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Art Past
Art Present

FOURTH EDITION

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Getting Started



SULTAN MUHAMMAD

THE FEAST OF SADEH AND THE DISCOVERY OF FIRE BY THE PERSIAN KING HUSHANG, from the *Tahmasp Shah-nameh*. c. 1520–25. Manuscript illumination, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{8}$ ".

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Persian national epic, the *Shah-nameh*, was originally composed by the poet Firdawsi between 975 and 1010. This *Shah-nameh*, which contains 258 miniatures, was created in the royal studios in the Persian capital at Tabriz. Commissioned by Shah Isma'il and his son Tahmasp. For further information see fig. 6-63.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART,
GIFT OF ARTHUR A. HOUGHTON, JR.



PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER

PEASANT WEDDING FEAST. c. 1566. Oil on wood, $3'8\frac{7}{8}'' \times 5'4\frac{1}{8}''$. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The bride is the smug woman seated in front of the suspended cloth with a crown above her head. To either side are the groom and the couple's parents. To the right, a priest is in conversation with a distinguished-looking man who probably represents the landowner for whom these peasants worked. For further information, see fig. 6-62.

Why Art Past/Art Present?

Art Past/Art Present is based on the idea that works of art can communicate to us through time and history. On a purely visual level they may engage us, but further study will reveal that they constantly remind us of the diversity and communality of human experience. To understand the visual language of art and to be receptive to its communication, however, requires active participation. How can we begin to establish a dialogue between ourselves and works of art? How can we achieve an understanding of past and present art from other societies, historic and current? And, in an age teeming with information, how do we move from information to knowledge and understanding? *Art Past/Art Present* has been designed to help us begin to answer these ques-

tions. The book opens with a section called “Experiencing Art” (pp. 1–7) that establishes some of the language and techniques useful for analyzing art and for understanding art and artists within a historical context.

What is the basic approach of *Art Past/Art Present*?

In creating *Art Past/Art Present*, we accepted the underlying assumptions that art results from the human experience of life and that art is itself fundamentally expressive. We wanted to offer to the interested reader a clear, concise, and integrated treatment of a limited number of works from around the world.

Why is history so important in understanding works of art?

In *Art Past/Art Present*, the works are discussed within a historical framework. This emphasizes the circumstances under which they came into being and helps us to analyze how they were viewed and how they functioned at that time; this approach is known as **contextualism**. Art should be studied in concert with history, politics, religion, geography, society, and culture in general, including music and literature, in order to more fully understand the scope and diversity of our human history. Chapters 2 through 10 of *Art Past/Art Present* each open with an overview of developments in history and art for each particular time period: prehistoric, ancient, 200 to 1400, fifteenth century, sixteenth century, seventeenth century, eighteenth century, nineteenth century, and twentieth century. A special section at the end of each overview discusses the role and status of artists during this period; when possible, self-portraits of artists are illustrated in this section. Following the overviews for each period, there are two- and four-page units that focus on a key work. These key works establish a chronology for *Art Past/Art Present*.

Why such a distinct chronological approach?

If you thumb through *Art Past/Art Present* looking at the top right-hand corner of the pages, you’ll see a series of boxes with dates that are chronological in sequence. In our minds there is historical accuracy in this chronology, for it means that the works and events are presented roughly as they happened; it can only be informative to be reminded, for example, that Donatello, Ghiberti, and Van Eyck (pp. 250–259) were all working at about the same time, or that the rock-cut Hindu temple at Ellora (pp. 172–173) was being carved at the same time that the Muslims were erecting the huge mosque in Córdoba (pp. 174–77). This interweaving of European, Asian, and American developments offers important insights into contemporary developments around the globe. At the same time, the organization of *Art Past/Art Present* in two- and four-page units means that the teacher or reader can focus on each unit independently.

1565	Tobacco is introduced into Britain
c. 1566	Pieter Bruegel the Elder, <i>Peasant Wedding Feast</i>
1578	China’s population reaches 60 million

What is the point of the boxes in the upper right corner of the pages?

The box lists historical events and cultural developments from the period in order to build context for the works of art being discussed. While there is no direct connection between the fact that the earliest Buddhist architecture in Japan (pp. 168–71) was built in the seventh century, during the same period when Muhammad began preaching openly, or that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* was written at about the same time that Caravaggio’s *Entombment of Christ* (fig. 7-14) was painted, such chronological connections help us build a more complex and complete sense of the development of human accomplishment and historical events around the globe.

What kind of important information is found in the captions to the illustrations?

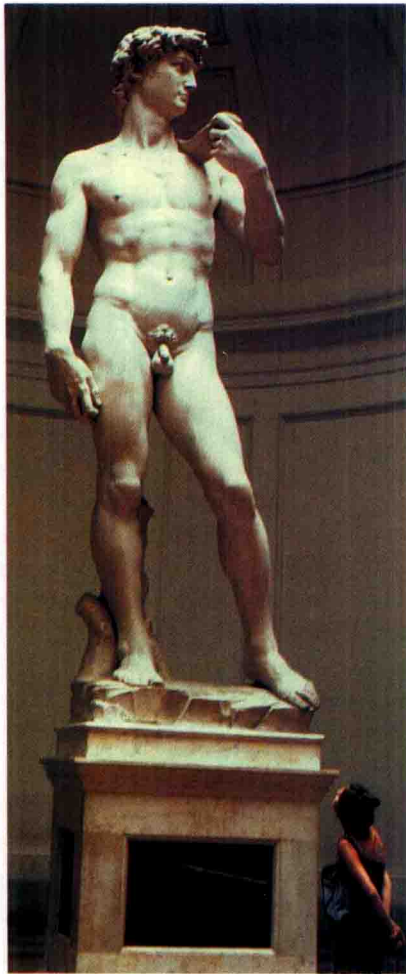
The main point of the captions is to provide some of the basic facts that identify the work of art:

Name of artist if known: While many early works are anonymous, in later periods we know many artists not only by name but also as personalities. An artist’s birth and death dates are given when their name is first mentioned in the text; nationality is given in the index.

Title: Titles only became necessary when people began listing works or displaying them, and chroniclers, collectors, and art historians have had to invent titles for many earlier works; you may sometimes notice that the title of a work of art in one book is different from that given in another. Some historic or popular titles are wrong, as is the case with Rembrandt’s *Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq* (fig. 7-27), which is now popularly but incorrectly known as *The Night Watch*.

Date: The date of creation is always a useful piece of information, but many early dates are uncertain or questionable. When a date is uncertain, we have used c. (from “circa,” the Latin term for “about”) before the date. We don’t know the exact date for Leonardo’s *Portrait of a Woman* (now known as the *Mona Lisa*, see fig. 6-21), but we think it was painted sometime between 1503 and 1505, hence the date given in the caption is c. 1503–05.

Materials: This is an important category because artists are often restricted in the kinds of materials that are available. Each material offers its own potential and restrictions, and understanding the role of the materials (the medium) in the



MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

DAVID 1501–04. Marble, height 13'5". Galleria dell' Accademia. Commissioned by the Cathedral Administration to be placed on a buttress below the dome of Florence Cathedral (see fig. 5-42). For further information see fig. 6-18.

artist's creative experience is often helpful.

Size: Size is given in feet and inches, height before width. This is another crucial category, because an understanding of the actual size of a work can help us to better understand the impact of that work when seen in the original. That Michelangelo's *David* is 13'5" tall is crucial for understanding the impact of this figure; by including a human figure in our illustration, we provide visual evidence for the impact of the sculpture's scale and presence.

Original and present location: Many works in the past were created by the artist for a specific setting, but few survive as originally placed. This loss of context means that we often need to try to recreate some sense of the original setting. The survival of Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling (pp. 300–303) and Soami's Zen Buddhist Dry Garden (fig. 6-79) in their original setting demonstrates how important setting can be in understanding a work of art. Present location tells us where we can go to see a work; below some captions, in small print, is further information about location and copyright.

Patron: In most earlier periods works of art were commissioned from the artist by a patron. The patron could be an individual, a family, a social group, a ruler, a government, and so forth. Knowing who needed and who paid for the work can often add insight into our understanding of the function and context for a work.

What should be read first, the captions or the text?

The factual information in the captions is mainly useful for identification purposes, but longer captions allow us to include additional information and discussion about that specific work. We would recommend that the captions be read first, followed by the text, which generally focuses on the broader cultural and historical ideas that are helpful in understanding the work of art.

Why is it important to list the patron in the captions?

Most of the works of art created in the past were made at the command or request of a patron: a person or group who commissioned the work and subsequently paid for it. This system is so different from current practices, in which artists create what they want to and then hope to find a buyer (the one important exception is architecture), that it seemed important to stress the roles of patrons not only as the persons who provided the money, but also the persons who needed the work and who probably gave specific information, requirements, and restrictions to the artists.

Why are some words in the text printed in boldface?

These boldfaced terms emphasize some of the new and perhaps unfamiliar terms that are helpful in understanding works of art; boldfaced terms are defined in the glossary on pp. 598–605, where each term is defined and where reference will be made to a specific work of art that illustrates or demonstrates the term.

Why are some passages in the text printed in blue?

These highlighted passages are either historical documents that are roughly contemporary with the creation of the work or quotations from artists themselves. We would emphasize that the words of those who lived when these works were created have particular authority and offer important insights for us today. This is contextualism at its best, because it allows us to read what was being said about the work at the time of its creation.

Themes

A new feature of this fourth edition is a series of nine double-page spreads devoted to art historical themes such as

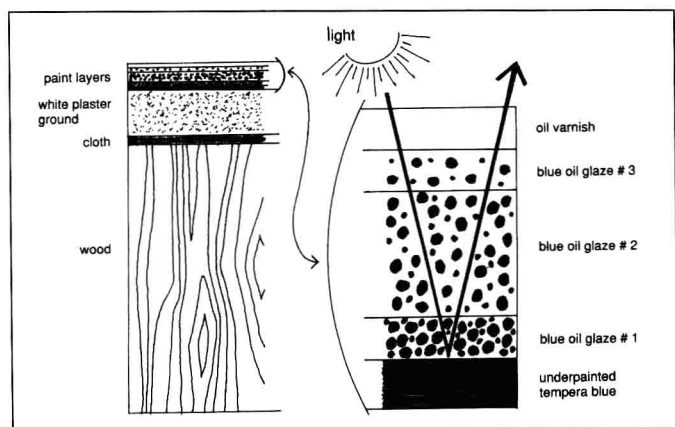
The Nude/The Body, Representing Nature, and The Artist as a Revolutionary. Each of these thematic discussions presents a group of works that can be more fully understood when seen in the context of other works representing the same theme. These spreads demonstrate some of the common themes that can be deduced when we look at artistic developments over history and around the globe. As a group, the works demonstrate how a comparison and contrast between works from different periods can illuminate how art has changed over time.

Maps

Twenty-one detailed maps are intended to help you determine the location of works of art and architecture discussed in the book.

Technique Boxes

Technique boxes have been placed in the text chronologically, at the moment when the particular technique originated or when it was most important for artistic developments. Clear diagrams accompany descriptions of, among others, *Chinese Piece-Mold Bronze Casting*, *Proportions of Gothic Cathedrals*, and *Printmaking*.



Schematic diagram of a section of a Flemish fifteenth-century oil painting, demonstrating the luminosity of the medium. The arrow suggests how light penetrates translucent oil glazes.

Art Past/Art Present Boxes

These boxes have been added chronologically at points where it seemed appropriate to discuss the relationship between the art of the time and the modern world. Examples include *The Impact of the Ancient Greek Orders* and *Chinese Aesthetic Theory*.

BC OR BCE, AD OR CE?

The dating system used throughout this book is the Western system, which is based on the year of the birth of

Christ as a dividing point. Many other cultures, including China, Israel, and the Muslim world, use a system based on historical events that are important to them; for business purposes, however, these cultures often use the dates common in the West. While the traditional designations used in Western culture for the periods before and after the birth of Christ have been BC "Before Christ" and AD "Anno Domini," "the year of the Lord," in this book we have adapted the new designations for these periods: BCE "Before the Common Era" and CE "Common Era."

Why include a bibliography?

We see *Art Past/Art Present* as only your first introduction to the larger and more complex world of the art that has been created over the centuries and around the world, not to mention the new art that is being created in our own times. The bibliography on pp. 606–608 lists books in English that will lead you further into this world. Happy Reading!

Acknowledgments

Of course we owe thanks to the generous efforts and insights of many people, including the several anonymous readers who have commented on the manuscript in its several editions. We are especially indebted to colleagues and former colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh and West Virginia University who willingly lent their authoritative understanding to different parts of the text:

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David G. Wilkins
Bernard Schultz
Katheryn M. Linduff

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Experiencing Art

A Brief Insight

NOTHING IS VISUALLY STILL OR QUIET ABOUT THIS work. Intense neon lights define state boundaries of the continental U.S.A., while the monitors within each state offer a constantly flowing array of images. Within this kaleidoscope, closed-circuit cameras feed images of those viewing this work into some of the monitors, forcing viewers to become part of the work of art while simultaneously standing before it.

How is your experience different when you view a painting in a museum, or watch television, or surf the net? Do you have different physical and psychological responses in these distinct situations? If we accept that all these experiences are visual in nature, can we find similarities among them? Can the media of TV and computers, for example, be brought into the realm of art?

These are some of the questions raised by the multimedia work you are now viewing. The artist, Nam June Paik, has given over fifty years of creative thought and activity to examining the relationship between art and technology, and to expanding the ways through which art and audience can interrelate. Paik's multimedia creation leads you to consider the complex, yet satisfying, dialogue between yourself and a work of art. 