

# Art History/20th Century

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**The twentieth century has seen huge changes in the modes and meanings of artistic production that mirror the enormous social changes that have occurred during the same time period. Continuing with the break with the academic values such as the hierarchy of genres, many movements and many countries re-evaluated aesthetics, technique, color, media, meaning, and many other aspects of artistic enterprise. Technology has had not only an indirect impact on artists, but often is the subject matter, or even the media that artists have worked with.**

The Impressionists, at the end of the nineteenth century, who championed landscape painting and revolutionized technique and use of color helped to open the floodgates for many more movements (not all of which identified themselves as such). The Secession movement, Fauvism, Cubism, Expressionism, Futurism, Dada, Suprematism, Surrealism, The Bauhaus, De Stijl, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Op Art, Minimalism, and the Postmodern are some of the major movements that have shaped the century and changed our very conceptions of what art is.

## Secessionist movement

The Secessionist movement was the Austrian branch of a larger movement known primarily as Art Nouveau ("new art"). Depending on the country, the style is also known as Jugendstil (Germany), Style Liberty (Italy), Modernisme (Spain), or Latvian Romanticism. Art Nouveau is an umbrella term but also refers to works of this style produced in France and Belgium. Art Nouveau has its roots in the English Arts and Crafts style of the 19th century; in fact, certain artists, like Charles Rennie Mackintosh, work in both styles. The purpose of Art Nouveau was to create what is known as a complete work of art - a work that includes painting, drawing and printmaking as well as applied arts and architecture. For this reason, some of the most beautiful and informative Art Nouveau works are complete rooms or houses where every object within is executed in Art Nouveau style. Art Nouveau is characterized by free-flowing floral, vegetal, and other typically feminine motifs. It also features a kind of romantic mysticism that can be traced back to the Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist movements of the 19th century. Some well-known Art Nouveau artists and craftsmen include Alphonse Mucha (Czech), an accomplished printmaker and painter; Antoni Gaudí (Spanish), whose architectural works dot Barcelona; Hector Guimard (French), whose wrought-iron entrances for the Paris metro have become his legacy; Gustav Klimt (Austrian), who led the Austrian Secessionists with his opulent and complex paintings; and Louis Comfort Tiffany (American), who is well-known for his distinctive stained-glass work.

## Fauvism

Fauvism, whose name derives from the French word for "wild beast," was a Primitivist movement centered in Paris in the first decade of the 20th century. The most well-known Fauvist artists are Henri Matisse and André Derain. The large blocks of color and simplified forms Fauvist artists used undoubtedly influenced the Cubist movement, which overlapped Fauvism by a few years.

## Cubism

The Father of Cubism is said to be Cézanne. Pablo Picasso, a Spanish artist, who had many phases in his long career, picked up the gauntlet of Cubism. His famous "Demoiselles d'Avignon" of 1907, housed in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, depicts five nude women, possibly prostitutes, in an interior. The painting is primitivistic - Picasso synthesized his well-documented interest in African masks into the faces of the figures. The fragmentation and flattening of the figures also anticipates the development of analytical Cubism a few years later. One of the Spaniard's most socio-political cubist paintings is "Guernica" of 1937, his grey, black and white portrait of the horrors of war. The Basque town of Guernica was bombed by the German Luftwaffe on April 26, 1937.[1]

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Another founding member of the Cubist movement was Georges Braque, a French artist whose analytical Cubist work from the 1910s is quite similar to Picasso's. Braque and Picasso worked together closely, and Braque's influence on Picasso (and vice versa) should not be downplayed. Other major artists of the analytical Cubist movement include Juan Gris, whose interest in mathematics made his art more regularized, and less fragmented, than Picasso's; Marcel Duchamp, whose early, pre-readymade works such as "Nude Descending a Staircase" are highly fragmented and undeniably Cubist; Jean Metzinger; and Albert Gleizes.

## Futurism

Futurism was an Italian movement in the 1920s that was based on a fascination with movement, technology, and machinery.

## Postmodernism

Postmodern artist Barbara Kruger is known for critical images inspired by commercial advertising. She is the author of several books. "Love for Sale" shows Kruger's blown up photographic black and white images with text in a red box superimposed creating a new meaning for the viewer. Kruger taught at the Art Institute and Cal Arts during the 70s. Kruger's work often focuses on feminist issues. Kruger's Whitney Biennial 2'x3' work, enlarged as she tackled billboards in the US and other countries. She was the subject of a lecture given at the 3rd Annual Conference of the Society of the Word and Image at Carleton University in Ontario, Canada in 1993.

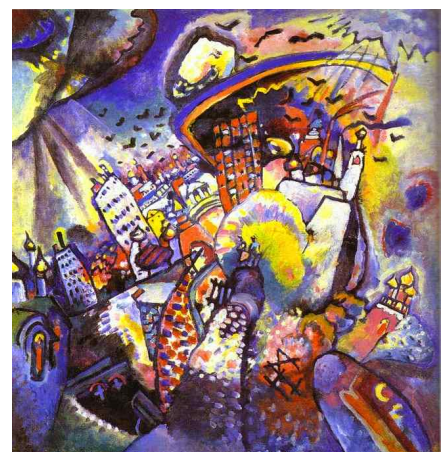
## Abstract Expressionism

A school of painting that flourished after World War II until the early 1960s, characterized by the view that art is nonrepresentational and chiefly improvisational.

Abstract art is defined as art that has no reference to any figurative reality. In its wider definition the term describes art that depicts real forms in a simplified or rather reduced way - keeping only an allusion of the original natural subject. The abstract paintings of Joan Miró are a good example of this wider definition. The term non-figurative is used as a synonym.

In the twentieth century Wassily Kandinsky is considered as the inventor of non-figurative art. Over a period of several years his paintings moved gradually away from figurative subjects. In 1910 he created the first completely abstract work of art - a watercolor - without any reference to reality. Wassily Kandinsky not only became the first abstract artist, he also promoted it as a theorist. In 1912 his book *On the Spiritual in Art* was published.

A movement of abstract painting that emerged in New York City during the mid-1940s and attained singular prominence in American art in the following decade; also called action painting and the New York school. Jackson Pollock's turbulent yet elegant abstract paintings, which were created by spattering paint on huge canvases placed on the floor, brought abstract expressionism before a hostile public. Willem de Kooning's first one-man show in 1948 established him as a highly influential artist. Other important artists involved with the movement included Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, and Mark Rothko; among other major abstract expressionists were such painters as Clyfford Still, Theodoros Stamos, Adolph Gottlieb, Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krasner, and Esteban Vicente.



Moscow I by Kandinsky (1916)

## References

- [1] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing\\_of\\_Guernica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Guernica)

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