

A HISTORY OF
**WESTERN
ART**

LAURIE SCHNEIDER ADAMS

Preface

The object of this text is to introduce students to the history of western art and of its most important styles. Although works of art have a history, they lose much of their meaning if separated from their cultural context, from the personalities of their makers, or from the requirements of patronage. As far as possible given the limitations of space, therefore, I try to place works of art within their context of time and place. I also emphasize the evolution of artistic style, a bias that is reflected in chapter and section headings.

This book differs from most others in its focus on relatively fewer works in greater depth. As a result, certain key artists and works are given more attention than in some texts, while others have had to be omitted entirely. Also, since this is a history of *western* art, many cultures—African and Asian, for example—are left out except to the extent that they have significantly influenced western style. Nonwestern arts and cultures are so complex that they deserve their own texts, and I have resisted the politically correct, but intellectually incorrect, temptation to present nonwestern arts as “chapters” of western art.

Many people have assisted generously in this endeavor. Marlene Park was particularly helpful during its formative stages. In the course of its development, sections have been read by Paul Barolsky, James Beck, Larissa Bonfante, Ellen Davis, Jack Flam, Sidney Geist, Donna and Carroll Janis, Carla Lord, Oscar White Muscarella, Maria Grazia Pernis, and Leo Steinberg. Their suggestions have been immensely helpful. John Adams contributed in a

number of ways at all stages of the process.

I would also like to thank Deborah Daniel Reinbold of the publisher, Brown & Benchmark, as well as a group of readers recruited by them: Edward Bryant of the University of New Mexico; Catheryn Leda Cheal of California State University, Northridge; Harvey A. Collins of Olivet Nazarene University; Laurinda S. Dixon of Syracuse University; Elisabeth L. Flynn of Longwood College; Larry Gleeson of the University of North Texas; Donna H. Goodman of Francis Marion College; Anthony Lacy Gully of Arizona State University; Nancy LaPaglia of Daley College; Anne H. Lisca of Santa Fe Community College; Charles S. Mayer of Indiana State University; Ronald D. Rarick of the University of Indianapolis; James T. Rocha; Nancy Serwint of Arizona State University; Laurel Covington Vogl of Fort Lewis College; Robert G. Ward of Northeast Louisiana University; and Salli Zimmerman of Nassau Community College.

Rosemary Bradley of Calmann & King provided valuable editorial advice. Ursula Sadie, my editor, spent many hours polishing the manuscript, and picture researcher Prue Waller and designer Andrew Shoobred also lent much expertise to the final product.

For assistance with the illustrations, I have to thank, among others, ACA Galleries, Warren Adelson, Christo and Jeanne-Claude Christo, the Flavin Institute, William Gaddis, Duane Hanson, M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., Sidney Janis Gallery, Robert Miller Gallery, Muriel Oxenberg Murphy, the Pace Gallery, and Allan Stone Gallery.

A HISTORY OF
WESTERN
ART



A HISTORY OF
WESTERN
ART

LAURIE SCHNEIDER ADAMS

John Jay College and the Graduate Center
City University of New York

Brown & Benchmark
PUBLISHERS

Madison Dubuque, IA Guilford, CT Chicago Toronto London
Caracas Mexico City Buenos Aires Madrid Bogota Sydney

To John, Alexa, and Caroline

Book Team

Publisher *Rosemary Bradley*
Senior Developmental Editor *Deborah Daniel Reinbold*
Associate Marketing Manager *Kirk Moen*

Brown & Benchmark
PUBLISHERS

Brown & Benchmark Publishers, A Times Mirror Higher Education Group, Inc. Company
President and Chief Executive Officer *Thomas E. Doran*
Vice President of Production and Business Development *Vickie Putman*
Vice President of Sales and Marketing *Bob McLaughlin*
Director of Marketing *John Finn*

 **Times Mirror
Higher Education Group**

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer *G. Franklin Lewis*
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer *James H. Higby*
President of WCB Manufacturing and Senior Vice President *Roger Meyer*
Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer *Robert Chesterman*

The credits section for this book begins on page 501 and is considered an extension of the copyright page.

Copyright © 1994 by Laurie Schneider Adams. All rights reserved.
A Times Mirror Company

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 93-70606
ISBN 0-697-13182-3

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This book was designed and produced by
CALMANN & KING LTD
71 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BN

Designer *Andrew Shoolbred*
Picture Researcher *Prue Waller*

Typeset by SX Composing, Rayleigh, UK
Printed in Hong Kong by South Sea International

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

FRONT COVER AND SPINE:

Nicolas Poussin, details of *The Dance of Human Life*, fig. 19.35. c. 1638-40. Oil on canvas, whole canvas 2 ft 8³/₈ in × 3 ft 5³/₈ in (0.83 × 1.05 m). Wallace Collection, London. Reproduced by Permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection.

BACK COVER:

Christo, *The Umbrellas*, Japan-U.S.A., 1984-91, detail of a section of 1760 yellow umbrellas in California, U.S.A. (see figs. 31.14 and 31.15). Nylon and aluminum. Photo Wolfgang Volz. © Christo.

FRONTISPICE:

God as Architect, from the *Bible Moralisée*, Reims, France, fol.1v, fig. 1.3. Mid-13th century. Illumination, 8³/₈ in (21.2 cm) wide. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

PART OPENERS:

p.11 Vincent van Gogh, detail of *Self-Portrait*, fig. 25.9. 1889. Oil on canvas, entire painting 25¹/₂ × 21¹/₄ in (64.8 × 54 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Cliché des Musées Nationaux, Paris.

p.33 Exekias, Attic black-figure amphora, *Achilles and Ajax Playing a Board Game*, fig. 7.3. 540-530 B.C. Terra cotta, 24 in (61 cm) high. Musei Vaticani, Rome.

p.149 Detail of the ceiling of the choir, S. Vitale, Ravenna, fig. 10.8. c. A.D. 547. Mosaic. Scala, Florence.

p.209 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of *Allegory of Good Government: The Effects of Good Government in the City and the Country*, Sala della Pace, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, fig. 14.8. 1338-9. Fresco, entire wall 46 ft (14 m) long. Scala, Florence.

p.295 Paul Cézanne, detail of *Still Life with Apples*, fig. 25.3. c. 1875-7. Oil on canvas, 7¹/₂ × 10³/₄ in (19.1 × 27.3 cm). By kind permission of the Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge, England (Keynes Collection).

p.409 Richard Rogers, detail of the Lloyd's Building, London, fig. 31.11. 1986. Arcaid, Kingston-upon-Thames, UK/Photo Richard Bryant.

Contents

Preface 9

PART ONE

Introduction

1 Why Do We Study Art? 12

The Artistic Impulse 12 *Chronology* 12 **The Value of Art** 13 Material Value 13 Intrinsic Value 13 Religious Value 14 Patriotic Value 15 Other Symbolic Values 15 **Art and Illusion** 16 Traditions Equating Artists with Gods 16 **Art and Identification** 18 Reflections and Shadows: Legends of How Art Began 18 Image Magic 18 Architecture 19

2 The Language of the Visual Artist 22

Form 22 Balance 22 **Line** 22 Expressive Qualities of Line 22 Lines Used for Modeling 24 Perspective 24 **Shape** 24 Expressive Qualities of Shape 24 **Light and Color** 25 Physical Properties of Color 26 Expressive Qualities of Color 29 **Texture** 31 **Stylistic Terminology** 31 **Subject Matter, Content, and Iconography** 32

PART TWO

The Ancient World

3 Prehistoric Western Europe 35

Stone Age 35 Paleolithic Era 35 *Carving* 36 *Categories of Sculpture* 37 *Modeling* 37 *Pigment* 39 Mesolithic Era 39 Neolithic Era 40 *The Celts* 41 *Post and Lintel Construction* 43

4 The Ancient Near East 46

Neolithic Era 46 Jericho 46 Çatal Hüyük 47 **Mesopotamia** 48 Chalcolithic Mesopotamia 48 Uruk Period 48 *Mesopotamian Gods* 49 *Load-Bearing Construction* 49 Ziggurats 49 Cylinder Seals 50 From Pictures to Words 50 *Gilgamesh* 51 Sumer: Early Dynastic Period 51 Neo-Sumerian Culture 52 Akkad: Old Akkadian Period 52 *Sargon of Akkad* 53 **Babylon** 55 Old Babylonian Period 55 *The Law Code of Hammurabi* 55 Hittite Empire 56 Neo-Babylonian Period 56 *Round Arches* 56 *Glazing* 56 **Assyria** 58 *Assyrian Kings* 58 Assyrian Empire 58 Reliefs 58 Lamassu 58 **Ancient Iran** 59 **The Scythians** 60 **Persian Empire** 60 *Columns* 61

5 Ancient Egypt 62

The Pharaohs 62 **Writing and Religion** 62 **Monumental Architecture** 65 Pyramids 65 Temples 67 *Egyptian Columns* 67 **Sculpture and Painting** 70 *The Egyptian Canon of Proportion* 70 Akhenaten's Style 73 *Egyptian Fresco* 74 Tutankhamen's Tomb 76

6 The Aegean 78

Cycladic Civilization 78 **Minoan Civilization** 79 *The Myth of the Minotaur* 80 *Minoan Fresco* 81 Discoveries at Thera 84 **Mycenean Civilization** 86 *The Legend of Agamemnon* 86 *Cyclopean Masonry* 86

7 Ancient Greece 90

Cultural Identity 90 Government, Philosophy, and Science 90 Literature and Drama 91 *The Greek Gods* 92 "Man is the Measure of All Things" 93 **Painting and Pottery** 93 Geometric Style 93 *Women in Ancient Greece* 93 *Greek Vase Media* 94 Black-Figure Painting 95 *Encaustic: Luminous Painting* 95 Red-Figure Painting 96 White-Ground

Painting 96 **Mosaic** 97 **Sculpture** 97 Archaic Style 97 Early Classical Style 99 *The Lost-Wax Process* 100 Fifth-Century Classical Style 101 **Classical Architecture** 102 Athens: The Acropolis 102 *Plan of the Parthenon* 105 The Parthenon 105 *The Golden Section* 106 *The Orders of Greek Architecture* 108 Medusa 111 The Temple of Athena Nike 112 The Erechtheum 112 **Late Classical Style** 114 *Greek Theater-in-the-Round* 115 **Hellenistic Period** 115 Sculpture 117 *The Trojan Horse* 119

8 The Etruscans 120

Language 120 Greek Influences 121 *Etruscan Materials* 121 Women in Etruscan Art 122 **Funerary Art** 122 *Pilasters* 123 Tombs 125

9 Ancient Rome 127

Origins of the Roman Empire 127 Greek Influence on Roman Art 127 *Women in Ancient Rome* 127 *Virgil's "Aeneid"* 128 *Roman Emperors* 128 **Architectural Types** 129 Domestic Architecture 129 *Roman Building Materials* 130 *Arches, Domes, and Vaults* 130 Public Buildings 132 Functional Architecture 137 Religious Architecture 137 Commemorative Architecture 141 **Sculptural Types** 144 Sarcophagi 144 Portraits 144 **Mural Painting** 147

PART THREE

The Christian World

10 Early Christian and Byzantine Art 151

A New Religion 151 Constantine and Christianity 151 The Divergence of East and West 151 *Christianity and the Scriptures* 152 *Christian Symbolism* 152 **Early Christian Art** 153 Sarcophagi 153 Basilicas 154 *The Catacombs* 154 *The Cross* 155 *Saint Peter* 155 Centrally Planned Churches 156 **Justinian and the Byzantine Style** 156 *Mosaic Technique* 158 **Later Byzantine Developments** 165

11 The Early Middle Ages 166

Islamic Art 166 Mosques 166 *Islam* 166 **Northern European Art** 171 *Anglo-Saxon Metalwork* 171

"Beowulf" 171 Hiberno-Saxon Art 172 Carolingian Period 175 *Manuscript Illumination* 175 *Monasticism: Chastity, Obedience, and Poverty* 176

12 Romanesque Art 178

Historical Background 178 *Feudalism* 178 **Pilgrimage Roads** 179 **Architecture** 180 *Sainte-Foy at Conques* 180 **Sculpture** 182 **Mural Painting** 185 *Bayeux Tapestry* 188

13 Gothic Art 189

Origins of the Gothic Style 189 **Early Gothic Architecture: Saint-Denis** 189 **Elements of Gothic Architecture** 191 Ribbed Groin Vaults 191 Piers 191 Flying Buttresses 191 Pointed Arches 191 The Skeleton 192 Stained Glass Windows 192 *Stained Glass Windows* 193 **The Age of Cathedrals: Chartres** 194 *Guilds* 194 Exterior Architecture 194 Exterior Sculpture 198 Interior 202 **Later Developments of the Gothic Style** 205 Reims Cathedral 205 English Gothic Cathedrals 208

PART FOUR

The Renaissance

14 Precursors of the Renaissance 211

Thirteenth-Century Italy 211 Nicola Pisano 211 Cimabue 213 Roman Revival in Padua 213 **Fourteenth-Century Italy** 213 *Dante: The Poet of Heaven and Hell* 213 *Tempera: Painstaking Preparation and Delicate Detail* 215 *Training in the Master's Workshop* 216 *Fresco: A Medium for Speed and Confidence* 216 The Arena Chapel 216 *Cardinal Virtues and Deadly Sins* 218 Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the Effects of Good Government 222

15 The Early Renaissance 224

Fifteenth-Century Italy 224 *Soldiers of Fortune* 225 Architecture 225 *Vasari's "Lives"* 227 *Lines of Vision* 228 Early Fifteenth-Century Painting 232 *A Distant Haze* 237 Early Renaissance Sculpture 237 Second-Generation Developments 238 *Oil Painting* 240 *Mendicant Monks* 243 **Fifteenth-Century Flanders** 247 Painting 247

16 The High Renaissance in Italy 253

Visual Arts 253 **Architecture** 253 The Ideal of the Circle 253 *Savonarola: Fifteenth-Century Fanatic* 253 *Vitruvius* 254 Centrally Planned Churches 255 St. Peter's and the Central Plan 256 **Painting and Sculpture** 259 Leonardo da Vinci 259 *Sfumato* 262 Michelangelo 262 Michelangelo's Late Style 266 Raphael 269 Titian 271

17 Mannerism and the Later Sixteenth Century in Italy 275

Mannerism 275 **Mannerist Painting** 275 *The Reformation* 276 Counter-Reformation Painting 281 *The Counter-Reformation* 281 *The Painter's Daughter* 281 **Architecture: Palladio** 282

18 Sixteenth-Century Painting in Northern Europe 286

The Netherlands 286 Bosch 286 **Erasmus: Reform without Strife** 286 Pieter Brueghel the Elder 289 **Germany** 291 Dürer 291 *The Development of Printmaking* 292 Grünewald 292 Hans Holbein the Younger 294

PART FIVE

Early Modern through the Nineteenth Century**19 The Baroque Style in Western Europe 297**

Baroque Style 297 **Architecture** 299 Italy 299 France 303 England 307 **Sculpture** 308 Bernini 308 **Italian Baroque Painting** 312 Caravaggio 312 Artemisia Gentileschi 314 *Women as Artists: From Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* 314 **Northern Baroque Painting** 315 Rubens 315 Rembrandt 318 *Etching* 321 Vermeer 322 *Vanitas* 324 Spanish Baroque Painting 324 Velázquez 324 French Baroque Painting 328 Poussin 328

20 Rococo and the Eighteenth Century 329

The Enlightenment 329 **Rococo Painting** 330 *The Academy* 330 **Rococo Architecture** 334 **Architectural Revivals** 336 Palladian Style 336 Gothic Revival 336 **European Painting** 339 Bourgeois Realism 339 Neoclassicism 340 **American Painting** 340

21 Neoclassicism: The Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries 342

Chronology of the French Revolution and the Reign of Napoleon 342 **The Neoclassical Style in France** 342 *Satyrs and Bacchantes* 343 Art in the Service of the State 344 **Ingres: The Transition to Romanticism** 345 **Developments in America** 347 The Architecture of Jefferson 347 *Chronology of the American Campaign for Independence* 349

22 Romanticism: The Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries 350

Rousseau and the Return to Nature 350 *Romanticism in Music and Poetry* 351 **Romantic Trends in Architecture** 351 **Romantic Painting** 352 Blake 352 Géricault 352 *Watercolor* 352 Delacroix 354 *The Salon* 355 Goya 357 *Aquatint* 357 **Romantic Landscape Painting** 359 *American Romantic Writers* 363

23 Nineteenth-Century Realism 364

The Communist Manifesto 364 *Realism in Literature* 365 **French Realist Painting** 366 Millet 366 Courbet 366 *Lithography* 368 Daumier 368 *Gargantua* 369 **Nineteenth-Century Photography** 371 *Photography* 372 **American Realism** 375 Eakins's "Gross Clinic" 375 **French Realism of the 1860s** 375 Manet's "Déjeuner sur l'Herbe" 375 Manet's "Olympia" 376 **Architecture** 377 Crystal Palace 377 Bridges 378 Eiffel Tower 380 Origins of the Skyscraper 380

24 Nineteenth-Century Impressionism 382

Painting 382 Manet: From the 1860s to the 1880s 382 *Japonisme* 383 Degas 385 Cassatt 386 Monet 387 Renoir 389 Pissarro 390 **Sculpture** 391 Rodin 391 **America at the Turn of the Century** 392 "Art for Art's Sake" 395

25 Post-Impressionism and the Late Nineteenth Century 396

Post-Impressionist Painters 396 Toulouse-Lautrec 396 *The Symbolist Movement* 396 Cézanne 397 *An Apple a Day . . .* 398 Seurat 400 Van Gogh 401 Gauguin 403 *Artists on Art* 404 **Symbolism** 405 Moreau 405 Munch 406 Rousseau 407 *The Mechanisms of Dreaming* 408

PART SIX

The Twentieth Century**26 Turn of the Century: Early Picasso, Fauvism, Expressionism, and Matisse 411**

Picasso and Matisse 412 Picasso's "Blue Period" 412 Fauvism 412 Matisse: "The Green Line" 413 Expressionism 414 The Bridge (Die Brücke) 414 The Blue Rider (Der blaue Reiter) 414 Matisse after Fauvism 417

27 Cubism, Futurism, and Related Twentieth-Century Developments 420

Gertrude Stein 420 Early Cubism 420 Precursors 420 Analytic Cubism 423 Collage 423 Synthetic Cubism 424 *Collage and Assemblage* 424 Early Twentieth-Century Developments 426 The City 426 Futurism 427 Léger's "City" 427 Mondrian 428 The Armory Show 429 Postscript 431 Early Twentieth-Century Architecture 431 Wright and the Prairie Style 431 *Cantilever* 431 International Style 433

28 Dada, Surrealism, Fantasy, and America Between the Wars 436

Dada 436 Surrealism 438 Sculpture Derived from Surrealism 442 America Between the Wars 444 Regionalism and Social Realism 444 Toward American Abstraction 446

29 Abstract Expressionism and Color Field Painting 448

The Teachers: Hofmann and Albers 448 Abstract Expressionism and the New York School 450 Gorky 450 Action Painting 451 *Acrylic* 454 Color Field Painting 455 West Coast Abstraction 457 Sculpture 458

30 The 1960s: Pop, Op, and Minimalism 460

New York Pop Art 460 Painting 460 Sculpture 466 Op Art 468 Minimal Sculpture 468

31 After 1965 470

Return to Realism 470 Developments in Architecture 473 Geodesic Domes 473 Post-Modernism: The Piazza d'Italia 474 The Louvre Pyramid 476 "High Tech" Architecture: The 1986 Lloyd's Building 477 Environmental Art 478 Smithsonian: "Spiral Jetty" 478 Christo: "The Umbrellas," Japan–U.S.A. 479 Urban Environment 479 Feminist Iconography 481 Chicago: "The Dinner Party" 481 Innovation and Continuity 481 Conclusion 484

Glossary 485

Suggestions for Further Reading 493

Notes 501

Acknowledgements 501

Picture Credits 502

Index 504

TIMELINES

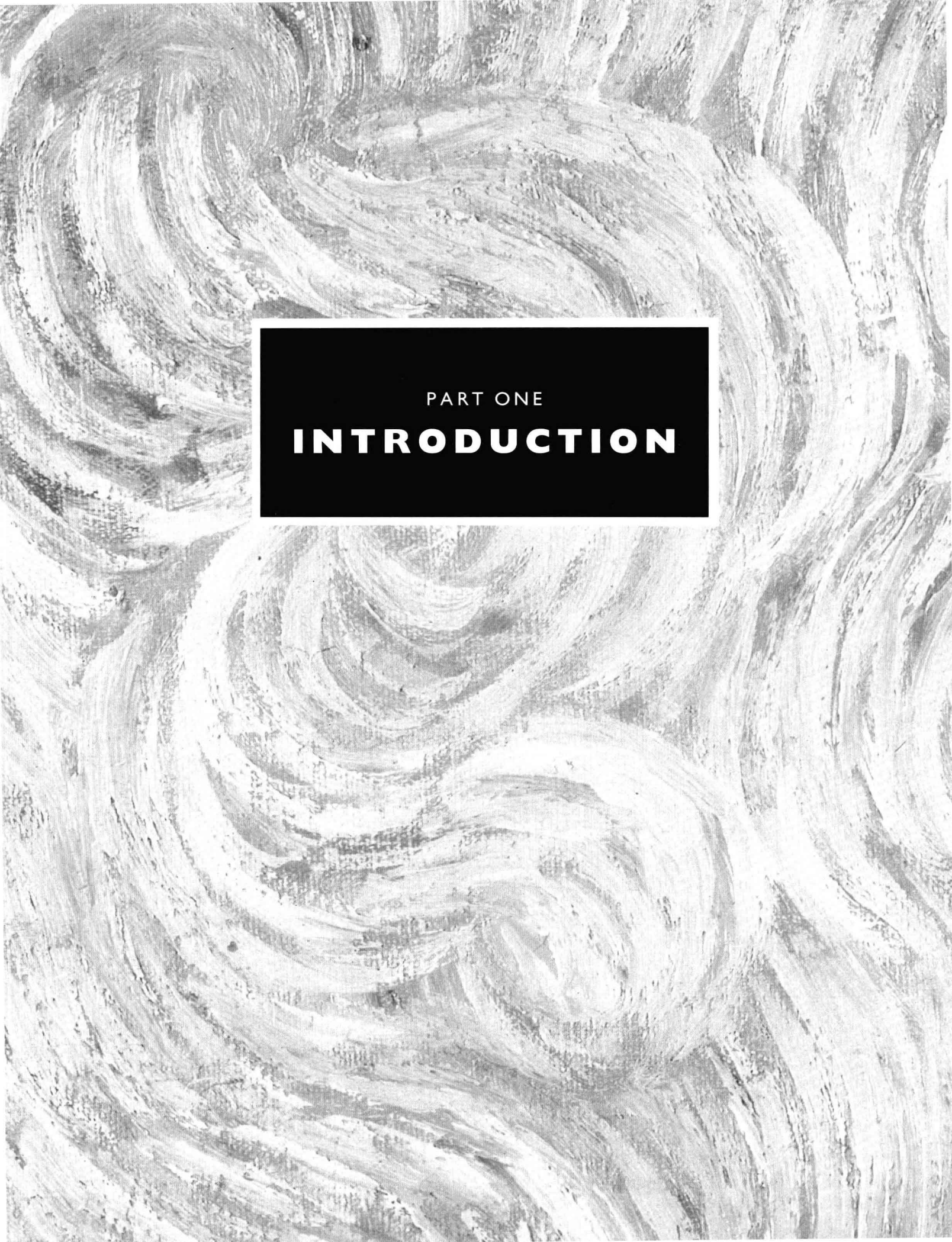
The Ancient World 34
The Christian World 150
The Renaissance 210
Early Modern through the Nineteenth Century 296
The Twentieth Century 410

MAPS

Prehistoric Europe 38
The Ancient Near East and Middle East 47
Ancient Egypt 63
The Ancient Aegean 78
Ancient Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean 91
Etruscan and Roman Italy 120
The Roman Empire, A.D. 14–284 128
Western Europe in the Middle Ages 167
Pilgrimage Roads to Santiago de Compostela, Spain 179
Leading Art Centers in Renaissance Italy 212
The Industrialized World in the Nineteenth Century 365

原书缺页

原书缺页



PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

Why Do We Study Art?

We study art because by doing so we learn about our own creative expressions and those of the past. The arts bridge the gap between past and present, and may even be the primary means of exploring a culture that never developed written documents. For example, the prehistoric cave paintings dating as far back as 30,000 B.C. reveal the importance for early societies of hunting. Their wish to reproduce and ensure the survival of the species is expressed in faceless prehistoric female figurines whose breasts and pelvis are disproportionately large. Prehistoric structures, whether oriented toward earth or sky, provide insights into the kinds of gods people worshiped. Without such objects, which have fortunately been preserved, we would know far less about ancient cultures than we now do.

We would also know less about ourselves, for art is a window on human thought and emotion. Certain themes, such as the wish to survive and to define oneself, persist in very different times and places. It is through the arts that the unique creative spirit of different peoples – as well as the similarities that bind them together – begins to emerge.

This book surveys the major periods and styles of western art. The arts of nonwestern cultures, such as those of Asia, Africa, and Pre-Columbian America, are so extensive that each requires its own text. Nonwestern examples are included here only when they influence western art. In the West, the major visual arts fall into three broad categories: pictures, sculpture, and architecture.

Pictures (from the Latin *pingo*, meaning “I paint”) are two-dimensional images (from the Latin *imago*, meaning “likeness”) with height and width, and are usually on a flat surface. But the discussion of pictures covers more than painting; it includes **mosaics**, **stained glass**, tapestry, some drawing and printing techniques, and photography.

A sculpture, unlike a picture, is a three-dimensional image – besides height and width, it has depth.

Architecture, literally meaning high (*archi*) building (*ecture*), is the most utilitarian of the three categories. Buildings are designed to enclose space for a specific purpose – worship, recreation, living, working – although they often contain pictures and sculptures as well, and

other forms of visual art. The pyramids of ancient Egypt, for example, were filled with statues of the pharaoh (king) who built them and their walls were painted with scenes from his life. Many churches are decorated with sculptures, paintings, mosaics, and stained glass windows illustrating stories of Christ and the saints. Likewise, the sumptuous palaces of western Europe would look bare without the decoration provided by paintings, sculptures, and tapestries.

The Artistic Impulse

Art is a vital and persistent aspect of everyday life. But where, one might ask, does the artistic impulse originate? We can see that it is inborn by observing children, who make pictures, sculptures, and buildings before learning to read or write. Children trace images in dirt or sand, and decorate just about anything from their own faces to the walls of their houses. They spontaneously make mud pies and snowmen. If given a pile of building blocks, they usually attempt to stack one on top of another to make a tower. All are efforts to create order from disorder and form from formlessness. While it may be difficult to relate a Greek temple or an Egyptian pyramid to a child’s sandcastle, all three express the same natural impulse to build.

Chronology

The Christian chronological system, generally used in the West, is followed throughout this book. Other religions (for example, Islam and Judaism) have different calendars.

Dates before the birth of Christ are followed by the letters B.C., an abbreviation for “Before Christ.” Dates after his birth are denoted by the letters A.D. — an abbreviation for *anno Domini*, Latin for “In the year of our Lord.” There is no year 0, so A.D. 1 immediately follows 1 B.C. If neither B.C. nor A.D. accompanies a date, A.D. is understood. Approximate dates are preceded by “c.,” an abbreviation for the Latin *circa*, meaning “around.”

In the adult world, creating art is a continuation and development of the child's inborn impulse. But now it takes on different meanings. One powerful motive for making art is the wish to leave behind after death a product of value by which to be remembered. The work of art symbolically prolongs the artist's existence. This parallels the pervasive feeling that, by having children, one is ensuring genealogical continuity into the future. Several artists have made such a connection. For example, according to Michelangelo's biographers, he said that he had no human children because his works were his children. Giotto, the great Italian painter of the early Renaissance (see p.213), expressed a similar idea in a fourteenth-century anecdote which begins as the poet Dante asks Giotto how it is that his children are so ugly and his paintings so beautiful. Giotto replies that he paints by the light of day and reproduces in the darkness of night. The twentieth-century artist Josef Albers (see p.448) also referred to this traditional connection between creation and procreation: he described a mixed color as the offspring of the two original colors and compared it to a child who combines the genes of two parents.

Related to the role of art as a memorial is the wish to preserve one's image after death. Artists have been commissioned to paint portraits, or representations of specific people; they have also made self-portraits. "Painting makes absent men present and the dead seem alive," wrote Leon Battista Alberti, the fifteenth-century Italian humanist (see p.238). "I paint to preserve the likeness of people after their death," wrote Albrecht Dürer, the sixteenth-century German artist (see p.291). Even as early as the Neolithic era (c. 8000–2000 B.C.; see p.46) skulls were modeled into faces with plaster, and shells were inserted into the eye sockets. In ancient Egypt (see Chapter 5), the pharaoh's features were painted on the outside of his mummy case so that his *ka*, or soul, could recognize him. And gold death masks of kings have been discovered from the Mycenaean civilization of ancient Greece (c. 1500 B.C.; see fig. 6.15).

It is not only the features of an individual that are valued as an extension of self after death. **Patrons**, or people who commission works, may prefer to order more monumental tributes. For example, the Egyptian rulers (3000–1000 B.C.) spent years planning and overseeing the construction of pyramids, not only in the belief that such monumental tombs would guarantee their existence in the afterlife, but also as a statement of their power while on earth. The Athenians built the Parthenon (see p.105) in 448–432 B.C. to house the colossal sculpture of their patron goddess Athena and, at the same time, to embody the intellectual and creative achievements of their civilization and to preserve them for future generations. King Louis XIV (see p.303) built his magnificent palace at Versailles in the seventeenth century as a monument to his political power, his reign, and the glory of France.

The Value of Art

Works of art are valued not only by the artist or patron, but also by entire cultures. In fact, those periods of history that we tend to identify as the high points of human achievement are those in which the arts were most highly valued and vigorously encouraged. In ancient Egypt, the pharaohs initiated building activity on a grand scale. They presided over the construction of palaces and temples in addition to pyramids, and commissioned vast numbers of sculptures and paintings. In fifth-century-B.C. Athens, the cradle of modern democracy, artists created many important sculptures, paintings, and buildings; their crowning achievement was the Parthenon. During the Gothic era (c. A.D. 1200–1400; see Chapter 13), a major part of the economic activity of every cathedral town revolved around the construction of its cathedral, the production of cathedral sculpture, and the manufacture of stained glass windows. In fifteenth-century Renaissance Florence, Italian banking families such as the Medici spent enormous amounts of money on art to adorn public spaces, private palaces, churches, and chapels. Today, corporations as well as individuals have become patrons of the arts and there is a flourishing art market throughout the world. More people buy art than ever before — often as an investment — and the auctioning of art has become an international business.

The contribution of the arts to human civilization has many facets, a few of which we shall now explore.

Material Value

Works of art may be valuable simply because they are made of a precious material. Gold, for example, was used in Egyptian art to represent divinity and the sun. These associations recur in Christian art, which reserved gold for the background of religious icons and for **halos** on divine figures. Valuable materials have unfortunately inspired the theft and plunder of art objects down the centuries by thieves who disregarded their cultural, religious, or artistic value and melt them down. Even the monumental cult statue of Athena in the Parthenon disappeared without a trace, presumably because of the value of the gold and ivory from which it was made.

Intrinsic Value

A work of art may contain valuable material but that is not the primary criterion by which its quality is judged. Its intrinsic value depends largely on people's assessment of the artist who created it and on its own **esthetic** character (that is, the degree to which the viewer experiences it as beautiful). The *Mona Lisa* (fig. 16.13) is made of relatively modest materials — paint and wood — but it is a priceless object nonetheless, and arguably the western world's most famous image. Leonardo da Vinci, who painted it around A.D. 1500 in Italy, was an acknowledged genius in his own day and his work has stood the test of time. The

paintings of the late nineteenth-century Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh (see p.401) have also endured, although he was ignored in his lifetime. It was not until after his death that his esthetic quality and originality were recognized. Today, the intrinsic value of an oil painting by van Gogh is reflected by its market price, which has risen to as high as \$80 million.



1.1 Constantin Brancusi, *Bird in Space*. 1928. Bronze, unique cast, 54 x 8½ x 6½ in (137.2 x 21.6 x 16.5 cm). Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (Given anonymously). Brancusi objected to the view of his work as abstract. In a statement published shortly after his death in 1957, he declared: "They are imbeciles who call my work abstract; that which they call abstract is the most realist, because what is real is not the exterior form but the idea, the essence of things."¹

Intrinsic value is not always apparent, as seen in the changing assessment of van Gogh's works. "Is it art?" is a familiar question, which expresses the difficulty of defining "art" and of recognizing the esthetic value of an object. One famous example of this dilemma is illustrated by a trial held in New York City in 1927. Edward Steichen, the prominent American photographer, had purchased a bronze sculpture entitled *Bird in Space* (fig. 1.1) from the Romanian artist Constantin Brancusi, who was living in France. Steichen imported the sculpture to the United States, whose laws do not require payment of customs duty on original works of art as long as they are declared on entering the country. When the customs official saw the *Bird*, however, he balked. It was not art, he said; it was "manufactured metal." Steichen's protests fell on deaf ears. The sculpture was admitted into the United States under the category of "Kitchen Utensils and Hospital Supplies," which meant that Steichen had to pay \$600 in import duty.

Later, with the financial backing of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the American sculptor and benefactor of the arts, Steichen appealed the ruling of the customs official. The ensuing trial received a great deal of publicity. Witnesses discussed whether the *Bird* was a bird at all, whether the artist could make it a bird by calling it one, whether it could be said to have certain characteristics of "birdness," and so on. The conservative witnesses refused to accept the work as a bird because it lacked certain biological attributes, such as wings and tail feathers. The more progressive witnesses pointed out that it had bird-like qualities—upward movement and a sense of spatial freedom. The final decision of the court was in favor of the plaintiff and Steichen got his money back. The *Bird* was declared a work of art. In today's market a Brancusi *Bird* would sell for millions of dollars.

Religious Value

One of the traditional ways in which art has been valued is in terms of its religious significance. From prehistory to the sixteenth-century Reformation, art was one of the most effective ways to express religious beliefs. Paintings and sculptures depicted gods and goddesses and thereby made their images accessible. Temples, churches, and mosques were symbolic dwelling places of gods and served to relate worshipers to their deity. Tombs expressed belief in the afterlife.

During the Middle Ages in western Europe, art often served an educational function. One important way of communicating Bible stories and legends of the saints to a largely illiterate population was through the sculptures, paintings, and stained glass windows in churches and cathedrals.

Beyond its teaching function, the religious significance of a work of art may be so great that entire groups of people identify with the object. The value of such a work is highlighted when it is taken away. In 1973, the Afo-a-Kom—a sacred figure embodying the soul of a village in

the Cameroon – disappeared. The villagers reportedly fell into a depression when they discovered that their statue was missing. The subsequent reappearance of the Afo-a-Kom in the window of a New York art dealer caused an international scandal that died down only after the statue was returned to its African home.

Patriotic Value

Works of art have patriotic value inasmuch as they express the pride and accomplishments of a particular culture. Patriotic sentiment was a primary aspect of the richly carved triumphal arches of ancient Rome (see p.142) because they were gateways for the return of victorious emperors and generals. Statues of national heroes stand in parks and public squares in most cities of the western world.

But a work need not represent a national figure or even a national theme to be an object of patriotic value. In 1945, at the end of World War II, the Dutch authorities arrested an art dealer, Han van Meegeren, for treason. They accused him of having sold a painting by the great seventeenth-century Dutch artist Vermeer to Hermann Goering, the Nazi Reichsmarschall and Hitler's most loyal supporter. When van Meegeren's case went to trial, he lashed out at the court. "Fools!" he cried, "I painted it myself." What he had sold to the Nazis was actually his own forgery, and he proved it by painting another "Vermeer" under supervision while in prison. Van Meegeren thus saved himself from conviction of treason by proving that he had been guilty of a lesser crime, namely forgery. It would have been treason to sell Vermeer's paintings, which were (and still are) considered national treasures, to Holland's enemies.

Another expression of the patriotic value of art can be seen in recent exhibitions made possible by shifts in world politics. Since détente between the Communist bloc and the West, Russia has been sending works of art from her museums for temporary exhibitions in the United States. In such circumstances, the traveling works of art become a kind of diplomatic currency and contribute to improved relations between nations.

The patriotic feeling that some cultures have about their works of art has contributed to their value as trophies, or spoils of war. When ancient Babylon was defeated by the Elamites in 1170 B.C., the victors stole the statue of Marduk, the chief Babylonian god, together with the law code of Hammurabi (see p.55). In the early nineteenth century, when Napoleon's armies marched through Europe, they plundered thousands of works of art. Napoleon's booty is now part of the French national art collection at the Louvre in Paris.

The patriotic value of art can be so great that nations whose works of art have been taken go to considerable lengths to recover them. Thus, at the end of World War II, the Allied army assigned a special division to recover the vast amounts of art stolen by the Nazis. A United States army task force discovered Hermann Goering's two

personal caches of stolen art in Bavaria, one in a medieval castle, and the other in a bombproof tunnel in nearby mountains. The task force arrived just in time, for Goering had equipped an "art train" with thermostatic temperature control to take "his" collection to safety. At the Nuremberg trials, Goering claimed that his intentions were nothing if not honorable – he was protecting the art from air raids.

A contemporary example of the patriotic value of art can be seen in the case of the Elgin Marbles. In the early nineteenth century when Athens was under Turkish rule, Thomas Bruce, the seventh earl of Elgin, obtained permission from Turkey to remove sculptures from the Parthenon and other buildings on the Acropolis. At great personal expense (amounting to £75,000), Lord Elgin sent the sculptures to England by boat. The first shipment sank, but the remainder of the works reached their destination in 1816. The British Museum in London purchased the sculptures for just £35,000. Now referred to as the Elgin Marbles, they are still in the British Museum, where they are a tourist attraction and a source of study for scholars. For years, the Greeks have been pressuring England to return the sculptures and the British have refused to do so. This kind of situation is a product of historical circumstance. Although Lord Elgin broke no laws and probably saved the sculptures from considerable damage, he is seen by many Greeks as having looted their cultural heritage.

Since art continues to have patriotic value, modern legislation in many countries is designed to avoid similar problems by making it difficult, if not illegal, to export national treasures. International protocols, such as the Hague Convention of 1959, the UNESCO General Conferences of 1964 and 1970, and the European Convention of 1967, protect cultural property and archeological heritage.

Other Symbolic Values

There are other aspects of the symbolic value of art besides religious and patriotic significance. Art is valued for its ability to convey illusions with which we identify. This identification leads us to endow art with symbolic power and to create legends about the origins of art.

Reactions to the arts cover virtually the entire range of human emotion. They include pleasure, fright, amusement, outrage, even avoidance. People can become attached to a work of art and not want to part with it, as Leonardo did after he painted the *Mona Lisa*. Instead of delivering it to the person who had commissioned it, Leonardo kept the painting until he died. Conversely, one may wish to destroy certain works because they arouse anger. In London in the early twentieth century, a suffragette slashed Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* (fig. 19.33) because she was offended by what she considered to be its sexist representation of a woman. Such examples illustrate the intense responses to the symbolic power of art. The remainder of this chapter considers psychological responses to the symbolic nature of the arts.