aluminum and bronze dome, 691–2, with multiple renovations, patron the Caliph Abd al-Malik, Jerusalem

The Dome of the Rock is a building of extraordinary beauty, solidity, elegance, and singularity of shape. . . Both outside and inside, the decoration is so magnificent and the workmanship so surpassing as to defy description. The greater part is covered with gold so that the eyes of one who gazes on its beauties are dazzled by its brilliance, now glowing like a mass of light, now flashing like lightning.

—Ibn Battuta (fourteenth century travel writer)

A Glorious Mystery

One of the most iconic images of the Middle East is undoubtedly the Dome of the Rock shimmering in the setting sun of Jerusalem. Sitting atop the Haram al-Sharif, the highest point in old Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock's golden-color Dome and Turkish Faience tiles dominates the cityscape of Old Jerusalem and in the 7th century served as a testament to the power of the new faith of Islam. The Dome of the Rock is one of the earliest surviving buildings from the Islamic world. This remarkable building is not a mosque, as is commonly assumed and scholars still debate its original function and meaning.

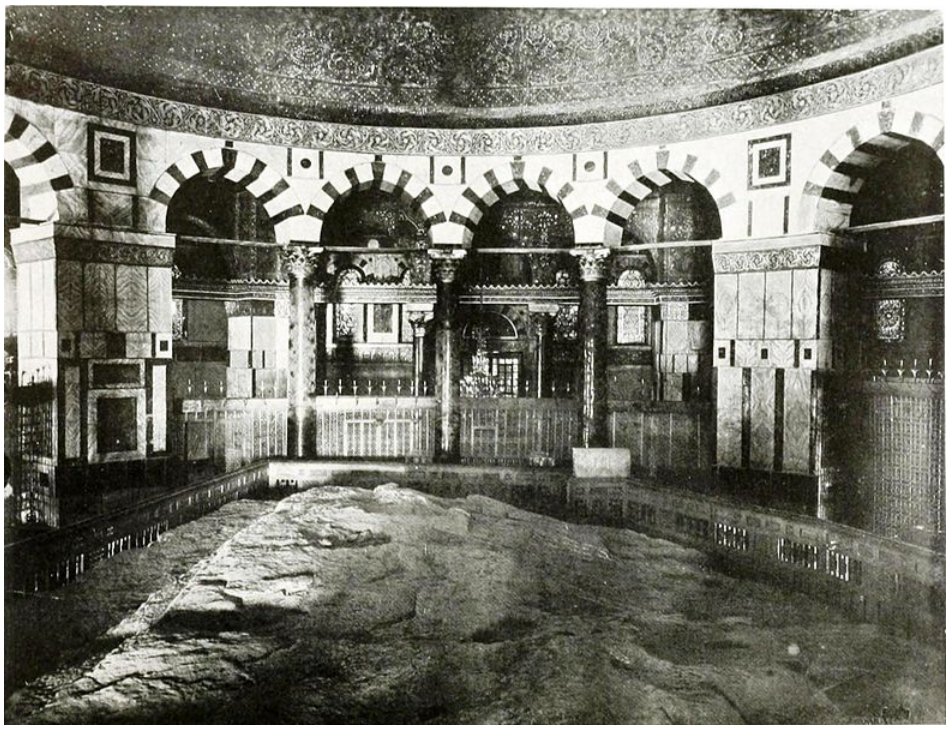


Figure 13.6.2. Interior of the Dome of the Rock

Between the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 and 691/2, when the Dome of the Rock was completed, there was intermittent warfare in Arabia and Holy Land around Jerusalem. The first Arab armies who emerged from the Arabian peninsula were focused on conquering and establishing an empire—not building. Thus, the Dome of the Rock was one of the first Islamic buildings ever constructed. It was built between 685 and 691/2 by Abd al-Malik, probably the most important Umayyad caliph, as a religious focal point for his supporters, while he was fighting a civil war against Ibn Zubayr. When Abd al-Malik began construction on the Dome of the Rock, he did not have control of the Kaaba, the holiest shrine in Islam, which is located in Mecca.



Figure 13.6.3. View of the Dome of the Rock Above the Western Wall

The Dome is located on the Haram al-Sharif, an enormous open-air platform that now houses Al-Aqsa mosque, madrasas and several other religious buildings. Few places are as holy for Christians, Jews and Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif. It is the Temple Mount, the site of the Jewish second temple, which the Roman Emperor Titus destroyed in 70 CE while subduing the Jewish revolt; a Roman temple was later built on the site. The Temple Mount was abandoned in Late Antiquity.

At the center of the Dome of the Rock sits a large rock, which is believed to be the location where Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. Today, Muslims believe that the Rock commemorates the night journey of Muhammad. One night the Angel Gabriel came to Muhammad while he slept near the Kaaba in Mecca and took him to al-Masjid al-Aqsa (the farthest mosque) in Jerusalem. From the Rock, Muhammad journeyed to heaven, where he met other prophets, such as Moses and Christ, witnessed paradise and hell and finally saw God enthroned and circumambulated by angels.

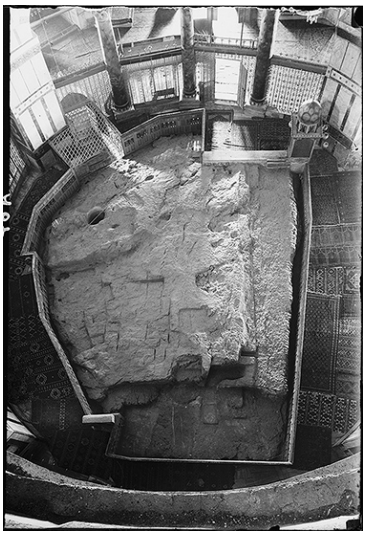


Figure **13.6.4**. Looking down on the rock (Sakhrah) in the center of the Dome of the Rock

The Rock is enclosed by two ambulatories (in this case the aisles that circle the rock) and an octagonal exterior wall. The central colonnade (row of columns) was composed of four piers and twelve columns supporting a rounded drum that transitions into the two-layered dome more than 20 meters in diameter.

The colonnades are clad in marble on their lower registers, and their upper registers are adorned with exceptional mosaics. The ethereal interior atmosphere is a result of light that pours in from grilled windows located in the drum and exterior walls. Golden mosaics depicting jewels shimmer in this glittering light. Byzantine and Sassanian crowns in the midst of vegetal motifs are also visible.

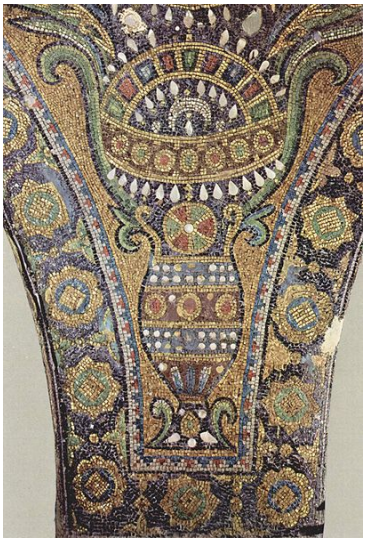


Figure **13.6.5**. Mosaic detail from the Dome of the Rock

The Byzantine Empire stood to the North and to the West of the new Islamic Empire until 1453, when its capital, Constantinople, fell to the Ottoman Turks. To the East, the old Sasanian Empire of Persia imploded under pressure from the Arabs, but nevertheless provided winged crown motifs that can be found in the Dome of the Rock. Wall and ceiling mosaics became very popular in Late Antiquity and adorn many Byzantine churches, including San Vitale in Ravenna and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Thus, the use

of mosaics reflects an artistic tie to the world of Late Antiquity. Late Antiquity is a period from about 300–800, when the Classical world dissolves and the Medieval period emerges.

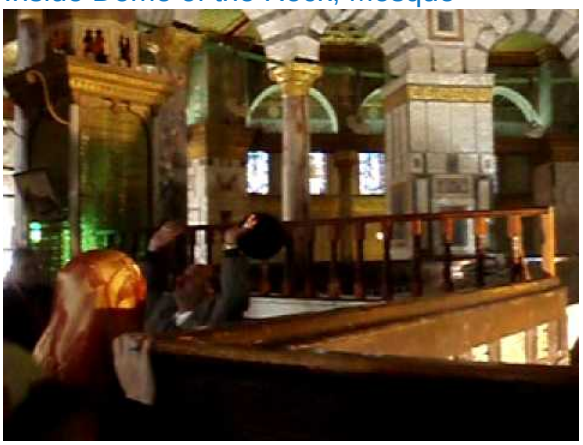
The mosaics in the Dome of the Rock contain no human Figures or animals. While Islam does not prohibit the use of figurative art per se, it seems that in religious buildings, this proscription was upheld. Instead, we see vegetative scrolls and motifs, as well as vessels and winged crowns, which were worn by Sasanian kings. Thus, the iconography of the Dome of the Rock also includes the other major pre-Islamic civilization of the region, the Sasanian Empire, which the Arab armies had defeated.

The building enclosing the Rock also seems to take its form from the imperial mausolea (the burial places) of Roman emperors, such as Augustus or Hadrian. Its circular form and Dome also reference the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The circular Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem was built to enclose the tomb of Christ. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock have domes that are almost identical in size; this suggests that the elevated position of the Dome of the Rock and the comparable size of its dome was a way that Muslims in the late 8th century proclaimed the superiority of their newly formed faith over Christians.

The Dome of the Rock also contains an inscription, 240 meters long, that includes some of the earliest surviving examples of verses from the Qur‘an—in an architectural context or otherwise. The bismillah (in the name of God, the merciful and compassionate), the phrase that starts each verse of the Qu’ran, and the shahada, the Islamic confession of faith, which states that there is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet, are also included in the inscription. The inscription also refers to Mary and Christ and proclaim that Christ was not divine but a prophet. Thus the inscription also proclaims some of the core values of the newly formed religion of Islam.

Below the Rock is a small chamber, whose purpose is not fully understood even to this day. For those are fortunate enough to be able to enter the Dome of the Rock, the experience is moving, regardless of one’s faith.

Inside Dome of the Rock, Mosque



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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13.7: Great Mosque of Cordoba

Known locally as Mezquita-Catedral, the Great Mosque of Cordoba is one of the oldest structures still standing from the time Muslims ruled Al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia including most of Spain, Portugal, and a small section of Southern France) in the late eighth century. Cordoba is a two hour train ride south of Madrid, and draws visitors from all over the world.

Temple/Church/Mosque/Church



Figure **13.7.1**. Great Mosque of Cordoba from the Air

The buildings on this site are as complex as the extraordinarily rich history they illustrate. Historians believe that there had first been a temple to the Roman god, Janus, on this site. The temple was converted into a church by invading Visigoths who seized Corboba in 572. Next, the church was converted into a mosque and then completely rebuilt by the descendants of the exiled Umayyads—the first Islamic dynasty who had originally ruled from their capital Damascus (in present-day Syria) from 661 until 750.

A New Capital

Following the overthrow of his family in Damascus by the incoming Abbasids, Prince Abd al-Rahman I escaped to southern Spain. Once there, he established control over almost all of the Iberian Peninsula and attempted to recreate the grandeur of Damascus in his capital, Cordoba. He sponsored elaborate building programs, promoted agriculture, and even imported fruit trees and other plants from his former home. Orange trees still stand in the courtyard of the Mosque of Cordoba, a beautiful, if bittersweet reminder of the Umayyad exile.

The Hypostyle Hall

The building itself was expanded over two hundred years. It is comprised of a large hypostyle prayer hall (hypostyle means, filled with columns), a courtyard with a fountain in the middle, an orange grove, a covered walkway circling the courtyard, and a minaret (a tower used to call the faithful to prayer) that is now encased in a squared, tapered bell tower. The expansive prayer hall seems magnified by its repeated geometry. It is built with recycled ancient Roman columns from which sprout a striking combination of two-tiered, symmetrical arches, formed of stone and red brick.



Figure 13.7.2. Hypostyle Hall, Great Mosque at Cordoba, Spain, begun 786 and enlarged during the ninth and tenth centuries

The Mihrab

The focal point in the prayer hall is the famous horseshoe arched mihrab or prayer niche. A mihrab is used in a mosque to identify the wall that faces Mecca—the birth place of Islam in what is now Saudi Arabia. This is practical as Muslims face toward Mecca during their daily prayers. The mihrab in the Great Mosque of Cordoba is framed by an exquisitely decorated arch behind which is an unusually large space, the size of a small room. Gold tesserae (small pieces of glass with gold and color backing) create a dazzling combination of dark blues, reddish browns, yellows and golds that form intricate calligraphic bands and vegetal motifs that adorn the arch.

The Horseshoe Arch

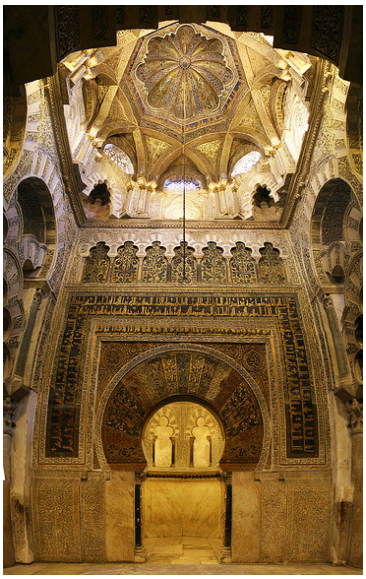


Figure 13.7.3. Cordoba Mezquita—Mihrab (panorama)

The horseshoe-style arch was common in the architecture of the Visigoths, the people that ruled this area after the Roman empire collapsed and before the Umayyads arrived. The horseshoe arch eventually spread across North Africa from Morocco to Egypt and is an easily identified characteristic of Western Islamic architecture (though there are some early examples in the East as well).

The Dome

Above the mihrab, is an equally dazzling dome. It is built of crisscrossing ribs that create pointed arches all lavishly covered with gold mosaic in a radial pattern. This astonishing building technique anticipates later Gothic rib vaulting, though on a more modest scale.

The Great Mosque of Cordoba is a prime example of the Muslem world's ability to brilliantly develop architectural styles based on pre-existing regional traditions. Here is an extraordinary combination of the familiar and the innovative, a formal stylistic vocabulary that can be recognized as "Islamic" even today.



Figure **13.7.4**. Mihrab Dome

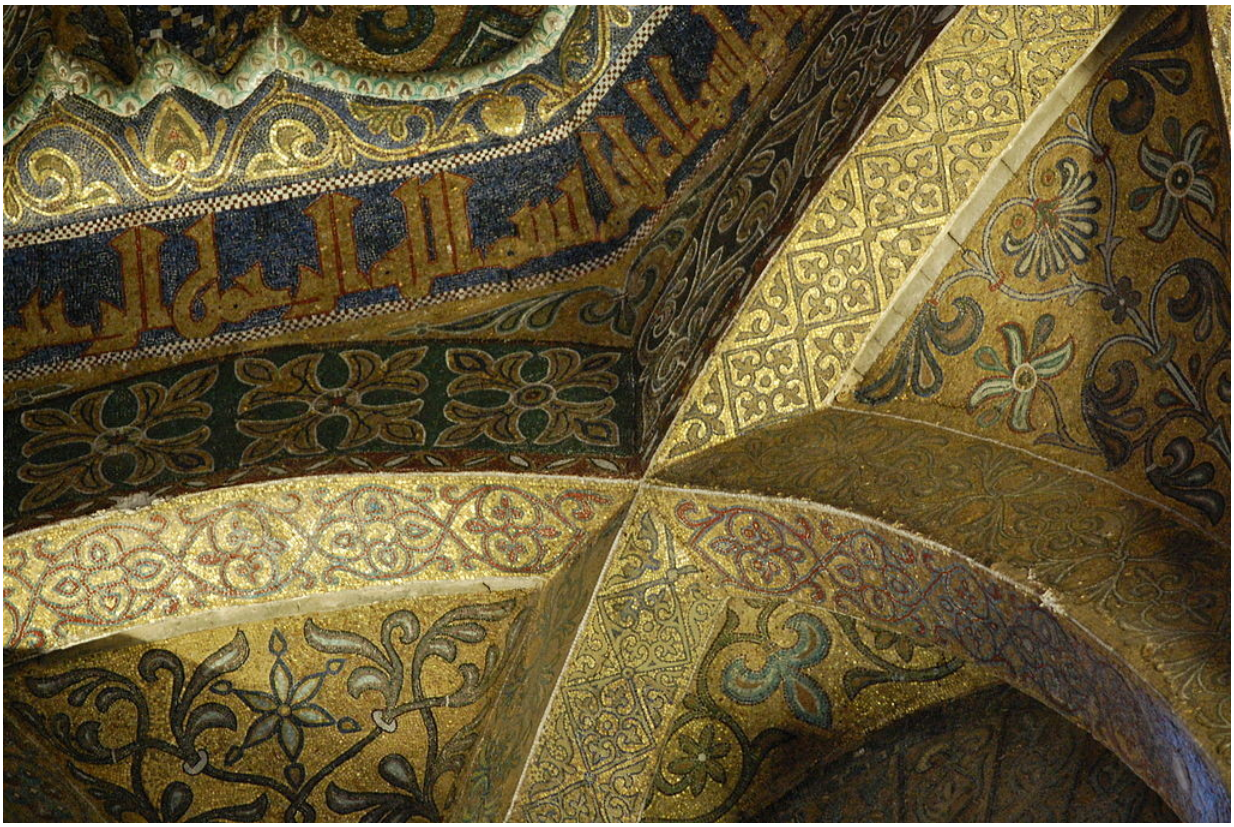


Figure **13.7.5**. Rib Detail, Mihrab Dome

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13.8: Medieval Period

For many, the Muslim world in the medieval period means the crusades. While this era was marked, in part, by military struggle, it is also overwhelmingly a period of peaceable exchanges of goods and ideas between West and East. Both the Christian and Islamic civilizations underwent great transformations and internal struggles during these years. In the Islamic world, dynasties fractured and began to develop distinctive styles of art. For the first time, disparate Islamic states existed at the same time. And although the Abbasid caliphate did not fully dissolve until 1258, other dynasties began to form, even before its end.

Fatimid (909–1171)



Figure **13.8.1**. The Fatimid Caliphate at its peak, c. 969

In the tenth century, the Fatimid dynasty emerged and posed a threat to the rule of the Abbasids. The Fatimid rulers, part of the Shi'ia faction, took their name from Fatima, Muhammad's daughter, from whom they claimed to be descended. The Sunnis, on the other hand, had previously pledged their alliance to Mu'awiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. At the height of their power, the Fatimids claimed lands from present-day Algeria to Syria. They conquered Egypt in 969 and founded the city of Cairo as their capital.

The Fatimid rulers expanded the power of the caliph and emphasized the importance of palace architecture. Mosques too were commissioned by royalty and every aspect of their decoration was of the highest caliber, from expertly-carved wooden minbars (where the spiritual leader guides prayers inside the mosque) to handcrafted metal lamps.

The wealth of the Fatimid court led to a general bourgeoning of the craft trade even outside of the religious context. Centers near Cairo became well known for ceramics, glass, metal, wood, and especially for lucrative textile production. The style of ornament developed as well, and artisans began to experiment with different forms of abstracted vegetal ornament and human Figures.

This period is often called the Islamic renaissance, for its booming trade in decorative objects as well as the high quality of its artwork.

Saljuq (1040–1157/1081–1307)



Figure **13.8.2**. The Saljuq Empire in 1092

The Saljuq rulers were of Central Asian Turkic origin. Once they assumed power after 1040, the Seljuqs introduced Islam to places it had not been heretofore. The Seljuqs of Rum (referring to Rome) ruled much of Anatolia, what is now Turkey (between 1040 and 1157), while the Seljuqs of present-day Iran controlled the rest of the empire (from 1081 to 1307).

The Saljuqs of Iran were great supporters of education and the arts and they founded a number of important madrasas (schools) during their brief reign. The congregational mosques they erected began using a four-iwan plan: these incorporate four immense doorways (iwans) in the center of each wall of a courtyard.

The art of the Anatolian Saljuqs looks quite different, perhaps explaining why it is often labeled as a distinct sultanate. The inhabitants of this newly conquered land in Anatolia included members of various religions (largely Buddhists and Shamen), other heritages, and the Byzantine and Armenian Christian traditions. Saljuq projects often drew from these existing indigenous traditions—just as had been the case with the earliest Islamic buildings. Building materials included stone, brick, and wood, and there existed a widespread representation of animals and Figures (some human) that had all but disappeared from architecture elsewhere in Islamic-ruled lands. The craftsmen here made great strides in the area of woodcarving, combining the elaborate scrolling and geometric forms typical of the Arabic aesthetic with wood, a medium indigenous to Turkey (and rarer in the desert climate of the Middle East).

Mamluk (1250–1517)



Figure **13.8.3**. Mihrab (prayer niche), c. 1270, Konya, Turkey, now in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin (photo: G. Barlow)

The name *Mamluk*, like many names, was given by later historians. The word itself means “owned” in Arabic. It refers to the Turkic slaves who served as soldiers for the Ayyubid sultanate before revolting and rising to power. The Mamluks ruled over key lands in the Middle East, including Mecca and Medina. Their capital at Cairo became the artistic and economic center of the Islamic world at this time.

The period saw a great production of art and architecture, particularly those commissioned by the reigning sultans. Patronizing the arts and creating monumental structures was a way for leaders to display their wealth and make their power visible within the landscape of the city.



Figure 13.8.4. Mosque lamp, Syria, thirteenth–fourteenth century, (Brooklyn Museum)

The Mamluks constructed countless mosques, madrasas and mausolea that were lavishly furnished and decorated. Mamluk decorative objects, particularly glasswork, became renowned throughout the Mediterranean. The empire benefitted from the trade of these goods economically and culturally, as Mamluk craftsmen began to incorporate elements gleaned from contact with other groups. The growing prevalence of trade with China and exposure to Chinese goods, for instance, led to the Mamluk production of blue and white ceramics, an imitation of porcelain typical of the Far East.

The Mamluk sultanate was generally prosperous, in part supported by pilgrims to Mecca and Medina as well as a flourishing textile market, but in 1517 the Mamluk sultanate was overtaken and absorbed into the growing Ottoman empire.

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13.9: Pyxis of Al-Mughira



Figure 13.9.1. Pyxis of al-Mughira, possibly from Madinat al-Zahra, AH 357/ 968 CE, carved ivory with traces of jade, 16cm × 11.8 cm (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

A pyxis is a cylindrical box used for cosmetics. Now, imagine a room in a palace where this beautifully carved ivory container is given a central place. The luxurious box sits open. Inside are small silver containers of perfume, also left open so that their sweet-smelling aromas could waft through the room, gently scenting the air. This particular pyxis was a gift to the then-eighteen-year-old al-Mughira, the son of a caliph, perhaps as a coming-of-age present.

The *Pyxis of al-Mughira*, now in the Louvre, is among the best surviving examples of the royal ivory carving tradition in Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain). It was probably fashioned in the Madinat al-Zahra workshops and its intricate and exceptional carving set it apart from many other examples; it also contains an inscription and figurative work which are important for understanding the traditions of ivory carving and Islamic art in Al-Andalus.

Carved Ivories in Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain)

Al-Andalus, the lands on the Iberian Peninsula (today, Spain), which were controlled by Muslims from 711 to 1492, are home to some of the most remarkable monuments of Islamic art. These include the Great Mosque of Cordoba, constructed by successive Umayyad Caliphs, and the Alhambra Palace, built by the final Islamic dynasty that controlled Al-Andalus, the Nasrids. As stunning and impressive as the architecture of Al-Andalus was, the luxury arts, specifically the exquisite textiles and intricately carved ivory artifacts, produced in in royal workshops, also flourished. One of the best examples of this tradition is the *Pyxis of al-Mughira*.



Figure 13.9.2. This medallion shows two men collecting eggs from the nests of Falcons, a symbol of Umayyad legitimacy.

Since the twilight years of the Roman Empire, carved ivory objects had been important elements of the artistic canon of the Mediterranean. Ivory was durable, smooth, elegant, and easily carved, making it highly desirable for the creation of diptychs, pyxides (the plural of pyxis), and icons that could serve as single panels or could combined into diptychs or triptychs during the Byzantine Empire. Highly portable, they were often given as gifts. Although ivory carving was practiced in Constantinople, Syria and Egypt, it was a new arrival in Al-Andalus, and there are no examples of ivory carved caskets before the reign of the Umayyad caliph, ‘Abd al-Rahman III (r. 929–61).

The *Pyxis of al-Mughira* is decorated with four eight-lobed medallions which are surrounded by Figures and animals that include falconers, wrestlers, griffons, peacocks, birds, goats and animals to be hunted. Each medallion has princely iconography.

Who Were They Made For?

In Al-Andalus, ivory objects, including Pyxides, were bestowed upon members of the royal family, specifically sons, wives and daughters on important or memorable occasions, such as a marriage, birth or coming of age; later they were given as Caliphal gifts to important allies, such as the Berbers, who are the indigenous peoples of North Africa, many of who converted to Islam and who swore their allegiance to the Umayyad Caliphs in Spain.

A surprising number of these royal ivory objects survive in their entirety, and these are spread throughout the museum collections today. Typically, these objects were carved out of solid ivory. Many caskets and pyxides held perfumes or cosmetics. While many pyxides were given to women, many were also given to men, including this one, which was given to al-Mughira, the youngest son of the deceased caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, when he was eighteen years old in the year AH 357/968 CE.



Figure **13.9.3**. This medallion centers around a lute player flanked by two Figures, one of whom holds the braided specter and flask of the Umayyads, while the other holds a fan. Presumably the man with the specter and flask symbolizes the Umayyad Caliph, and the Figure with the fan, the Abassids.



Figure 13.9.4. Another medallion shows lions attacking two bulls. As in Arabic poetry, these lions symbolize the victorious (in this case, perhaps the Umayyads).

The pyxis was probably cut from the cross-section of an elephant's tusk and it was adorned in highly specific, royal iconography. There are also traces of inlaid jade. Jade and other precious and semi-precious stones were used in the decoration of these boxes.

Remember, Islamic art is not strictly speaking aniconic (*aniconic* = the absence of human Figures). Human and animal Figures played a vital part in iconography. We see them here in this pyxis, which some scholars (including those at the Louvre), have interpreted as expressing the political authority and legitimacy of Umayyad Caliphs (as opposed to the Abbasid Caliphs, who ruled in Baghdad).

The final scene shows men on horseback date-picking (Figure 13.9.5). The date-palm, found primarily in the Middle East and North Africa, may allude to the lost lands of the East (the lands under Abbasid control). This too was a theme of Umayyad poetry. The use of visual imagery which is also found in the poetry of the era demonstrates that these two art forms were in communication.



Figure 13.9.5. Men on horseback date-picking

An Arabic inscription in the kufic script runs around the base of the lid and reads: "God's blessing, favours, joy, beatitude to al-Mughira son of the Commander of the faithful, may God have mercy upon him, in the year 357."

Some inscriptions on other ivory carvings also mention the name of the workshop and craftsman who made these exceptional pieces.

The iconography may have had a further specific message to al-Mughira. After the death of his brother, al-Hakam II, al-Mughira may have been a threat to Hisham II (r. 976–1013) and he was executed (along with his supporters). While al-Mughira met an unfortunate end, the beauty of his pyxis ensured its survival.

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13.10: The Alhambra



Figure **13.10.1**. The Alhambra, Sabika hill, Granada, Spain begun 1238

The Alhambra in Granada, Spain, is distinct among Medieval palaces for its sophisticated planning, complex decorative programs, and its many enchanting gardens and fountains. Its intimate spaces are built at a human scale that visitors find elegant and inviting.

The Alhambra, an abbreviation of the Arabic: Qal'at al-Hamra, or red fort, was built by the Nasrid Dynasty (1232–1492)—the last Muslims to rule in Spain. Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr (known as Muhammad I, r. 1237–1273) founded the Nasrid Dynasty and secured this region in 1237. He began construction of his court complex, the Alhambra, on Sabika hill the following year.

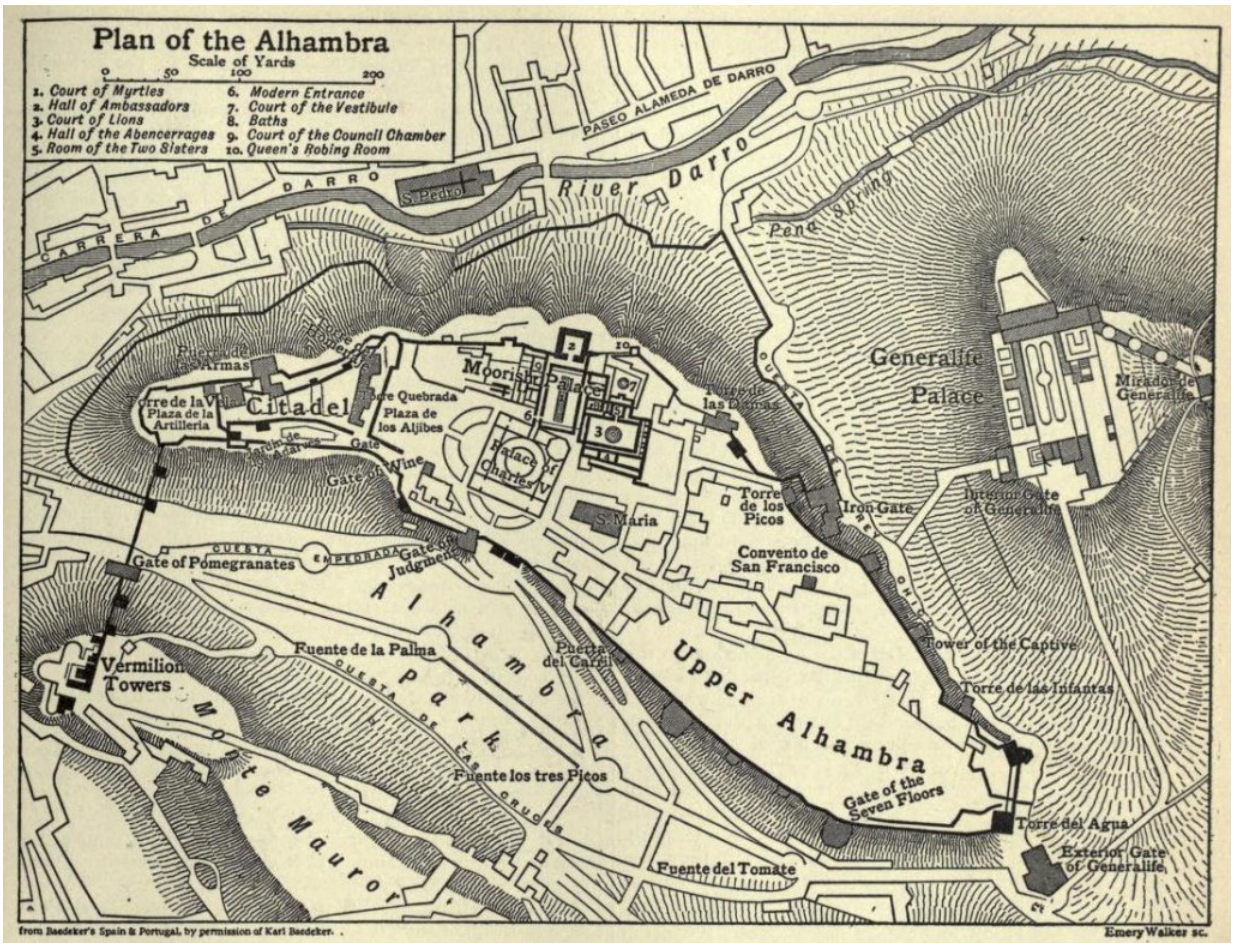


Figure **13.10.2**. Plan of the Alhambra and Generalife

Three Parts

1,730 meters (1 mile) of walls and thirty towers of varying size enclose this city within a city. Access was restricted to four main gates. The Alhambra's nearly 26 acres include structures with three distinct purposes, a residence for the ruler and close family, the citadel, Alcazaba—barracks for the elite guard who were responsible for the safety of the complex, and an area called medina (or city), near the Puerta del Vino (Wine Gate), where court officials lived and worked.

The different parts of the complex are connected by paths, gardens and gates but each part of the complex could be blocked in the event of a threat. The exquisitely detailed structures with their highly ornate interior spaces and patios contrast with the plain walls of the fortress exterior.

Three Palaces

The Alhambra's most celebrated structures are the three original royal palaces. These are the Comares Palace, the Palace of the Lions, and the Partal Palace, each of which was built during fourteenth century. A large fourth palace was later begun by the Christian ruler, Carlos V.

The Comares Palace

El Mexuar is an audience chamber near the Torre de Comares at the northern edge of the complex. It was built by Ismail I (1314–1325) as a throne room, but became a reception and meeting hall when the palaces were expanded in the 1330s. The room has complex geometric tile dadoes (lower wall panels distinct from the area above) and carved stucco panels that give it a formality suitable for receiving dignitaries.



Figure **13.10.3**. El Mexuar



Figure **13.10.4**. El Mexuar Wall Detail

Behind El Mexuar stands the formal and elaborate Comares façade set back from a courtyard and fountain. The façade is built on a raised three-stepped platform that might have served as a kind of outdoor stage for the ruler. The carved stucco façade was once painted in brilliant colors, though only traces remain. A dark winding passage beyond the Comares façade leads to a covered patio

surrounding a large courtyard with a pool, now known as the Court of the Myrtles (Figure **13.10.5**). This was the focal point of the Comares Palace, which is reflected in the cool tranquil water.



Figure **13.10.5**. Court of Myrtles, Alhambra

The Alhambra's largest tower, the Comares Tower, contains the Salón de Comares (Hall of the Ambassadors), a throne room built by Yusuf I (1333–1354). This room exhibits the most diverse decorative and architectural arts contained in the Alhambra.

The double arched windows illuminate the room and provide breathtaking views. Additional light is provided by arched grille (lattice) windows set high in the walls. At eye level, the walls are lavishly decorated with tiles laid in intricate geometric patterns. The remaining surfaces are covered with intricately carved stucco motifs organized in bands and panels of curvilinear patterns and calligraphy.

Palace of the Lions

The Palacio de los Leones (Palace of the Lions) stands next to the Comares Palace but should be considered an independent building. The two structures were connected after Granada fell to the Christians. Muhammad V (1362–1391) built the Palace of the Lions' most celebrated feature, a fountain with a complex hydraulic system consisting of a marble basin on the backs of twelve carved stone lions situated at the intersection of two water channels that form a cross in the rectilinear courtyard (Figure **13.10.6**). An arched covered patio encircles the courtyard and displays fine stucco carvings held up by a series of slender columns. Two decorative pavilions protrude into the courtyard on an East–West axis (at the narrow sides of the courtyard), accentuating the royal spaces behind them.



Figure **13.10.6**. Court of the Lions

To the West, the Sala de los Mocárabes (Muqarnas Chamber), may have functioned as an antechamber and was near the original entrance to the palace. It takes its name from the intricately carved system of brackets called “muqarnas” that hold up the vaulted ceiling. Across the courtyard, to the East, is the Sala de los Reyes (Hall of the Kings), an elongated space divided into sections using a series of arches leading up to a vaulted muqarnas ceiling; the room has multiple alcoves, some with an unobstructed view of the courtyard, but with no known function.

This room contains paintings on the ceiling representing courtly life. The images were first painted on tanned sheepskins, in the tradition of miniature painting. They use brilliant colors and fine details and are attached to the ceiling rather than painted on it. There are two other halls in the Palace of the Lions on the northern and southern ends; they are the Sala de las Dos Hermanas (the Hall of the Two Sisters) and the Hall of Abencerrajas. Both were residential apartments with rooms on the second floor. Each also have a large domed room sumptuously decorated with carved and painted stucco in muqarnas forms with elaborate and varying star motifs.



Figure **13.10.7**. Hall of Abencerrajas

The Partal Palace

The Palacio del Partal (Partal Palace) was built in the early fourteenth century and is also known as del Pórtico (Portico Palace) because of the portico formed by a five-arched arcade at one end of a large pool. It is one of the oldest palace structures in the Alhambra complex.

Generalife



Figure **13.10.8**. Court of the Long Pond, Generalife

The Nasrid rulers did not limit themselves to building within the wall of the Alhambra. One of the best preserved Nasrid estates, just beyond the walls, is called Generalife (from the Arabic, Jannat al-arifa). The word jannat means paradise and by association, garden, or a place of cultivation which Generalife has in abundance. Its water channels, fountains and greenery can be understood in relation to passage 2:25 in the Koran, “gardens, underneath which running waters flow.”

In one of the most spectacular Generalife gardens, a long narrow patio is ornamented with a water channel and two rows of water fountains. Generalife also contains a palace built in the same decorative manner as those within the Alhambra but its elaborate vegetable and ornamental gardens made this lush complex a welcome retreat for the rulers of Granada.

Interior and Exterior Reimagined

To be sure, gardens and water fountains, canals, and pools are a recurring theme in construction across the Muslim dominion. Water is both practical and beautiful in architecture and in this respect the Alhambra and Generalife are no exception. But the Nasrid rulers of Granada made water integral. They brought the sound, sight and cooling qualities of water into close proximity, in gardens, courtyards, marble canals, and even directly indoors.

The Alhambra’s architecture shares many characteristics with other examples of Islamic architecture, but is singular in the way it complicates the relationship between interior and exterior. Its buildings feature shaded patios and covered walkways that pass from well-lit interior spaces onto shaded courtyards and sun-filled gardens all enlivened by the reflection of water and intricately carved stucco decoration.

More profoundly however, this is a place to reflect. Given the beauty, care and detail found at the Alhambra, it is tempting to imagine that the Nasrids planned to remain here forever; it is ironic then to see throughout the complex in the carved stucco, the words, “No conqueror, but God” left by those that had once conquered Granada, and would themselves be conquered. It is a testament to the Alhambra that the Catholic monarchs who besieged and ultimately took the city left this complex largely intact.

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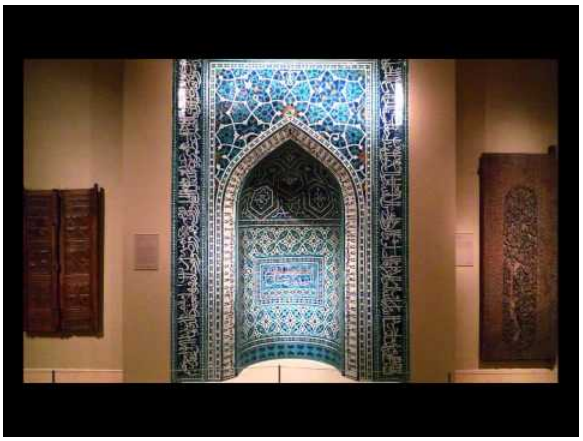
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13.11: Ilkhanid Mihrab

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay Lewis and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a Mihrab that was created just after the Ilkhanid period.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Mihrab (prayer niche), 1354–55 (AH 755), just after the Ilkhanid period, Isfahan, Iran, polychrome glazed tiles, 135-1/16 × 113-11/16 inches / 343.1× 288.7 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

Arabic Inscriptions

Outer border: Quotation from the Qur'an (chapter IX, verses 18–22)

Inner border: (in Kufic script): "Said [the Prophet] on him be blessing and peace: . . . witness that there is no God save Allah and that Muhammad is his Apostle and the Blessed Imam, and in legal almsgiving, and in the pilgrimage, and in the fast of Ramadan, and he said, on him be blessing and peace."

Central framed text: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'The Mosque is the dwelling place of the pious.'"

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13.12: Later Period

Later Empires

What does the Taj Mahal have to do with the Tamerlane? What do Persian carpets have to do with Turkish tiles? Quite a bit, as it turns out. By the fourteenth century, Islam had spread as far East as India and Islamic rulers had solidified their power by establishing prosperous cities and a robust trade in decorative arts along the all-important Silk Road.

This is a complex period with competing and overlapping cultures and empires. This interactive map can help, and read below for an introduction to the later Islamic dynasties.

Ottoman (1300–1924)

At its earliest stages, the Ottoman state was little more than a group formed as a result of the dissolution of the Anatolian Seljuq sultanate. However, in 1453, the Ottomans captured the great Byzantine capital, Constantinople, and in 1517, they defeated the Mamluks and took control of the most significant state in the Islamic world.



Figure **13.12.1**. Sülemaniye Mosque, Istanbul, 1550–1558

While the Ottomans ruled for many centuries, the height of the empire's cultural and economic prosperity was achieved during Süleyman the Magnificent's reign (r. 1520–1566), a period often referred to as the Ottoman's 'golden age.' In addition to large-scale architectural projects, the decorative arts flourished, chief among them, ceramics, particularly tiles. Iznik tiles, named for the city in Anatolia where they were produced, developed a trademark style of curling vines and flowers rendered in beautiful shades of blue and turquoise. These designs were informed by the blue and white floral patterns found in Chinese porcelain—similar to earlier Mamluk tiles, and Timurid art to the East. In addition to Iznik, other artistic hubs developed, such as Bursa, known for its silks, and Cairo for its carpets. The capital, Istanbul (formerly Constantinople), became a great center for all matters of cultural importance from manuscript illumination to architecture.

The architecture of the period, both sacred and secular, incorporates these decorative arts, from the dazzling blue tiles and monumental calligraphy that adorn the walls of Topkapi Palace (begun 1459) to the carpets that line the floors of the Süleymaniye Mosque (1550–1558). Ottoman mosque architecture itself is marked by the use of domes, widely used earlier in Byzantium, and towering minarets. The Byzantine influence draws primarily from Hagia Sophia, a former church that was converted into a mosque (and is now a museum).

Timurid (1369–1502)

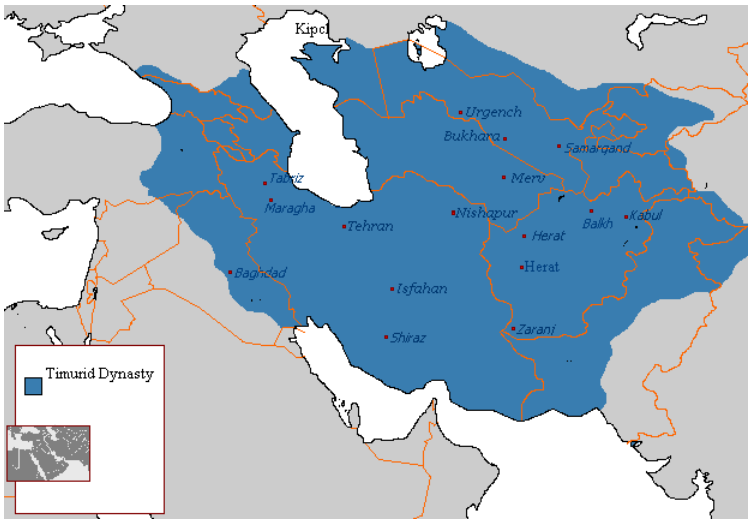


Figure **13.12.2**. Timurid Dynasty at its greatest extent

This powerful Central Asian dynasty was named for its founder, Tamerlane (ruled 1370–1405), which is derived from Timur the Lame. Despite his rather pathetic epithet, he claimed to be a descendent of Genghis Khan and demonstrated some of his supposed ancestor's ruthlessness in conquering neighboring territories.

After establishing a vast empire, Timur developed a monumental architecture befitting his power, and sought to make Samarkand the "pearl of the world." Because the capital was situated at a major crossroads of the Silk Road (the crucial trade route linking the Middle East, Central Asia, and China), and because Timur had conquered so widely, the Timurids acquired a myriad of artisans and craftspeople from distinct artistic traditions. The resulting style synthesized aesthetic and design principles from as far away as India (then Hindustan) and the lands in between.



Figure **13.12.3**. Registan, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 15th–17th centuries

The result can be seen in cities filled with buildings created on a lavish scale that exhibited tall, bulbous domes and the finest ceramic tiles. The structures and even the cities themselves are often described foremost by the overwhelming use of blues and golds. While the Timurid dynasty itself was short-lived, its legacy survives not only in the grand architecture that it left behind but in its descendents who went on to play significant roles in the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires.

Safavid (1502–1736)

The Safavids, a group with roots in the Sufic tradition (a mystical branch of Islam), came to power in Persia, modern-day Iran and Azerbaijan. In 1501 the Safavid rulers declared Shi'a Islam as its state religion; and in just ten years the empire came to include all

of Iran.



Figure **13.12.4**. Ardabil Carpet, Tabriz, Iran, 1539–1540, wool and silk, larger than 34 × 17 feet, (Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

The art of manuscript illumination was highly prized in the Safavid courts, and royal patrons made many large-scale commissions. Perhaps the most notable of these is the Shahnama (or 'Book of Kings,' a compilation of stories about earlier rulers of Iran) from the 1520s. While painting in this context did not have the same prominent and longstanding tradition as it does in Western art, the illustrations exhibit masterful workmanship and an incredible attention to detail.

Trade in carpets was also important, and even today, people understand the appeal of Persian carpets. These large-scale, high-quality pieces were created as luxurious furnishings for royal courts. The most famous—perhaps of all time—is a pair known as the Ardabil Carpets, created in 1539–1540. The carpets were nearly identical, perfectly symmetrical and enormous. Every inch of space was filled with flowers, scrolling vines, and medallions.

External Link

View this Ardabil Carpet up close in the Google Art Project.

The empire began to struggle financially and militarily until the rule of Shah Abbas (r. 1587–1629). He moved the capital to Isfahan where he built a magnificent new city and established state workshops for textiles, which, along with silk and other goods, were increasingly exported to Europe. The mosque architecture made use of earlier Persian elements, like the four-iwan plan and building materials of brick and glazed tiles reminiscent of Timurid architecture, with its blues and greens and bulbous domes. Even in such far-removed lands, the connections between these dynasties are evident in the art they created.

Mughal (1526–1858)

Though Islam had been introduced in India centuries before, the Mughals were responsible for some of the greatest works of art produced in the canons of both Indian and Islamic art. The empire established itself when Babur, himself a Timurid prince of Turkish and Central Asian descent, came to Hindustan and defeated the existing Islamic sultanate in Delhi.

Tracing their roots to Central Asia, the Mughals produced art, music and poetry that was highly influenced by Persian and Central Asian aesthetics. This is evident in the style and importance given to miniature paintings, created to illustrate manuscripts. The most grandiose of these was the Akbarnama, created to record the conquests of Akbar, widely regarded as the greatest Mughal emperor. The art and architecture created during his reign demonstrate a synthesis of indigenous Indian temple architecture with structural and design elements derived from Islamic sources farther West. The Mughals developed a unique architectural style

which, in the years after Akbar's reign, began to feature scalloped arches and stylized floral designs in white marble. The most famous example is the Taj Mahal, constructed by Shah Jahan from 1632–1653.



Figure **13.12.5**. Sikandra, Agra, 1605–1613

The Mughal dynasty left a lasting mark on the landscape of India, and remained in power until the British completed their conquest of India in the nineteenth century.

Although historians generally agree that the major Islamic dynasties end in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Islamic art and culture have continued to flourish. Muslim artists and Muslim countries are still producing art. Some art historians consider such work as simply modern or contemporary art while others see it within the continuity of Islamic art.

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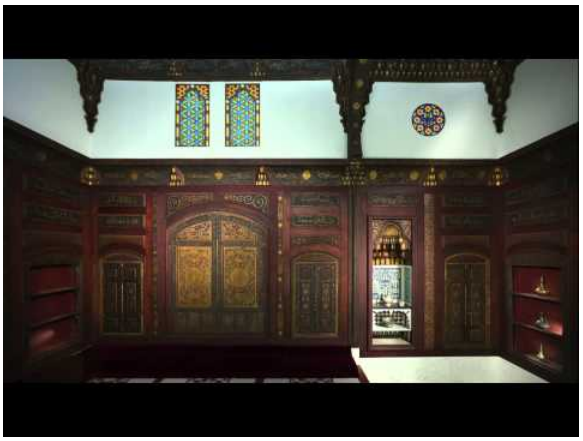
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13.13: Qa’a- The Damascus Room

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay Lewis and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of a Reception Room (Qa’a) from the Ottoman period.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Reception Room (Qa’a), Ottoman period, 1119 AH / 1707 CE, Damascus, Syria, poplar, gesso relief with gold and tin leaf, glazes and paint; cypress, poplar, walnut, black mulberry, mother-of pearl, marble and other stones, stucco with glass, plaster, ceramic tiles, iron, brass, 22 feet and a 1/2 inch high × 16 feet, 8-1/2 inches deep × 26 feet, 4-3/4 inches long, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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13.14: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Take a virtual tour of the Islamic galleries at LACMA
- Visit the following websites and read the information about the Dome of the Rock:
  - Dome of the Rock 1
  - Dome of the Rock 2

Watch this video:



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Romanesque Art

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Romanesque art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Romanesque art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Romanesque art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Romanesque art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Romanesque art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

14.1: Overview
14.2: Key Learning Items
14.3: Introduction to Romanesque Art
14.4: Pilgrimage Routes
14.5: Church Architecture
14.6: Abbaye of Fontenay
14.7: Saint Trophime
14.8: Last Judgment Tympanum
14.9: Virgin from Ger
14.10: Historiated Capitals
14.11: Painting- Wise and Foolish Virgins
14.12: Bayeux Tapestry
14.13: Diagram of a Romanesque Portal
14.14: External Resources

Thumbnail: Apse of Sant Climent de Taüll, a Spanish fresco by the Master of Taüll, now in Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. (Public Domain; via Wikipedia)

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14.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Romanesque art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Romanesque art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Romanesque Art

- **Read:** Introduction to Romanesque Art
- **Read:** Pilgrimage Routes
- **Read:** Church Architecture
- **Read:** Abbaye of Fontenay
- **Read:** Saint Trophime
- **Watch:** Last Judgment Tympanum (10:29)
- **Watch:** Virgin from Ger (3:16)
- **Watch:** Historiated Capitals (3:45)
- **Watch:** Painting: Wise and Foolish Virgins (5:44)
- **Watch:** Bayeux Tapestry (4:56)
- **Explore:** Diagram of a Romanesque Portal

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignment

- **Submit:** Module 14 Quiz (5 points)

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14.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the typical elements of a Romanesque church?
- Besides architecture, what other types of art were produced during the Romanesque era?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- barrel vault
- groin (cross) vault
- pilgrimage
- relics
- mandorla
- narthex
- nave
- aisle
- transept
- gallery
- bay
- triforium
- radiating chapels
- crossing
- apse
- ambulatory
- historiated capital
- tympanum
- jambs
- portal

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

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14.3: Introduction to Romanesque Art



Figure **14.3.1**. Southwell Minster

The name gives it away–Romanesque architecture is based on Roman architectural elements. It is the rounded Roman arch that is the literal basis for structures built in this style.

All through the regions that were part of the ancient Roman Empire are ruins of Roman aqueducts and buildings, most of them exhibiting arches as part of the architecture. (You may make the etymological leap that the two words are related, but the Oxford English Dictionary shows arch as coming from Latin *arcus*, which defines the shape, while *arch*-as in architect, archbishop and archenemy-comes from Greek *arkhos,* meaning chief. *Tekton* means builder.)

When Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800 CE, Europe began to take its first steps out of the "Dark Ages" since the fall of Rome in the fifth century. The remains of Roman civilization were seen all over the continent, and legends of the great empire would have been passed down through generations. So when Charlemagne wanted to unite his empire and validate his reign, he began building churches in the Roman style–particularly the style of Christian Rome in the days of Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor.

After a gap of around two hundred years with no large building projects, the architects of Charlemagne's day looked to the arched, or arcaded, system seen in Christian Roman edifices as a model. It is a logical system of stresses and buttressing, which was fairly easily engineered for large structures, and it began to be used in gatehouses, chapels, and churches in Europe. These early examples may be referred to as pre-Romanesque because, after a brief spurt of growth, the development of architecture again lapsed. As a body of knowledge was eventually re-developed, buildings became larger and more imposing. Examples of Romanesque cathedrals from the early Middle Ages (roughly 1000–1200) are solid, massive, impressive churches that are often still the largest structure in many towns.

In Britain, the Romanesque style became known as "Norman" because the major building scheme in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was instigated by William the Conqueror, who invaded Britain in 1066 from Normandy in northern France. (The Normans were the descendants of Vikings—Norse, or north men—who had invaded this area over a century earlier.) Durham and Gloucester Cathedrals and Southwell Minster are excellent examples of churches in the Norman, or Romanesque style.

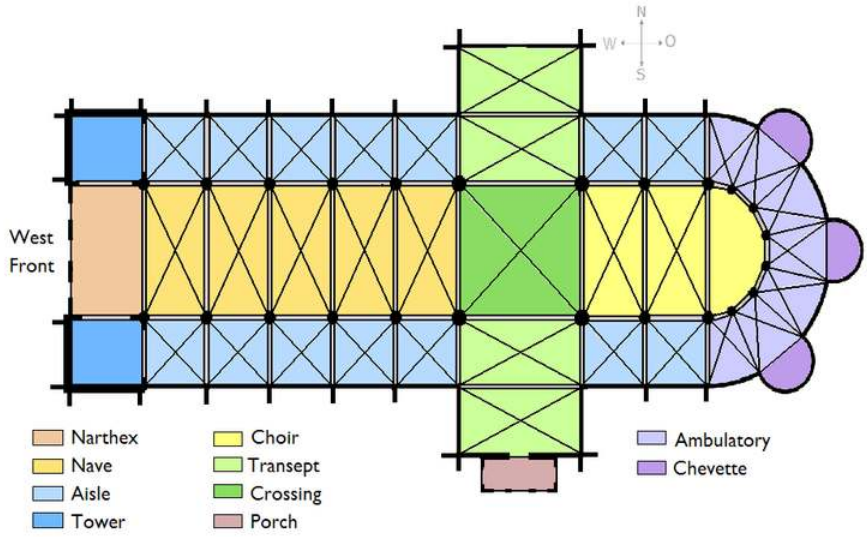


Figure **14.3.2**. Typical cathedral schematic plan; we will be using the terms defined here

The arches that define the naves of these churches are well modulated and geometrically logical–with one look you can see the repeating shapes, and proportions that make sense for an immense and weighty structure. There is a large arcade on the ground level made up of bulky piers or columns. The piers may have been filled with rubble rather than being solid, carved stone. Above this arcade is a second level of smaller arches, often in pairs with a column between the two. The next higher level was again proportionately smaller, creating a rational diminution of structural elements as the mass of the building is reduced.

The decoration is often quite simple, using geometric shapes rather than floral or curvilinear patterns. Common shapes used include diapers—squares or lozenges—and chevrons, which were zigzag patterns and shapes. Plain circles were also used, which echoed the half-circle shape of the ubiquitous arches.



Figure **14.3.3**. (left) Gloucester Cathedral exterior; (right) Gloucester Cathedral aisle



Figure **14.3.4**. The ceiling of the Southwell Minster nave.

Early Romanesque ceilings and roofs were often made of wood, as if the architects had not quite understood how to span the two sides of the building using stone, which created outward thrust and stresses on the side walls. This development, of course, didn't

take long to manifest, and led from barrel vaulting (simple, semicircular roof vaults) to cross vaulting, which became ever more adventurous and ornate in the Gothic.

Pictures taken from video footage by Richard Spanswick

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14.4: Pilgrimage Routes

The End of the World

Y2K. The Rapture. 2012. For over a decade, speculation about the end of the world has run rampant—all in conjunction with the arrival of the new millennium. The same was true for our religious European counterparts who, prior to the year 1000, believed the Second Coming of Christ was imminent, and the end was nigh.

When the apocalypse failed to materialize in 1000, it was decided that the correct year must be 1033, a thousand years from the death of Jesus Christ, but then that year also passed without any cataclysmic event.

Just how extreme the millennial panic was, remains debated. It is certain that from the year 950 onwards, there was a significant increase in building activity, particularly of religious structures. There were many reasons for this construction boom beside millennial panic, and the building of monumental religious structures continued even as fears of the immediate end of time faded.

Not surprisingly, this period also witnessed a surge in the popularity of the religious pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place. They are acts of piety and may have been undertaken in gratitude for the fact that doomsday had not arrived, and to ensure salvation, whenever the end did come.

The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela

For the average European in the twelfth Century, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Jerusalem was out of the question—travel to the Middle East was too far, too dangerous and too expensive. Santiago de Compostela in Spain offered a much more convenient option.

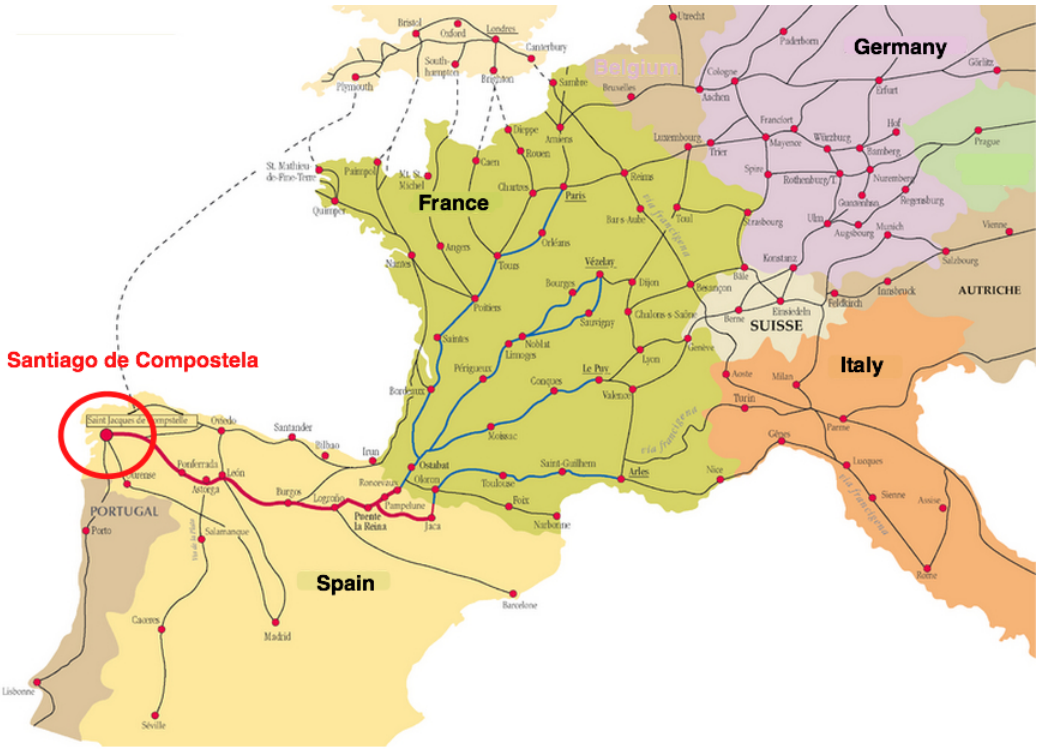


Figure 14.4.1. Pilgrimage routes

To this day, hundreds of thousands of faithful travel the “Way of Saint James” to the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela. They go on foot across Europe to a holy shrine where bones, believed to belong to Saint James, were unearthed. The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela now stands on this site.

The pious of the Middle Ages wanted to pay homage to holy relics, and pilgrimage churches sprang up along the route to Spain. Pilgrims commonly walked barefoot and wore a scalloped shell, the symbol of Saint James (the shell’s grooves symbolize the many roads of the pilgrimage).

In France alone there were four main routes toward Spain. Le Puy, Arles, Paris and Vézelay are the cities on these roads and each contains a church that was an important pilgrimage site in its own right.

Why make a Pilgrimage?

A pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela was an expression of Christian devotion and it was believed that it could purify the soul and perhaps even produce miraculous healing benefits. A criminal could travel the "Way of Saint James" as an act penance. For the everyday person, a pilgrimage was also one of the only opportunities to travel and see some of the world. It was a chance to meet people, perhaps even those outside one's own class. The purpose of pilgrimage may not have been entirely devotional.

The Cult of the Relic



Figure **14.4.2**. St. Foy Reliquary, Conques Abbey

Pilgrimage churches can be seen in part as popular destinations, a spiritual tourism of sorts for medieval travelers. Guidebooks, badges and various souvenirs were sold. Pilgrims, though traveling light, would spend money in the towns that possessed important sacred relics.

The cult of relic was at its peak during the Romanesque period (c. 1000–1200 CE). Relics are religious objects generally connected to a saint, or some other venerated person. A relic might be a body part, a saint's finger, a cloth worn by the Virgin Mary, or a piece of the True Cross. Relics are often housed in a protective container called a reliquary. Reliquaries are often quite opulent and can be encrusted with precious metals and gemstones given by the faithful. An example is the Reliquary of Saint Foy, located at Conques abbey on the pilgrimage route. It is said to hold a piece of the child martyr's skull. A large pilgrimage church might be home to one major relic, and dozens of lesser-known relics. Because of their sacred and economic value, every church wanted an important relic and a black market boomed with fake and stolen goods.

Accommodating Crowds

Pilgrimage churches were constructed with some special features to make them particularly accessible to visitors. The goal was to get large numbers of people to the relics and out again without disturbing the Mass in the center of the church. A large portal that could accommodate the pious throngs was a prerequisite. Generally, these portals would also have an elaborate sculptural program, often portraying the Second Coming—a good way to remind the weary pilgrim why they made the trip!



Figure **14.4.3**. Portal, Cathedral of Saint Lazare, Autun, twelfth century

A pilgrimage church generally consisted of a double aisle on either side of the nave (the wide hall that runs down the center of a church). In this way, the visitor could move easily around the outer edges of the church until reaching the smaller apsidioles or radiating chapels. These are small rooms generally located off the back of the church behind the altar where relics were often displayed. The faithful would move from chapel to chapel venerating each relic in turn.

Thick Walls, Small Windows

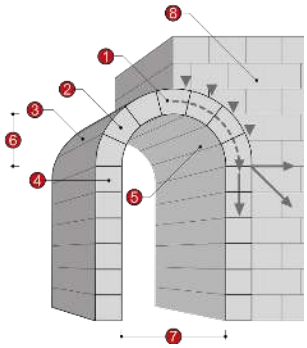


Figure **14.4.4**. The thrust of a barrel vault.

Romanesque churches were dark. This was in large part because of the use of stone barrel-vault construction (Figure **14.4.4**). This system provided excellent acoustics and reduced fire danger. However, a barrel vault exerts continuous lateral (outward pressure) all along the walls that support the vault.

This meant the outer walls of the church had to be extra thick. It also meant that windows had to be small and few. When builders dared to pierce walls with additional or larger windows they risked structural failure. Churches did collapse.



Figure **14.4.5**. Nave, Tournus Cathedral, 11th century

Later, the masons of the Gothic period replaced the barrel vault with the groin vault which carries weight down to its four corners, concentrating the pressure of the vaulting, and allowing for much larger windows.

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14.5: Church Architecture

Many of Europe's medieval cathedrals are museums in their own right, housing fantastic examples of craftsmanship and works of art. Additionally, the buildings themselves are impressive. Although architectural styles varied from place to place, building to building, there are some basic features that were fairly universal in monumental churches built in the Middle Ages, and the prototype for that type of building was the Roman basilica.

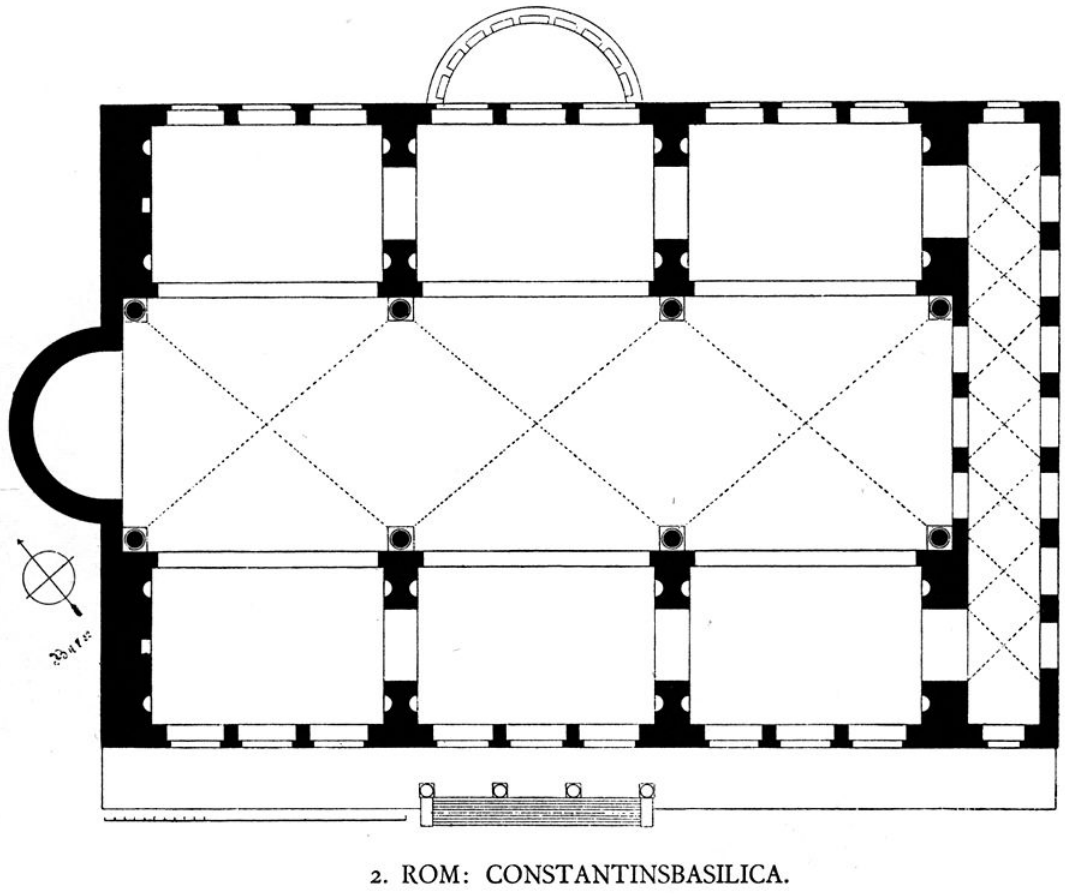


Figure 14.5.1. Basilica of Maxentius Floor plan

Prototype: The Ancient Roman Basilica

In ancient Rome, the basilica was created as a place for tribunals and other types of business. The building was rectangular in shape, with the long, central portion of the hall made up of the *nave*. Here the interior reached its fullest height. The nave was flanked on either side by a colonnade that delineated the side aisles, which were of a lower height than the nave. Because the side aisles were lower, the roof over this section was below the roofline of the nave, allowing for windows near the ceiling of the nave.

This band of windows was called the *clerestory*. At the far end of the nave, away from the main door, was a semi-circular extension, usually with a half-dome roof. This area was the *apse*, and is where the magistrate or other senior officials would hold court.

Because this plan allowed for many people to circulate within a large, and awesome, space, the general plan became an obvious choice for early Christian buildings. The religious rituals, masses, and pilgrimages that became commonplace by the Middle Ages were very different from today's services, and to understand the architecture it is necessary to understand how the buildings were used and the components that made up these massive edifices.

The Medieval Church Plan

Although medieval churches are usually oriented east to west, they all vary slightly. When a new church was to be built, the patron saint was selected and the altar location laid out. On the saint's day, a line would be surveyed from the position of the rising sun through the altar site and extending in a westerly direction. This was the orientation of the new building.

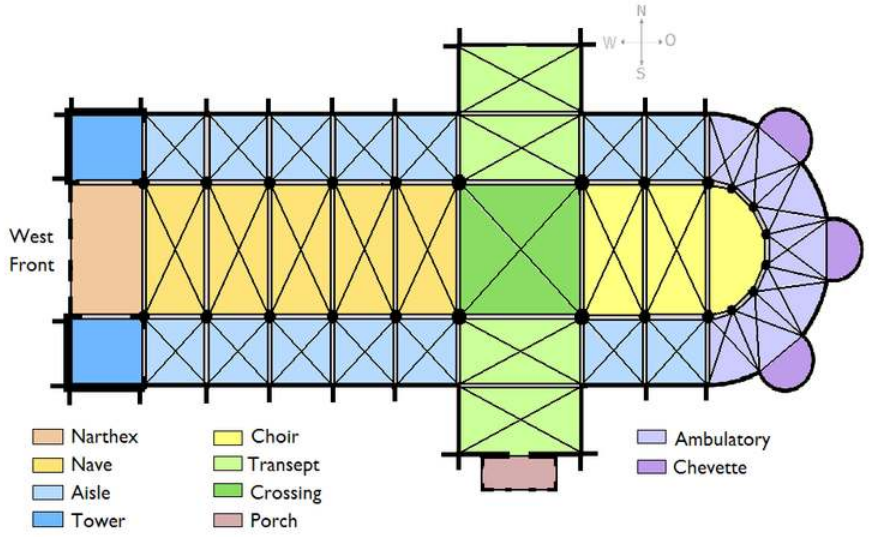


Figure **14.5.2**. Typical cathedral schematic plan

The entrance foyer is called the *narthex*, but this is not found in all medieval churches. Daily access may be through a door on the north or south side. The largest, central, western door may have been reserved for ceremonial purposes.

The Church Plan

Inside, you should imagine the interior space without the chairs or pews that we are used to seeing today. Unlike in a Roman basilica, the side aisles run behind a series of arches rather than columns. In very extensive buildings there may be two side aisles, with the ceiling of the outer one lower than the one next to the nave. This hierarchy of size and proportion extended to the major units of the plan—the *bays*. A bay is the square unit in the arcade defined by a vault, the section supported by consecutive pillars. Typically, the width of the nave was equal to two bays. The *vault* is the arched roof or ceiling, or a section of it.

The major arcade at the ground floor is topped by a second arcade, called the *gallery*, which is topped by the clerestory or a third arcade level. The arcade just below the clerestory is called the *triforium*. The nave was used for the procession of the clergy to the altar. The main altar was basically in the position of the basilican apse, although in some designs it is further forward. The area around the altar—the *choir* or *chancel*—was reserved for the clergy or monks, who performed services throughout the day.

The cathedrals and former monastery churches are much larger than needed for the local population. They expected and received numerous pilgrims who came to various shrines and altars within the church where they might pray to a supposed piece of the true cross, or a bone of a martyr, or the tomb of a king. The pilgrims entered the church and found their way to the chapel or altar of their desire—therefore, the side aisles made an efficient path for pilgrims to come and go without disrupting the daily services.



Figure **14.5.3**. Transept Salisbury Cathedral (photo taken from video footage by Richard Spanswick)

Development of this plan over time shows that very soon the apse was elongated, adding more room to the choir. Additionally, the termini of the aisles developed into small wings themselves, known as *transepts*. These were also extended, providing room for more tombs, more shrines, and more pilgrims.

The area where the axes of the nave and transepts meet is called, logically, the *crossing*.

An aisle often surrounds the apse, running behind the altar. Called the *ambulatory*, this aisle accessed additional small chapels, called*radiating chapels* or *chevets*. Of course, there are many variations on these typical building blocks of medieval church design. Different regions had different tastes, greater or lesser financial power, more or less experienced architects and masons, which created the diversity of medieval buildings still standing today.

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14.6: Abbaye of Fontenay

The Rules

The Romanesque abbey of Fontenay (Abbaye de Fontenay) is located in Burgundy, France and stands today as a prime architectural example of the Cistercian order. Who are the Cistercians, you ask? The Cistercian were (and still are) monks that broke away from the mainstream Benedictines (specifically the Cluniacs), at the end of the eleventh century. They are sometimes referred to as the white monks, a reference to their clothing (habit)—a deviation from the Benedictine's black robes—or as Bernardines, after Cistercian superstar Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.



Figure **14.6.1**. Cloister, Abbaye de Fontenay



Figure **14.6.2**. Illumination with St. Benedict delivering his Rule to St. Maurus, Monastery of St. Gilles, Nimes, 1129

Essentially, the Cistercians felt the Benedictine monks had become too worldly and were no longer staying true to the Rules of Saint Benedict of Nursia. The Cistercians thought that the amount of time being devoted to manual labor was lacking. The goal of the Cistercians was to adhere strictly to the sixth century Rule of Saint Benedict. This Rule pronounced that a monk should divide his day equally between prayer, study and manual labor, as well as live a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. Most Cistercian abbeys were built to reflect this dedication to the Rule of Saint Benedict, with manual labor being an integral component. Fontenay, a fairly early addition to the order, and built directly under Bernard of Clairvaux, is no exception. Fontenay was the second "daughter house" of Clairvaux, and one of the four founding houses of the order. Saint Bernard held strong beliefs as to how abbeys should be built and, as Fontenay was built under his auspices, it conforms to Saint Bernard's dictates to a nicety.



Figure **14.6.3**. Inside the walls, Abbaye de Fontenay

Self-Sufficiency

Cistercians chose to locate their abbeys in remote areas, far from any sort of hubbub that might interrupt their spiritual meditations. In Fontenay's case, it was originally founded on the site of an old hermitage. However, due to issues with that site, the abbey was forced to relocate in 1130 to its present location further along the marshy valley. Often Cistercian would take an inhospitable topography and make it livable, such as the marshy site of Fontenay. The Cistercian abbeys focused on complete self-sufficiency, and were akin to mini-towns, rendering the outside world obsolete. Ironically, given the success of the abbeys, they often became the economic hub of the area.



Figure **14.6.4**. Chapter House, Abbaye de Fontenay

Cistercian abbeys were similar to those of the Benedictines, possessing a dormitory for sleep, a cloister for strolling, a chapterhouse for the monks' morning meeting, and a caldarium, or warming room where the monks could read and transcribe (also sometimes referred to as a scriptorium). However, an additional feature found at Cistercian abbeys was a wing for lay brothers. Unique to the order, and one of the reasons for its popularity, was the fact they would allow lay men to join. These men were required to adhere to most of the rules of the order but their lives were slightly less strict, and lay brothers could never be ordained or hold office. Fontenay today is remarkably well preserved, though the refectory (cafeteria) was destroyed and the gatehouse restored the seventeenth century; repairs have also been made to the roof. The abbey still possesses its medieval forge, with its tremendous hydraulic hammer. The forge was an important producer of iron tools and building components in its day.



Figure **14.6.5**. View of chapter house (lower floor, left), dormitory (upper floor, left) and church apse (right)

Harmony of Proportions

The Cistercians were known to take an austere tone when it came to ornament. Bernard of Clairvaux felt decoration, whether in the church or in the cloister, would detract from the monks from their heavenly ruminations. With this in mind, Bernard also nixed the crossing tower, which was a common feature in other Romanesque churches, but something Saint Bernard found ostentatious and excessive. A small bell can be found on the roof, as it was a necessity for calling the monks to mass. The Cistercians did, however, lavish acute attention on the construction materials, the stones of the church themselves, generally only using the finest of ashlar masonry.



Figure **14.6.7**. West façade, Abbaye de Fontenay

One enters the church through a singular portal almost completely devoid of ornament aside from the beautiful pink and brown coloring of the stones. The church is in the form of a Latin cross. The east end consists of a flattened apse flanked by two matching square chapels—a deviation from the more common semi-circular apse. Fontenay was dedicated in 1147, making it one of the oldest Cistercian churches in France.



Figure **14.6.8**. Nave, Abbaye de Fontenay

When a visitor enters the church, they are confronted with the symmetrical beauty that is quintessential to the Cistercian abbey. The harmony of proportions might almost make one think of a Classical Greek temple, or the work of later Renaissance architects such as Alberti. Cistercian architecture did inspire Le Corbusier, pioneer of modern architecture. The eight bay nave is flanked by aisles on either side. There is no clerestory. Light only enters from the side aisles on the right, the windows at the east and west ends, as well as windows that pierce the East wall of the crossing transept. The nave is a rounded barrel vault, ever so slightly pointed and the side aisles are likewise supported by barrel vaults which are perpendicular to the nave. Engaged columns coursed into the nave wall connect to the transverse arches above to produce a quiet visual rhythm. As is the case with a number of Cistercian abbeys, the church at Fontenay anticipates the Gothic aesthetic in the way that the barrel vaults are gently pointed.



Figure 14.6.9. Abbaye de Fontenay seen from the cloister

Into Private Hands

Like so many abbeys, Fontenay was seized during the French revolution, at which point it ceased to function as a religious center. The property was auctioned off and it became a paper mill in 1791. Later it was be adapted for other industrial purposes until purchased by Edouard Anyard, who restored its structures to their original purity. It remains in the Anyard family to this day, and is open to the public for all to see. It stands as a sober, yet stunning, reminder of the reductive beauty of Cistercian architecture.

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14.7: Saint Trophime

The Provençal city of Arles in the south of France, is home to the medieval church, Saint Trophime.

First Impressions



Figure **14.7.1**. Place de la République with Saint Trophime to the right.

When I first saw the church, somewhat inconspicuously wedged between two more recent structures, it struck me as rather non-descript. However, that impression only lasted a moment.

As I drew nearer, the magnificence of the portal, embellished with an elaborate sculptural program, came into view. Hapless souls, chained and bound, shuffle along to their ultimate doom while Christ in Majesty, surrounded by symbols of his apostles, looks stoically on (Figure **14.7.2**). This is perhaps the finest example of a Romanesque portal to be found in southern France.



Figure **14.7.2**. Tympanum and Lintel

The exterior of Saint Trophime was cleaned in recent years—for better or for worse. While it is a pleasure to see the sculpture without a thick black film of pollution, some think these sorts of restorations do more harm than good. The entrance to the cathedral consists of a single arched opening reminiscent of ancient triumphal arches. There are a number of triumphal arches that still stand not far from Arles, in nearby Saint Remy and Orange.



Figure **14.7.3**. Portal, Saint Trophime, Arles (photo: C. M. Bolli)

The entirety of the main portal projects outward and it is on this portion of the exterior that the bulk of the church's sculpture can be found.

Known as the church of Saint Stephen in early Christian times, the church was renamed Saint Trophime when the relics of Saint Trophimus (the first bishop of Arles), in this case a variety of bones, were dug up and reinterred at the church site in 972. Typical for medieval churches, Saint Trophime was constructed over a long period of time and built in a series of campaigns. The structure that is seen today was started in the eleventh century and completed in the twelfth, with a few bits from earlier and later periods thrown in.

A Pilgrimage Church

The church of Saint Trophime was the first stop on the Via Tolosa, one of the main pilgrimage routes through France leading to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The church was also the episcopal seat, or home to the bishop's chair, from the early fifth century until the early nineteenth century, giving this structure cathedral status.

Saint Trophime is Romanesque in style, as opposed to Gothic, and one way this can be seen is in the tell tale rounded arch of the front portal. Gothic structures tended to favor a tall pointed arch. Likewise, a heavy barrel vault covers the nave, as opposed to a pointed rib vault (which became a hallmark of Gothic architecture). It should be noted that the barrel vault at Saint Trophime is slightly pointed, perhaps hinting at the Gothic age to come.

Inside the Church

The interior, though not as decorative as the facade, is just as impressive. When visitors enter Saint Trophime, they are greeted by a high nave (the long central hall). In fact, standing 20 meters/65 feet high, this is the tallest nave in Provence and is equivalent to a six story building.



Figure 14.7.4. Nave (with clerestory and barrel vault) and aisle, Saint Trophime, Arles (photo: C. M. Bolli)

The nave is flanked by tall, narrow side aisles, which are covered by half-barrel vaults. Side aisles are fairly unusual in medieval Provençal churches, the tendency being toward single nave buildings. Because Saint Trophime was a cathedral at the time of its construction, it may have warrented a more complex and expansive design (at least in comparison to nearby parish churches).

The nave of Saint Trophime is composed of five bays and communicates with the side aisles via arcades that are slightly pointed like the main barrel vault. The elevation is a straightforward two-story design, consisting of an arcade and a clerestory (the upper portion of the wall pierced by windows).



Figure 14.7.5. Crossing Tower, Saint Trophime, Arles

Despite this, Saint Trophime is still rather dark, perhaps due its large size. The nave and aisles are crossed by a transept, which creates the plan's cruciform shape. There is a crossing tower above the intersection of the nave and trancept supported on squinches (support that help transition from the rectangular form of the bay up to the octagonal form of the tower), a common feature of Provençal churches.

This tower reaches a stately height of 60 meters—over 130 feet! The east end terminates in three semi-circular apses. The central apse and ambulatory was rebuilt in the fifteenth century, and therefore reflects a Gothic sensibility in its use of pointed arches and rib vaults. The remainder of the church is a true Romanesque gem.

A Regional Style

Provence, along with many other regions, developed its own unique Romanesque style. Saint Trophime is a wonderful representation of some of the facets of this Provençal regional style. For example, it is built of finely dressed ashlar masonry, meaning it uses precisely cut stones and little or no mortar. Given the number of stones needed to create this building, this was no

small feat! There would have been no speedy stone saws, only a mason's trusty chisel and mallet. Despite the time and labor involved, this was a common building practice in the area.

Many of these stones are emblazoned with prominent markings, often resembling letters of the alphabet. These are called mason's marks and were also common to local masonic practice. Mason's marks were used for a variety of purposes, including payment and placement of the stones.

The Sculpture Within

The interior of Saint Trophime is much more austere than the portal or cloister, another attribute typical to the Provençal Romanesque style. However, the interior of Saint Trophime is not without ornament.



Figure **14.7.6**. Cloister Capital, Saint Trophime, Arles

Of special note are the classically inspired Corinthian columns (fluted columns surmounted by a scroll and acanthus leaf capital) that can be found just below the springing of the main nave vault. There is also a stringcourse molding running the length of the nave just above the clerestory carved in an acanthus leaf pattern. Both the Corinthian column and the acanthus leaf molding were favorites of the ancient Romans.

Arles abounds with Roman ruins, including an arena, a theater and the remains of a bath complex. It is easy to see how local medieval builders may have been inspired by the Roman remains they would have seen daily.

Sculpture on the Portal: The Last Judgment

The portal tympanum (illustrated above) displays Christ in Majesty surrounded by the four apostles represented in symbolic form: John (eagle), Matthew (angel), Luke (ox), and Mark (lion). This is also known as the tetramorph. Those chosen for heaven, including bishops and priests, sit at Christ's right. At Christ's left stands an angel brandishing a sword, effectively blocking the damned from paradise. The condemned souls, with hellfire licking at their legs, seem to be taking their damnation in stride. The carving, exquisite though it may be, does not convey the same strong emotions present in some contemporaneous churches such as at Moissac.



Figure **14.7.7**. The Elect (blessed), Saint Trophime, Arles (photo: C. M. Bolli)



Figure **14.7.8**. Angel and Damned at the Gates of Heaven, Saint Trophime, Arles (photo: C. M. Bolli)

The Last Judgment and Second Coming are common subjects for Romanesque portals, particularly for those churches along the pilgrimage routes. The Saint Trophime version is notable in its overall stoicism despite the drama of the subject matter.

The portal is jam-packed with sculpture. There are a number of other biblical scenes included in addition to the Last Judgment, particularly from the early life of Christ. For example, if one looks at the lintel just to the right of the doorway, the Adoration of the Magi can be seen. Below those registers a host of saints, including Peter, Paul, Stephen and Trophime himself, glare into the middle distance, giving the viewer the sense that they too have been judged and been found wanting! The grand entranceway's symmetrical organization into clear registers gives it an orderly and uniform appearance, everlasting hellfire not withstanding.

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14.8: Last Judgment Tympanum

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Last Judgment Tympanum*, from the Central Portal on West facade of the Cathedral of St. Lazare.

A Note from Dr. Zucker: In the video, I state that Lazarus's sister is Mary Magdalene. This is not correct although his sister's name is indeed Mary (many thanks to IkarusZmedieval for pointing out the error). It is worth noting however that *The Golden Legend*, which would become available about a century later, but was based on earlier common beliefs, actually does conflate these two Marys (just as I did).



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Last Judgment Tympanum, Central Portal on West facade of the Cathedral of St. Lazare, Autun, c. 1130–46

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14.9: Virgin from Ger

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the *Virgin from Ger*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Virgin from Ger, second half of the twelfth century, wood, tempera, and stucco, 51.8 × 20.5 × 15.5 cm, From the parish church of Santa Coloma de Ger, Baixa Cerdanya (Museu Nacional d'Art de Cataunya Palau Nacional, Barcelona)

External Link

View this work up close in the Google Art Project.

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14.10: Historiated Capitals

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of historiated capitals from the crossing of the Church of Sant Miquel of the castle of Camarasa (Noguera).

A Note from Drs. Harris and Zucker: We use the word “prefiguration” in the video, referring to the Christian tradition of typology, the interpretion Old Testiment stories as foretelling those in the New. In this case, the story of Abraham and Isaac is used to anticipate God’s willingness to sacrifice his son Jesus Christ for mankind’s salvation.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Historiated capitals from the crossing of the Church of Sant Miquel of the castle of Camarasa (Noguera), early thirteenth century, stone, 77 × 1.65 × 77.5 cm (Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, Palau Nacional, Barcelona).

Genesis 22:1–13 (New International Version—UK)

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, Abraham! Here I am, he replied.
2 Then God said, Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.
3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.
4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.
5 He said to his servants, Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.
6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together,
7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, Father? Yes, my son? Abraham replied. The fire and wood are here, Isaac said, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?
8 Abraham answered, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together.
9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.
10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.
11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, Abraham! Abraham! Here I am, he replied.
12 Do not lay a hand on the boy, he said. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.
13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

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14.11: Painting- Wise and Foolish Virgins

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Circle of the Master of Pedret, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, south apse of the Epistle, Sant Quirze de Pedret, late eleventh century to the beginning of twelfth century, fresco transferred to canvas 325 × 315 × 320 cm (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona)

External Link

View this fresco up close in the Google Art Project

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14.12: Bayeux Tapestry

The BBC's David Dimbleby describes the historical significance of the Bayeux Tapestry for his forthcoming BBC One series, *Seven Ages of Britain*.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

The title "Bayeux Tapestry" is a bit of a misnomer—the textile is embroidered wool on linen, and not actually a woven tapestry. The wool was dyed using the plants Woad, Madder, and Rocket. The linen canvas measures 20 inches in height by 130 feet in length (50 cm × 70 m), and supports the narrative embroidery that tells of the Norman invasion of England—though very much from the Norman perspective.

The tapestry depicts Duke William of Normandy's conquest of Harold Godwinson—England's new and ill-fated King. The conquest is portrayed as fully justified, and Harold is represented as an opportunist who broke his oaths to Edward the Confessor, former King of England, and to William himself.

Although first known as William the "Bastard" (he was the illegitimate son of Robert the Magnificent and Herleva of Falaise), a name change accompanied his military success: he became known as William the "Conqueror." The Norman conquest is a key turning point in Western history, and the English language still reflects this dominance of French over Saxon culture.

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- The Bayeux Tapestry - Seven Ages of Britain - BBC One. **Authored by**: BBC. **Located at**: https://youtu.be/F8OPQ_28mdo. **License**: *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms**: Standard YouTube License

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14.13: Diagram of a Romanesque Portal



Click on the link below to view the website “Diagram of a Romanesque Portal” developed by Cal State LA. This site has an interactive diagram of a Romanesque portal, as well as an extensive photo library of the different features of these portals.

- Diagram of a Romanesque Portal

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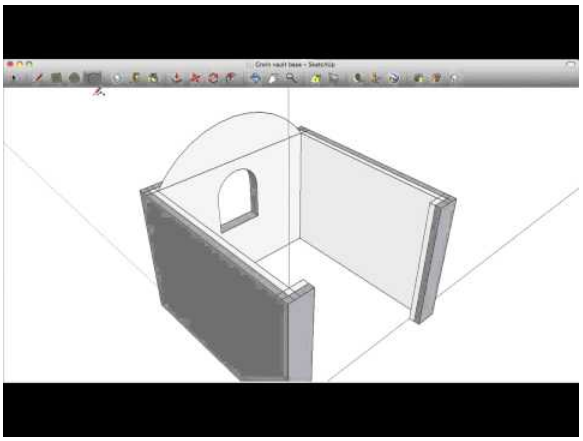
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14.14: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Explore the Bayeux Tapestry
- Saint-Sernin cathedral in Toulouse, France, ca. 1070-1120

Watch this video:



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Gothic Art

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts and terminology of Gothic art
- Investigate and apply the fundamental questions we ask when looking at art objects from this era
- Discuss, collaborate, and generate understanding as to the meaning of Gothic art
- Assess and evaluate the impact of Gothic art on the continued evolution of Western art

In this chapter, we will examine Gothic art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Gothic art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

15.1: Overview
15.2: Key Learning Items
15.3: St. Denis
15.4: Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres
15.5: Gothic Architecture
15.6: Southwell Minister
15.7: Salisbury Cathedral
15.8: Blanche of Castile
15.9: External Resources

Thumbnail: East end of Salisbury Cathedral

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15.1: Overview

In this chapter, we will examine Gothic art. We will look at how this art contributed to the larger development of Western art. It is imperative to understand Gothic art in order to see how it impacted later artistic developments.

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this module include:

- **Review:** Key Learning Items

Gothic Art

- **Watch:** St. Denis (5:17)
- **Watch:** Chartres (three videos—5:51, 3:24, and 9:04)
- **Read:** Gothic Architecture
- **Read:** Southwell Minister
- **Read:** Salisbury Cathedral
- **Read:** Blanche of Castile

Extra Review

- **Review:** External Resources

Assignments

- **Submit:** Module 15 Quiz (5 points)
- **Submit:** Unit 2 Scavenger Hunt (50 points)
- **Complete:** Exam 2

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15.2: Key Learning Items

Key Questions to Ask

While you are reviewing the content of this module, consider the following questions:

- What are the typical elements of a Gothic church?
- How did architecture change from the Romanesque to Gothic period?
- How was Chartres typical of the great Gothic cathedrals?
- What are the other major Gothic cathedrals?

Key Vocabulary Terms

- pointed arch
- clerestory
- tracery
- ribbed vault
- tierceron
- tower
- spire
- moralized Bible
- flying buttress

Here are links to art history glossaries that will help you better understand the above key vocabulary terms.

- ArtLex: Art Dictionary
- About.com: Art History
- Artcyclopedia: A Guide to Fine Art

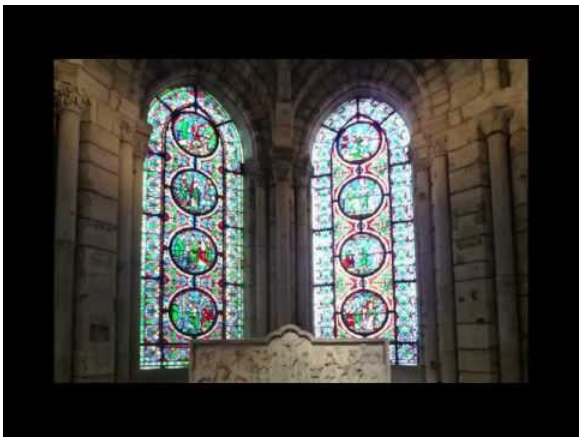
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15.3: St. Denis

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker provide a description, historical perspective, and analysis of the Ambulatory of the Basilica of Saint Denis.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Ambulatory, Basilica of Saint Denis, Paris, 1140–44.

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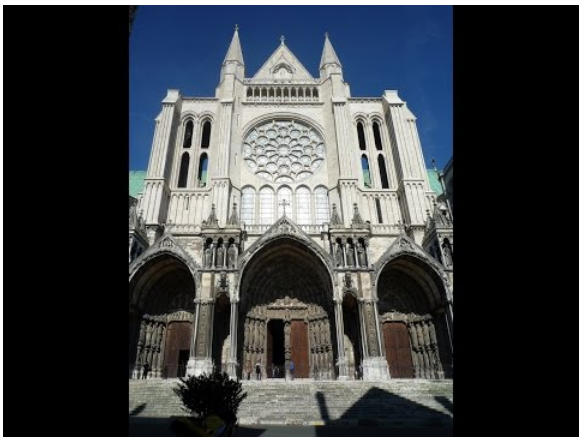
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15.4: Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres

The Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres was built in c.1145 and 1194–c.1220.

Part 1

This video focuses on the cathedral's pre-Gothic history, its sacred relic, and the westwerk's royal portal and jamb Figures



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Part 2

This video focuses on the cathedral's interior, its stained glass, nave, aisles, elevation, and choir



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

Part 3

This video focuses on the symbolism of light, the cathedral's flying buttresses, transept, the iconography of the north rose window, and the north porch and its sculptural program



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15.5: Gothic Architecture



Figure **15.5.1**. East end of Salisbury Cathedral

Forget the association of the word “Gothic” to dark, haunted houses, *Wuthering Heights*, or ghostly pale people wearing black nail polish and ripped fishnets. The original Gothic style was actually developed to bring sunshine into people’s lives, and especially into their churches. To get past the accrued definitions of the centuries, it’s best to go back to the very start of the word Gothic, and to the style that bears the name.

The Goths were a so-called barbaric tribe who held power in various regions of Europe, between the collapse of the Roman Empire and the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire (so, from roughly the fifth to the eighth century). They were not renowned for great achievements in architecture. As with many art historical terms, “Gothic” came to be applied to a certain architectural style after the fact.

The style represented giant steps away from the previous, relatively basic building systems that had prevailed. The Gothic grew out of the Romanesque architectural style, when both prosperity and peace allowed for several centuries of cultural development and great building schemes. From roughly 1000 to 1400, several significant cathedrals and churches were built, particularly in Britain and France, offering architects and masons a chance to work out ever more complex problems and daring designs.



Figure **15.5.2**. Nave ceiling in Southwell Minister

The most fundamental element of the Gothic style of architecture is the pointed arch, which was likely borrowed from Islamic architecture that would have been seen in Spain at this time. The pointed arch relieved some of the thrust, and therefore, the stress on other structural elements. It then became possible to reduce the size of the columns or piers that supported the arch.

So, rather than having massive, drum-like columns as in the Romanesque churches, the new columns could be more slender. This slimness was repeated in the upper levels of the nave, so that the gallery and clerestory would not seem to overpower the lower arcade. In fact, the column basically continued all the way to the roof, and became part of the vault.



Figure **15.5.3**. Salisbury Cathedral nave.

In the vault, the pointed arch could be seen in three dimensions where the ribbed vaulting met in the center of the ceiling of each bay. This ribbed vaulting is another distinguishing feature of Gothic architecture. However, it should be noted that prototypes for the pointed arches and ribbed vaulting were seen first in late-Romanesque buildings.

The new understanding of architecture and design led to more fantastic examples of vaulting and ornamentation, and the Early Gothic or Lancet style (from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) developed into the Decorated or Rayonnant Gothic (roughly fourteenth century). The ornate stonework that held the windows—called *tracery*—became more florid, and other stonework even more exuberant.



Figure **15.5.4**. Decorative carving in Southwell Minister

The ribbed vaulting became more complicated and was crossed with *lierne* ribs into complex webs, or the addition of cross ribs, called *tierceron*. As the decoration developed further, the Perpendicular or International Gothic took over (fifteenth century). Fan vaulting decorated half-conoid shapes extending from the tops of the columnar ribs.

The slender columns and lighter systems of thrust allowed for larger windows and more light. The windows, tracery, carvings, and ribs make up a dizzying display of decoration that one encounters in a Gothic church. In late Gothic buildings, almost every surface is decorated. Although such a building as a whole is ordered and coherent, the profusion of shapes and patterns can make a sense of order difficult to discern at first glance.



Figure **15.5.5**. (left) Lierne vaults at Gloucester Cathedral; (right) Window vaults at Gloucester Cathedral

After the great flowering of Gothic style, tastes again shifted back to the neat, straight lines and rational geometry of the Classical era. It was in the Renaissance that the name Gothic came to be applied to this medieval style that seemed vulgar to Renaissance sensibilities. It is still the term we use today, though hopefully without the implied insult, which negates the amazing leaps of imagination and engineering that were required to build such edifices.

Pictures taken from video footage by Richard Spanswick.

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15.6: Southwell Minister

Exemplary Architecture

Southwell Minster in Nottinghamshire, England, is not as famous as some of Britain's other great medieval churches, and neither is it as large. However, it presents superb examples of both Romanesque or Norman and Gothic architecture in a building that suffered little damage during the turbulent years of the British Reformation, Civil War, and World War II.

Construction of the current church building was begun circa 1108, and was essentially completed around 50 years later. The basic layout for churches at that time was the shape of a cross, with the east end as the top, the transepts making the crossing arm, and the nave as the longer extension at the bottom of the cross. The east end held the altar and choir, or quire, which were used by the clergy during daily masses. The nave was accessible to the lay community. Although medieval British churches are basically oriented east to west, they all vary slightly. When a new church was to be built, the patron saint was selected and the altar location laid out. On the saint's day, a line would be surveyed from the position of the rising sun through the altar site and extending in a westerly direction. This was the orientation of the new building.

In clerical terms, Southwell Minster is a cathedral; but rather than rummage in ecclesiastical definitions, this essay will look at the architectural styles.



Figure **15.6.1**. Southwell Minister



Figure **15.6.2**. The pulpitum and choir, looking west to the nave

On entering Southwell Minster, the sense of space feels logical and follows a well-defined and rhythmic order. The nave is in the Norman, or Romanesque, architectural style. It is delineated by simple rounded—Roman—stone arches springing from heavy round stone columns. The arcade on each side separates the nave from the side aisles, which allow people to move through the church to smaller side chapels. Above the first tier is a second arcade with smaller arches defining the gallery, and above that is another arcade—smaller still—which includes windows and is known as the clerestory. The ceiling of Southwell Minster is a wooden barrel vault.

The arches, column capitals, window surrounds, and portals are decorated with carved patterns that are geometric and straightforward. Although the material is stone, its lack of detailed texture gives it a plastic quality, especially when seen in some lights. The stone, Permian sandstone, has a warm cream color, while the heavy arches and massive walls impart a feeling of strength and permanence. This commanding style represented effective propaganda for William the Conqueror, who had invaded Britain in 1066 and imposed strong organizational systems in both the Church and government.

Transition from Norman to Gothic

The transepts are also in the Norman style, severe and blunt. But as you move further east and enter the quire, the uncomplicated architecture and decoration gives way to pointed arches and curlicue embellishments. The sense of moving to a different building and place are somewhat confusing at first, until you are fully inside the east end and find yourself enveloped in the Gothic style.

The original east end of Southwell, and of many other medieval cathedrals, was found to be too small once the building was completed, so the old east end was pulled down and replaced with a larger extension in the latest fashion. Although the new east end was built within roughly one hundred years of the original building, architecture had moved on quickly. Now the arches were pointed at the top, and the decoration was more and more ornate. Structurally, new techniques allowed for larger windows than were possible in the Romanesque idiom.

Prebendary Seats of Stone



Figure **15.6.2**. Entrance to the Chapter House

The Chapter House, begun circa 1300, is accessible from the north transept, and was the meeting hall of the original *prebends* (a clergy member drawing a stipend from Anglican church revenues) associated with the minster. Each prebend, who would have held certain responsibilities for his area of the diocese, had a stone seat on the wall of the chapter house. Each seat alcove is topped with decorated trefoil arches and a variety of leaves. The “Leaves of Southwell” have been documented as some of the best medieval stone carvings in England, and represent oak, ivy, hawthorn, grape, hops, and other flora.

Because the Southwell Chapter House is relatively small, it does not require a center column to support the roof as a larger area would. The octagonal room is topped by a vault carried not only on ribs that reach to the center, but also on cross ribs that span between the main ribs. These intermediate ribs are known as *tiercerons*, and signify a further development into the more complex and decorated vaults that are an integral part of the English Decorated and Perpendicular Gothic styles.

History and Presence

As a whole or in its individual parts, Southwell Minster is a brilliant example of medieval architecture in England and its rapid development over 200 years. The building has suffered relatively little damage or major alteration over its thousand-year life. Indeed, part of its appeal is its architectural integrity, as well as the fact that it is a living (i.e., still in use) building.

As the years have passed, new decoration has been added that reflects a functioning parish community—a baptismal font from 1661, stained glass windows from various centuries, a modern sculpture of Christus Rex from the twentieth century. The church is not overrun with tourists, but is still very much a local parish with an active congregation that continues to use the building, ring the bells, and weave the ties of history into twenty-first century life.

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15.7: Salisbury Cathedral

The Biggest and the Highest

There are so many superlatives consorting with the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Salisbury: it has the tallest spire in Britain (404 feet); it houses the best preserved of the four surviving original copies of the Magna Carta (1215 CE); it has the oldest working clock in Europe (1386 CE); it has the largest cathedral cloisters and cathedral close in Britain; the choir (or quire) stalls are the largest and earliest complete set in Britain; the vault is the highest is Britain. Bigger, better, best—and built in a mere 38 years, roughly from 1220 to 1258, which is a pretty short construction schedule for a large stone building made without motorized equipment.



Figure **15.7.1**. The Nave, Transepts and North Door from the East

One factor that enabled Salisbury Cathedral to become so extraordinary is that it was the first major cathedral to be built on an unobstructed site. The architect and clerics were able to conceive a design and lay it out exactly as they wanted. Construction was carried out in one campaign, giving the complex a cohesive motif and singular identity. The cloisters were started as a purely decorative feature only five years after the cathedral building was completed, with shapes, patterns, and materials that copy those of the cathedral interior.

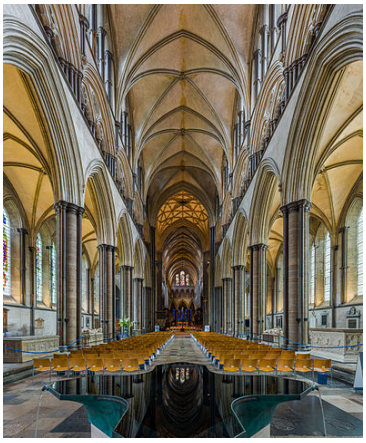


Figure **15.7.2**. The Nave

It was an ideal opportunity in the development of Early English Gothic architecture, and Salisbury Cathedral made full use of the new techniques of this emerging style. Pointed arches and lancet shapes are everywhere, from the prominent west windows to the painted arches of the east end. The narrow piers of the cathedral were made of cut stone rather than rubble-filled drums, as in earlier buildings, which changed the method of distributing the structure's weight and allowed for more light in the interior. The piers are decorated with slender columns of dark gray Purbeck marble, which reappear in clusters and as stand-alone supports in the arches of the triforium, clerestory, and cloisters. The triforium and cloisters repeat the same patterns of plate tracery—basically stone cut-out shapes—of quatrefoils, cinquefoils, even hexafoils and octofoils. Proportions are uniform throughout.

One deviation from the typical Gothic style is the way the lower arcade level of the nave is cut off by a string course that runs between it and the triforium. In most churches of this period, the columns or piers stretch upwards in one form or another all the way to the ceiling or vault. Here at Salisbury the arcade is merely an arcade, and the effect is more like a layer cake with the upper tiers sitting on top of rather than extending from the lower level.

The Tower and the Spire



Figure **15.7.3**. View of the spire from the cloisters.

The original design called for a fairly ordinary square crossing tower of modest height. But in the early part of the 14th century, two stories were added to the tower, and then the pointed spire was added in 1330. The spire is the most readily identified feature of the cathedral and is visible for miles. However, the addition of this landmark tower and spire added over 6,000 tons of weight to the supporting structure. Because the building had not been engineered to carry the extra weight, additional buttressing was required internally and externally. The transepts now sport masonry girders, or strainer arches, to support the weight. Not surprisingly, the spire has never been straight and now tilts to the southeast by about 27 inches.

Restorations

Over the centuries the cathedral has been subject to well-intentioned, but heavy-handed restorations by later architects such as James Wyatt and Sir George Gilbert Scott, who tried to conform the building to contemporary tastes. Therefore, the interior has lost some of its original decoration and furnishings, including stained glass and small chapels, and new things have been added. This is pretty typical, though, of a building that is several centuries old. Fortunately, the regularity and clean lines of the cathedral have not been tampered with. It is still refined, polished, and generally easy on the eye.

Sunlight

Although it inspires the usual awe felt in such a grand and substantial building, and is as pretty as a wedding cake, it has had some criticism from art historians: Nikolaus Pevsner and Harry Batsford both disliked the west front, with its encrustation of statues and "variegated pettiness" (Batsford). John Ruskin, the Victorian art critic and writer, found the building "profound and gloomy." Indeed, in gray weather, the monochromatic scheme of Chilmark stone and Purbeck marble is just gray upon gray.

However, the cathedral has a widely changing character of neutral tones; sunlight transforms the building, and the visitor's experience of it. This very quality is what made the Gothic style so revolutionary—the ability to get sunlight into a large building with massive stone walls. Windows are everywhere, and when the light streams through the clerestory arches and the enormous west window, the interior turns from drear gray to transcendent gold.

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15.8: Blanche of Castile



Figure **15.8.1**. *Blanche of Castile and King Louis IX of France; Author Dictating to a Scribe*, Moralized Bible, France, probably Paris, c. 1230, 14 3/4 × 10 1/4 inches / 37.5 × 26.2 cm (The Morgan Library & Museum)

In 1226 a French king died, leaving his queen to rule his kingdom until their son came of age. The 38-year-old widow, Blanche of Castile, had her work cut out for her. Rebelling barons were eager to win back lands that her husband's father had seized from them. They rallied troops against her, defamed her character, and even accused her of adultery and murder.

Caught in a perilous web of treachery, insurrections, and open warfare, Blanche persuaded, cajoled, negotiated, and fought would-be enemies after her husband, King Louis VIII, died of dysentery after only a three-year reign. When their son Louis IX took the helm in 1234, he inherited a kingdom that was, for a time anyway, at peace.

External Link

View this painting up close in the Google Art Project.

A Manuscript Illumination

A dazzling illumination in New York's Morgan Library could well depict Blanche of Castile and her son Louis, a beardless youth crowned king. A cleric and a scribe are depicted underneath them. Each Figure is set against a ground of burnished gold, seated beneath a trefoil arch. Stylized and colorful buildings dance above their heads, suggesting a sophisticated, urban setting—perhaps Paris, the capital city of the Capetian kingdom (the Capetians were one of the oldest royal families in France) and home to a renowned school of theology.

A Moralized Bible

This last page the New York Morgan Library's manuscript MS M 240 is the last quire (folded page) of a three-volume moralized bible, the majority of which is housed at the Cathedral Treasury in Toledo, Spain. Moralized bibles, made expressedly for the French royal house, include lavishly illustrated abbreviated passages from the Old and New Testaments. Explanatory texts that allude to historical events and tales accompany these literary and visual readings, which—woven together—convey a moral.

Assuming historians are correct in identifying the two rulers, we are looking at the four people intensely involved in the production of this manuscript. As patron and ruler, Queen Blanche of Castile would have financed its production. As ruler-to-be, Louis IX's job was to take its lessons to heart along with those from the other biblical and ancient texts that his tutors read with him.



Figure 15.8.2. Louis IX, a trefoiled open crown atop his head, returns his mother's glance. In his right hand he holds a scepter, indicating his kingly status. It is topped by the characteristic fleur-de-lys on which, curiously, a bird sits. A four-pedaled brooch, dominated by a large square of sapphire blue in the center, secures a pink mantle lined with green that rests on his boyish shoulders.

In the upper register, an enthroned king and queen wear the traditional medieval open crown topped with fleur-de-lys—a stylized iris or lily symbolizing a French monarch's religious, political, and dynastic right to rule. The blue-eyed queen, left, is veiled in a white widow's wimple. An ermine-lined blue mantle drapes over her shoulders. Her pink T-shaped tunic spills over a thin blue edge of paint which visually supports these enthroned Figures. A slender green column divides the queen's space from that of her son, King Louis IX, to whom she deliberately gestures across the page, raising her left hand in his direction. Her pose and animated facial expression suggest that she is dedicating this manuscript, with its lessons and morals, to the young king.

In his left hand, between his forefinger and thumb, Louis holds a small golden ball or disc. During the mass that followed coronations, French kings and queens would traditionally give the presiding bishop of Reims 13 gold coins (all French kings were crowned in this northern French cathedral town.) This could reference Louis' 1226 coronation, just three weeks after his father's death, suggesting a probable date for this bible's commission. A manuscript this lavish, however, would have taken eight to ten years to complete—perfect timing, because in 1235, the 21-year-old Louis was ready to assume the rule of his Capetian kingdom from his mother.



Figure 15.8.3. Coronation of the Virgin, tympanum of central portal, north transept, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1204–10

A Link between Earth and Heaven

Queen Blanche and her son, the young king, echo a gesture and pose that would have been familiar to many Christians: the Virgin Mary and Christ enthroned side-by-side as celestial rulers of heaven, found in the numerous Coronations of the Virgin carved in ivory, wood, and stone. This scene was especially prevalent in tympana, the top sculpted semi-circle over cathedral portals found throughout France. On beholding the Morgan illumination, viewers would have immediately made the connection between this

earthly Queen Blanche and her son, anointed by God with the divine right to rule, and that of Mary, Queen of heaven and her son, divine Figures who offer salvation.

A Cleric and an Artist

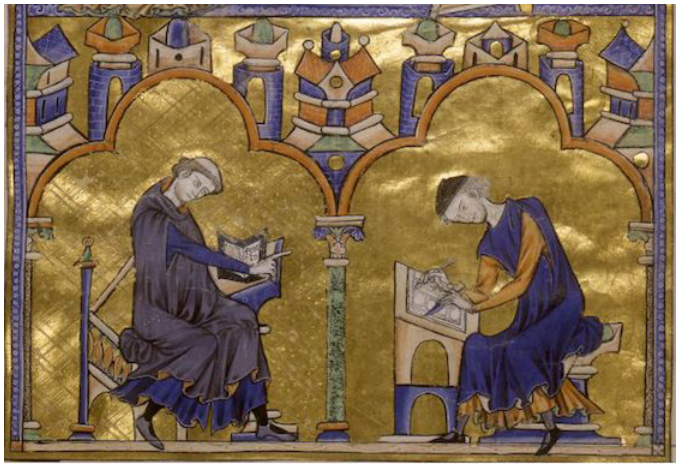


Figure 15.8.4. The illumination's bottom register depicts a tonsured cleric (churchman with a partly shaved head), left, and an illuminator, on the right. The artist dons a blue surcoat, wears a cap, and is seated on cushioned bench.

The cleric wears a sleeveless cloak appropriate for divine services—this is an educated man—and emphasizes his role as a scholar. He tilts his head forward and points his right forefinger at the artist across from him, as though giving instructions. No clues are given as to this cleric's religious order, as he probably represents the many Parisian theologians responsible for the manuscript's visual and literary content—all of whom were undoubtedly told to spare no expense.

Knife in his left hand and stylus in his right, he looks down at his work: four vertically-stacked circles in a left column, with part of a fifth visible on the right. We know, from the 4887 medallions that precede this illumination, what's next on this artist's agenda: he will apply a thin sheet of gold leaf onto the background, and then paint the medallion's biblical and explanatory scenes in brilliant hues of lapis lazuli, green, red, yellow, grey, orange and sepia.

Advice for a King

Blanche undoubtedly hand-picked the theologians whose job it was to establish this manuscript's guidelines, select biblical passages, write explanations, hire copyists, and oversee the images that the artists should paint. Art and text, mutually dependent, spelled out advice that its readers, Louis IX and perhaps his siblings, could practice in their enlightened rule. The nobles, church officials, and perhaps even common folk who viewed this page could be reassured that their ruler had been well trained to deal with whatever calamities came his way.

This thirteenth century illumination, both dazzling and edifying, represents the cutting edge of lavishness in a society that embraced conspicuous consumption. As a pedagogical tool, perhaps it played no small part in helping Louis IX achieve the status of sainthood, awarded by Pope Bonifiace VIII 27 years after the king's death. This and other images in the bible moralisée explain why Parisian illuminators monopolized manuscript production at this time. Look again at the work. Who else could compete against such a resounding image of character and grace?

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15.9: External Resources

Check out these websites for more information:

- Virtual Tour of Amiens Cathedral
- Virtual Tour of Chartres Cathedral
- Stained Glass in Medieval Europe

Watch these videos:



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanesque_architecture

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Hadrian’s villa
9.4: Hadrian’s Villa

N

Narmer Palette
4.3: Ancient Egypt

Nike of Samothrace
6.7: Nike of Samothrace

terracotta	a type of ceramic also called earthenware

Glossary

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

Detailed Licensing

Overview

Title: Art History I (Lumen)

Webpages: 215

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