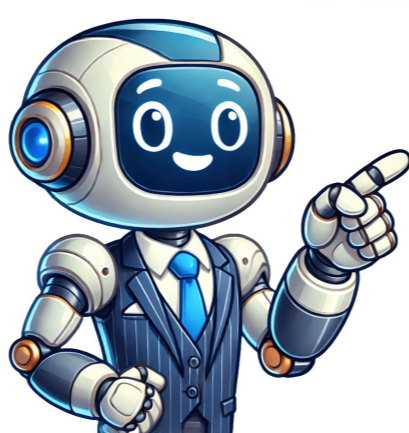


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When did art start

Art history spans over 30,000 years, featuring various styles and movements that give us insight into the past. By examining art from different eras, we can gain a deeper understanding of the people who created it and the cultures they belonged to. The timeline of art history takes us on a journey through ancient civilizations, classical periods, and modern times, showcasing diverse artistic expressions. Ancient art encompasses creations from around 30,000 B.C.E. to 400 A.D., including fertility statuettes, bone flutes, and other prehistoric artworks. This period also saw the emergence of civilizations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and early Chinese dynasties, each contributing their unique styles and purposes. The medieval period, spanning from 400 to 1400 A.D., is often referred to as the "Dark Ages." Art during this time was characterized by formalized religion, brutal scenes, or a focus on decoration. However, it also saw significant transitions in style, including the Byzantine and Early Christian periods, as well as the rise of illuminated manuscripts and Gothic architecture. The Renaissance period, covering 1400 to 1880 A.D., is notable for its Italian artists, such as Brunelleschi, Donatello, Botticelli, and Alberti. This era marked a significant shift in art, emphasizing humanism and realism. As we continue through the timeline of art history, we find ourselves in the midst of contemporary art movements from the 1970s to the present day. As the centuries went by, Western Art evolved rapidly from High Renaissance onwards, with notable figures like Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael making their mark. Meanwhile, in Northern Europe, various schools such as Antwerp Mannerism and The Little Masters emerged, while in China, the Ming and Qing Dynasties took place, and Japan witnessed the Momoyama and Edo Periods. This period also saw distinct art forms develop in the Americas, particularly among the Aztecs and Incas. The significance of artworks cannot be fully understood without understanding the timeline of art history and the major periods that shaped it. This article provides an overview of the most significant eras of creation and their historical contexts. It's astonishing that our understanding of art periods still relies heavily on a timeline that ends 30 years ago. The concept of distinct eras seems insufficient to encapsulate the diverse artistic styles emerging since the dawn of the 21st century. Many art historians feel that traditional painting has lost its relevance in today's fast-paced digital era, but it would be premature to dismiss the value of traditional mediums. Art continues to serve as a unique platform for expressing human experiences, just like our ancient ancestors did outside the confines of modern classification. A Deeper Dive into Art Eras As we delve deeper into the social, cultural, and historical contexts of each art era, it becomes apparent how many periods draw inspiration from those that came before them. Art, much like human consciousness, is constantly evolving. It's also essential to note that this timeline primarily focuses on Western and European art. The Byzantine Era (330 - 1453) During the Byzantine period, there was a surge in religious art production, influenced by the Christianization of Greek culture and Roman Empire art styles. This era began around 330 CE and lasted until 1453. Key themes included scenes from Greek mythology and Christian literature. The Byzantine art period can be divided into three distinct periods: Early Byzantine, Middle Byzantine, and Late Byzantine. Byzantine painting featured angular contours, flat colors, and a distinctive gold backdrop. These styles permeated architecture, mosaics, interior decor, and religious buildings as reminders of the Christian faith, which emphasized "the path to salvation." Centers like Constantinople served as hubs for artistic expression due to their significance in the Byzantine Empire and Catholic Church. The Romanesque Period (1000 - 1300) Historians typically consider the Romanesque era as the starting point for the art history timeline. This period emerged during the rise of Christianity around 1000 CE, a time when only a small percentage of Europeans were literate. To disseminate biblical messages, ministers turned to alternative methods, such as art. Following the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE, art shifted from classical styles to focus on Christian themes. Romanesque paintings exclusively featured Christian objects, stories, deities, saints, and ceremonies, aimed at educating the masses about Christian values and beliefs. The Romanesque art style emphasized simplicity and symbolic representation, with bold contours and clean colors. Artists employed various mediums, including wall frescoes, mosaics, panel paintings, and book paintings, often conveying Christian themes and emotions. In contrast, Gothic art emerged as a response to the era's contradictory feelings of freedom and fear. As individuals sought new levels of understanding, paintings became more diverse, focusing on human subjects and everyday life scenes. The development of realistic human faces, three-dimensional perspectives, and attention to personal details reflect this shift towards individualism. The emergence of faith in the church led to a divergence in artistic expression outside its walls. By the end of the Gothic era, artworks by masters like Hieronymus Bosch and Breughel were deemed unsuitable for placement within churches, indicating a shift towards a more secular focus. The Romanesque period saw fewer identifiable artists, as art was prioritized over individual creators. In contrast, the Gothic period witnessed an influx of known artists, including Giotto di Bondone. As schools of art began to form in various European regions, the Renaissance era (1420-1520) brought forth a cultural rebirth centered around humanism. Artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci drew inspiration from ancient Roman and Greek philosophies, revitalizing classical ideals. The Renaissance also saw significant advancements in sculpture, particularly through Donatello's work inspired by Classical forms. The period witnessed a renewed focus on the natural world, with artists employing three-dimensional perspective to create realistic human representations. Michelangelo's statue of David exemplified this technique, as did his contemporaries' paintings, which incorporated frescoes from ancient civilizations. The shift towards oil paint also characterized the Renaissance, paving the way for great Dutch landscape paintings. The Mannerist era (1520-1600) revealed a more complex and nuanced approach to art, though some pieces may be perceived as kitsch today due to their artificiality and commercialism. However, not all artworks from this period fit modern notions of kitsch, offering a glimpse into the evolving nature of artistic expression during this time. Instead, what characterizes the art of this period as kitsch is the over-exaggeration that dominated it. Following the Renaissance, artists began to showcase their unique styles, leading to a proliferation of elaborate and intricate works. Even Michelangelo, renowned for his grandeur, was not immune to this trend, with some of his later paintings being seen as deviating from traditional Renaissance styles. The expression of human emotions, gestures, and clothing in mannerist art was amplified, resulting in an unnatural, distorted representation of the human form. This style drew artists from across Europe to Italy, where it first emerged. The Baroque Era (1590 - 1760): Exalting Human Ambition and Grandeur This period saw a shift towards celebrating humanity's achievements over divine power. Kings, princes, and even popes sought to showcase their authority through art, leading to an increase in grandiose and unrealistic depictions. The exaggeration present in Mannerism persisted, with paintings featuring scenes of monarchs ascending to heaven, mingling with angels, and basking in divine glory. New materials like gold and marble became prized for sculptures, emphasizing wealth and status. Art academies proliferated, as art became a means to display one's power and prestige. The use of light and dark contrasts, warm and cold colors, and symbols of good and evil were amplified beyond natural proportions. Prominent artists of the Baroque period, such as Caravaggio and Rembrandt, further emphasized human grandeur through their striking use of chiaroscuro. The Rococo Art Period (1725 - 1780): A Reflection of French Aristocracy Characterized by the French word "rocaille," meaning shellwork, this era produced paintings typical of the French aristocracy. The solid forms and ornate details that defined this style reflect the opulence and excess of the time. The Rococo period was characterized by a shift from strong and powerful paintings to light and playful ones, featuring lighter colors that were often almost transparent. This era's art neglected religious themes, instead focusing on the shepherd's idyl, symbolizing life as carefree and without economic or social hardship. In contrast to this, the Classicism period emerged in France around 1770, marked by a return to classical styles of artistic expression inspired by Roman and Greek art. Classicist paintings were strict, with two-dimensional colors and human figures, losing symbolism in the process. The Classicism era produced art that was used internationally to instill patriotism in nations, including works by Louis-Sieze, Empire, and Biedermeier. The Romanticism period, occurring around the same time as Classicism, was an emotionally charged reaction against its stern nature. Romantic paintings focused on the exploration of emotions and the subconscious, often inspired by the natural environment. The art of the Romantic era lacked a tangible style, with English and French painters emphasizing shadows and lights, while German painters tended to have more serious, thoughtful works. Critics mocked some Romantic painters for their interpretations of the world, but this movement's focus on emotions and nature paved the way for later styles. Realism emerged as a reaction against Romanticism, presenting both the good and evil aspects of reality without embellishment. Realist artists sought to show the world in its true form, with a focus on truth over subjective interpretation. This era saw works by Gustave Courbet, who emphasized the "obligation of art into truth." Impressionist artists challenged traditional techniques, favoring spontaneous brushstrokes and vibrant colors over realistic representations. Historians often credit Impressionism with ushering in the modern era, marking a significant departure from Classical art forms. Characterized by artists like Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh, Impressionism emphasized capturing fleeting moments of natural light and color. Initially met with skepticism, Impressionist paintings were seen as lacking technique. However, this movement introduced new methods of applying paint, such as Pointillism, and led to a focus on expressive brushstrokes and abstract compositions. En plein-air painting allowed artists to capture the nuances of the natural world. This shift also marked a move away from teaching art to create solely for artistic expression. Post-Impressionism emerged as an art movement focused on deep symbolism rather than literal representation of natural appearances. Notable artists associated with this style include Paul Gauguin, Georges Seurat, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Cézanne. Their works exhibit similarities that diverge from traditional Impressionist norms, imbuing the atmosphere with a stronger emotional resonance. Although each artist had their unique approach, many utilized innovative techniques that distinguished them from others in the art world of early 20th century. The influence of post-Impressionism can be seen in Fauvism, as artists like Henri Matisse drew inspiration from renowned post-Impressionists such as Paul Signac and John Russell. Art Nouveau, which spanned from 1890 to 1910, is characterized by its use of soft curves, florals, and stylized human figures, as seen in Gustav Klimt's works. In contrast, Expressionism emerged in Germany, emphasizing the expression of subjective feelings and criticism of power. This movement often featured a sense of aggression and archaic expressiveness, as seen in the works of Wassily Kandinsky. The Cubist movement, led by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, rejected traditional representation, instead fragmenting objects into geometric shapes to present multiple perspectives simultaneously. The early 20th century saw a proliferation of innovative art movements that challenged traditional norms and pushed the boundaries of what was considered "art". Futurism, founded by Tommaso Marinetti, emerged as a militant movement rejecting classical values and embracing chaos, hostility, and aggression. Painting became a prominent form within this era, with artists like Juan Gris creating influential works. Futurism's emphasis on illogic and provocation gave rise to Dadaism, an anti-war movement that questioned existing norms and values. This era saw the emergence of conceptual art, paving the way for later modern movements. Dadaist principles also influenced the development of action art, where painting became a fusion of social, cultural, and subjective elements. In 1913, Constructivism emerged in Russia with Vladimir Tatlin's abstract paintings, influencing the development of abstract modern art. This movement involved arranging geometric forms harmoniously, rejecting bright colors and expanding on earlier styles like Suprematism. The conceptual theory behind Constructivism was shaped by Jean Piaget's work on human knowledge creation. Constructivist artists utilized bold typography and photomontages with minimal color palettes, having a profound impact on design and architecture. This era saw a shift from political to aesthetic concerns, laying the groundwork for future artistic innovations. Throughout the 1920s, a dynamic design style emerged, with Kazimir Malevich coining the term "Constructivist" to describe Alexander Rodchenko's work. This period also saw the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural rebirth in African-American communities that showcased intellectual and artistic expression through various mediums like music, literature, visual art, poetry, politics, dance, and fashion. The movement, which spanned from 1920 to 1930, is also known as the New Negro Movement, emphasizing the Black experience from a non-Western perspective. It fostered political activism that later influenced movements such as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s. Surrealism emerged during this time, focusing on subconscious realities and critiques of societal norms. This movement was characterized by artists painting directly from their dreams and dealing with uncomfortable concepts, desires, and taboos. Salvador Dalí's work is iconic in this regard, particularly his painting "Melting Watch" (1954). The New Objectivity movement that followed focused on themes of social and political critique, often featuring cold, unemotional, and technical images such as radios and lightbulbs. This style was a response to the turmoil of war, seeking order and stability through art. Finally, Abstract Expressionism emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, moving away from European influences and focusing on individual expression through color, gesture, and texture. This movement marked a significant shift in Modern art, redefining representation, visual aesthetics, and postwar culture. Abstract Expressionism emerged post-WWII, with American artists embracing abstract approaches to convey emotion. This movement was the first outside Europe, focusing on color-field and action paintings. Artists like Marc Tobey and Jackson Pollock pioneered this style, characterized by thick paint applications creating unique pieces. Critics called it "un-American" during the Cold War. Pop Art (1955-1969) saw artists treat everything as art, from advertisements to toilets. Characterized by uniform blocks of color and clear lines, it was influenced by Photorealism and serial prints. David Hockney and Andy Warhol were iconic figures in this movement, inspired by popular culture and Hollywood's finest. Neo-Expressionism (1980-1989) emerged in the 1980s with large-format representational paintings depicting cities and big-city life. Berlin was a hub for this movement, which drew inspiration from Fauvism. Although some artists continued to paint in this style in New York after the movement disbanded in 1989, Neo-Expressionism's impact on modern art remains significant. Throughout history, art has been a fundamental part of human expression, capturing troubles and joys. This summary provides insight into the contexts surrounding famous artworks. We've also created a web story about art periods for further exploration. The art movement is distinct from the art period, as periods are categorized by time and era, whereas movements are intentionally created by artists with a shared philosophy. In contrast to periods, which encompass various styles and can be broader categories, movements are characterized by their own unique ideologies. The current art period is known as Contemporary, spanning from the late-1970s to the present day, reflecting globalized and technological advancements. The term "Divisionism" encompasses various art movements, including Abstract Expressionism, De Stijl, Lyrical Abstraction, Rayonism, and Suprematism. Op Art and Minimalism from the 1960s and 1970s are also part of this category, often regarded as the final modern art movement. This period's legacy extends into Contemporary Art and overlaps with Post-Modern Art. Additionally, information is provided on Stuckism, a movement that emphasizes painting and opposes conceptual art.

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