Laurie Schneider Adams

Art ACROSS TIME

Second Edition

Volume I Prehistory to the Fourteenth Century

Art across Time

SECOND EDITION

VOLUME I

PREHISTORY TO THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

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Preface

We are bombarded with images from birth and tend to assume that we understand their meaning. But the paradoxical fact is that, although children read pictures before words, a picture is more complex than a word—hence the proverbial "a picture is worth a thousand words." One aim of *Art across Time* is therefore to introduce readers to the complexity of images, while also surveying the history of those images. Context is a particular area of concern, for works of art lose much of their meaning if separated from the time and place in which they were created. Context also includes function, patronage, and the character and talent of the individual artist.

The complexity of the visual arts has led to different approaches to reading images. Throughout the text, therefore, there are discussions of methodology, and there is a brief survey of the modern methodologies of art historical interpretation in the Introduction (repeated in both volumes). Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* is considered from various methodological viewpoints in Chapter 13 (13.69), as is Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* in Chapter 22 (22.7).

While comprehensive, *Art across Time* avoids an encyclopedic approach to art history and attempts instead a more manageable narrative that is suitable for a one-year survey course. Certain key works and artists are given more attention than in some books, while other works and artists are omitted entirely. An effort is made to present the history of art as a dynamic narrative grounded in scholarship, a narrative that is a dialogue between modern viewers and their past.

"Windows on the World"

Sections entitled "Window on the World" provide an introduction to the art of certain non-Western cultures. They highlight specific periods within cultures, particularly when they are thematically related to, or have significantly influenced, Western art. Some of the Windows—such as Aboriginal rock paintings in the chapter on prehistory (Volume I, Chapter 1) and Japanese woodblock prints in the chapter on Impressionism (Chapter 22)—are placed within Western chapters. Others in Volume I—for example, those dealing with the Indus Valley Civilization, Mesoamerica, and the Far East—are placed chronologically between Western chapters. The Windows offer a sense of the range of world art and remind readers that the history of Western art is only one of many art historical narratives. These narratives reflect the differences, as well as the similarities, between cultures, and emphasize the complexity of the visual arts by taking Western readers far afield of their accustomed territory and exposing them to unfamiliar ways of thinking about the arts. As with the European artists of the early twentieth century who collected African and Oceanic sculpture in search of new, non-Classical ways of representing the human figure, so viewers who encounter such works for the first time are encouraged to stretch their own limits of seeing and understanding.

Boxes

Within chapters, readers will find "boxes" that encapsulate background information necessary for the study of art. These boxes take students aside, without interrupting the flow of the text, to explain media and techniques, as well as different philosophies of art from Plato to Marx, Burke to Freud, and Winckelmann to Greenberg. Significant works of literature related to the arts are also covered: epics such as *Gilgamesh,* the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* the *Edda,* and *Beowulf* (Volume I), as well as excerpts of Romantic, Dada, and contemporary poetry. A few of the boxes show artists quoting from their predecessors—Bob Thompson quoting Lucas Cranach and Paul Gauguin, for example, and Beaufort Delaney quoting Balzac. This helps to establish personal artistic genealogies within the broader narrative of art history.

Illustration Program

The illustrations in *Art across Time* are in a consistently large format, which encourages careful looking. All of the paintings are reproduced in color, and the percentage of color is higher than in any other survey text presently on the market. Occasionally, more than one view of a sculpture or a building is illustrated to give readers a sense of its three-dimensional reality. Architectural discussions are enhanced with labeled plans, sections, and axonometric diagrams. Many of the picture captions include anecdotes or biographical information about the artists; these are intended to encourage readers to identify with painters, sculptors, and architects, and they also provide a sense of the role of artists in society. Maps both define geographical context and indicate changing national boundaries over time.

Other Pedagogical Features

Languages as well as the visual arts have a history, and the etymology of art historical terms is therefore provided. This reinforces the meanings of words and reveals their continuity through time. In the chapter on ancient Greece (Volume I), transcriptions of terms and proper names are given according to Greek spelling, with certain exceptions in deference to convention: Acropolis, Euclid, Socrates, and Laocoön, all of which would be spelled with a "k" rather than a "c" in Greek. Likewise, Roman names and

terms are given according to Latin transcription. The first time an art historical term appears in the text, it is highlighted in bold to indicate that it is also defined in the glossary at the back of the book.

At the end of each chapter, a chronological timeline of the works illustrated is useful for review purposes. This lists contemporaneous developments in other fields as well as cross-cultural artistic developments, and it contains selected images for review.

New to the Second Edition

At the request of reviewers and adopters of the first edition, the text is now divided into seven parts. Each two-page part opener incorporates chapter previews that highlight important developments relevant to the cultural contextualization of art. The Introduction, formerly Chapter 1, has been updated and is repeated in both volumes.

In addition to numerous text refinements throughout the second edition, several substantial changes should be noted. The Window on the World for Mesoamerica has been rewritten, and Georgia Riley de Havenon, a pre-Columbian specialist, has contributed sections on Aztec and Andean art. The coverage of the Renaissance and Gothic periods has been reorganized. With the help of Robert Maxwell of the University of Michigan, Gothic diagrams have been redrawn to improve accuracy and pedagogy.

Supplements

Interactive CD-ROM

Art across Time's Core Concepts in Art CD-ROM, available free to students with every new copy of the textbook in any of its iterations, provides valuable supplemental materials. Below is a brief description and table of contents:

Description Conceived, designed, and written by students for students under the leadership of Bonnie Mitchell (Bowling Green State University), one of the preeminent multimedia designers, *Art across Time*'s Core Concepts in Art CD-ROM provides supplemental exercises and information in the areas students experience difficulties.

Contents

- **Elements of Art:** Allows students to interact with the formal elements of art by working through over 70 interactive exercises illustrating line, shape, color, light, dark, and texture.
- **Art Techniques:** Takes your students on a tour of art studios. *Art Techniques* illustrates working with a variety of media from bronze pouring, to painting, to video techniques with extensive, narrated video segments.
- **Chapter Resources:** Study resources correlated to each chapter of *Art across Time;* both a review and test preparation. Students will find key terms, chapter summaries, and a self-correcting study quiz to help prepare for in-class tests, midterms, and finals. Also included is an exercise on methodologies that demonstrates the application of different methods to Van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait.*
- **Research and the Internet:** Introduces students to the research process from idea generation, to organization, to researching on- and off-line, and includes guidelines for incorporating sources for term papers and bibliographies.
- **Study Skills:** Helps your students adjust to the rigors of college work. The *Study Skills* section of the CD-ROM provides practical advice on how to succeed at college.

Online Learning Center

Recently, the Internet has played an increasing role in college education; *Art across Time* is, therefore, supported by an Online Learning Center <http://www.mhhe.com/artacrosstime> that offers additional resources for students wishing to quiz themselves. They can send the results to their instructor via e-mail, link to additional research topics on the World Wide Web, use the pronunciation guide, follow links to artists, and more.

Student Study Guide

The student study guides are designed as chapter-by-chapter work books to accompany each volume of *Art across Time* and are also available to accompany the single volume. Perforated pages allow professors to assign exercises to be handed in along with each reading assignment. The exercises include brief essays, fill-in-the-blanks, matching artists with works, and works with their sites. In addition, students are asked to identify key figures and define terms.

Finally, slide sets for qualifying adopters and an instructor's manual complete the impressive supplemental support package for *Art across Time*. For more information, please contact your local McGraw-Hill sales representative, or e-mail <art@mcgraw-hill.com>.

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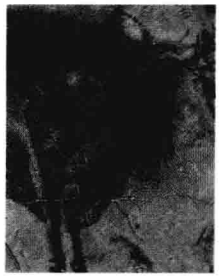

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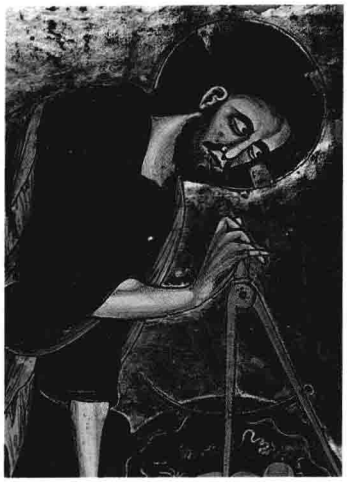


Introduction

Why Do We Study the History of Art?

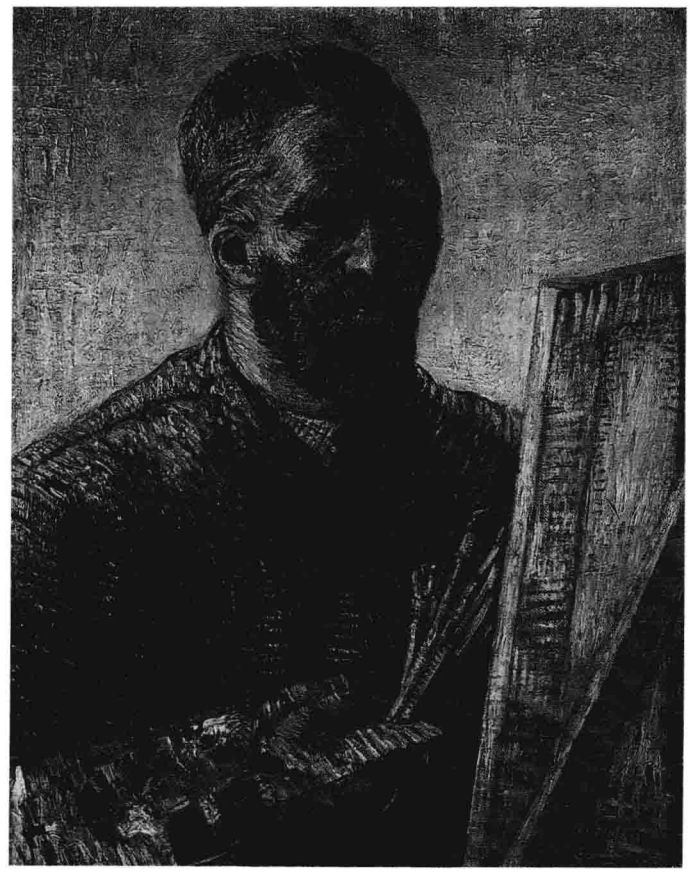
We study the arts and their history because they teach us about our own creative expressions and those of our past. Studying the history of art is one way of exploring human cultures—both ancient and modern—that have not developed written documents. For example, the prevalence of animals in the prehistoric cave paintings of western Europe reveals the importance of animals in those societies. Female figurines with oversized breasts and hips express the wish to reproduce and ensure the survival of the species. Prehistoric structures, whether oriented toward earth or sky, provide insights into the beliefs of early cultures. If such objects had not 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 onto human thought and emotion. For example, van Gogh's self-portraits are explicitly autobiographical. From what is known about his life, he was sustained by his art. In figure **I.1** he depicts himself behind a painting that we do not see, even though we might suspect that it, too, is a self-portrait. For there are several elements in the visible painting that assert the artist's presence. Van Gogh's self-image predominates; he holds a set of brushes and a palette of unformed paint composed of the same colors used in the picture. At the center of the palette is an intense orange, the distinctive color of his beard, as well as of his name (Vincent) and the date ('88), with which he simultaneously signs both the painting we see and the painting we do not see.

The arts exemplify the variety of creative expression from one culture to the next. This book surveys the major periods and styles of Western art (see box), with certain

The Western Tradition

"Western art" is the product of a group of cultures that have historically been thought of as sharing common traditions. Some of these cultures, such as that of medieval France, developed in the Western Hemisphere, but others, such as that of ancient Babylon (in modern Iraq), did not. Likewise, some cultures that were geographically western, such as that of the Maya (in modern Mexico and Central America), have not traditionally been considered part of the West. This book follows the conventional (Western) usage of the terms *Western* and *non-Western:* the Western world comprises North America and Europe, as well as ancient Egypt and the ancient Near East, while the non-Western world comprises all areas and traditions outside those boundaries. It is important, however, to be aware that these categories are based as much on ideas about culture as on geography.



I.1 Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait before His Easel,* 1888. Oil on canvas; 25¾ in. × 19⅞ in. (65.5 × 50.5 cm). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Vincent van Gogh Foundation.

highlights of non-Western art included to give readers a sense of differences—as well as similarities—in works of art around the world.

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 flat. Pictures are not only paintings, however: they include mosaics, stained glass, tapestries, drawings, prints, and photographs.

Sculptures (from the Latin *sculpere,* meaning "to carve"), unlike pictures, are three-dimensional: besides height and width, they have depth. Sculptures have traditionally been made of a variety of materials such as stone, metal, wood, and clay. More modern materials include glass, plastics, cloth, string, wire, television monitors, and even animal carcasses.

Architecture, which literally means "high (*archi*) building (*tecture*)," is the most utilitarian of the three categories. Buildings are designed to enclose and order space for specific purposes. They often contain pictures and sculptures as well as other forms of visual art. Some ancient Egyptian tombs, for example, were filled with statues of the deceased. Many churches are decorated with sculptures, paintings, mosaics, and stained-glass windows illustrating the lives of Christ and the saints. Buddhist caves and temples contain sculptures and paintings representing events in the life of the Buddha.

The Artistic Impulse

Art is a vital and persistent aspect of human experience. But where does the artistic impulse originate? We can see that it is inborn by observing children, who make pictures, sculptures, and model buildings before learning to read or write. Children trace images in dirt, build snowmen and sand castles, and decorate just about anything from their own faces to the walls of their houses. All are efforts to impose order on disorder and to create form from formlessness. Although it may be difficult to relate an Egyptian pyramid or a Greek temple to a child's sand castle or toy tower, all express the natural impulse to build.

In the adult world, creating art is a continuation and development of the child's inborn impulse to play. This is clear from the statements of artists themselves: Picasso said that he was unable to learn math because every time he looked at the number 7 he thought he saw an upside-down nose. The self-taught American artist Horace Pippin described his impulse to attach drawings to words when learning to spell.

One powerful motive for making art is the wish to leave behind after death something 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. In an anecdote about Giotto, the fourteenth-century Italian artist, the poet Dante asks Giotto why 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. According to his biographers, Michelangelo said that he had no human children because his works were his children. The twentieth-century Swiss artist Paul Klee also referred to his pictures as children, and equated artistic genius with procreation. His German contemporary Josef Albers cited this traditional connection between creation and procreation in relation to paint itself: he described a mixed color (see "The Language of Art," p. 17) 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 likeness after death. Artists are often commissioned to paint **portraits,** or representations of specific people. They also make self-portraits. "Painting makes absent men present and the dead seem alive," wrote Leon Battista Alberti, the fifteenth-century Italian humanist. "I paint to preserve the likeness of men after their death," wrote Albrecht Dürer in sixteenth-century Germany. Even as early as the Neolithic era (in western Europe c. 6000/4000–2000 B.C. (see box) and the seventh millennium in the Near East), skulls were modeled into faces with plaster, and shells were inserted into the eye sockets. In ancient Egypt, a pharaoh's features were painted on the outside of his mummy case so that his *ka,* or soul, could recognize him. The Mycenaeans made gold death masks of their kings, and the Romans preserved the images of their ancestors by carving marble portraits from wax death masks.

Chronology

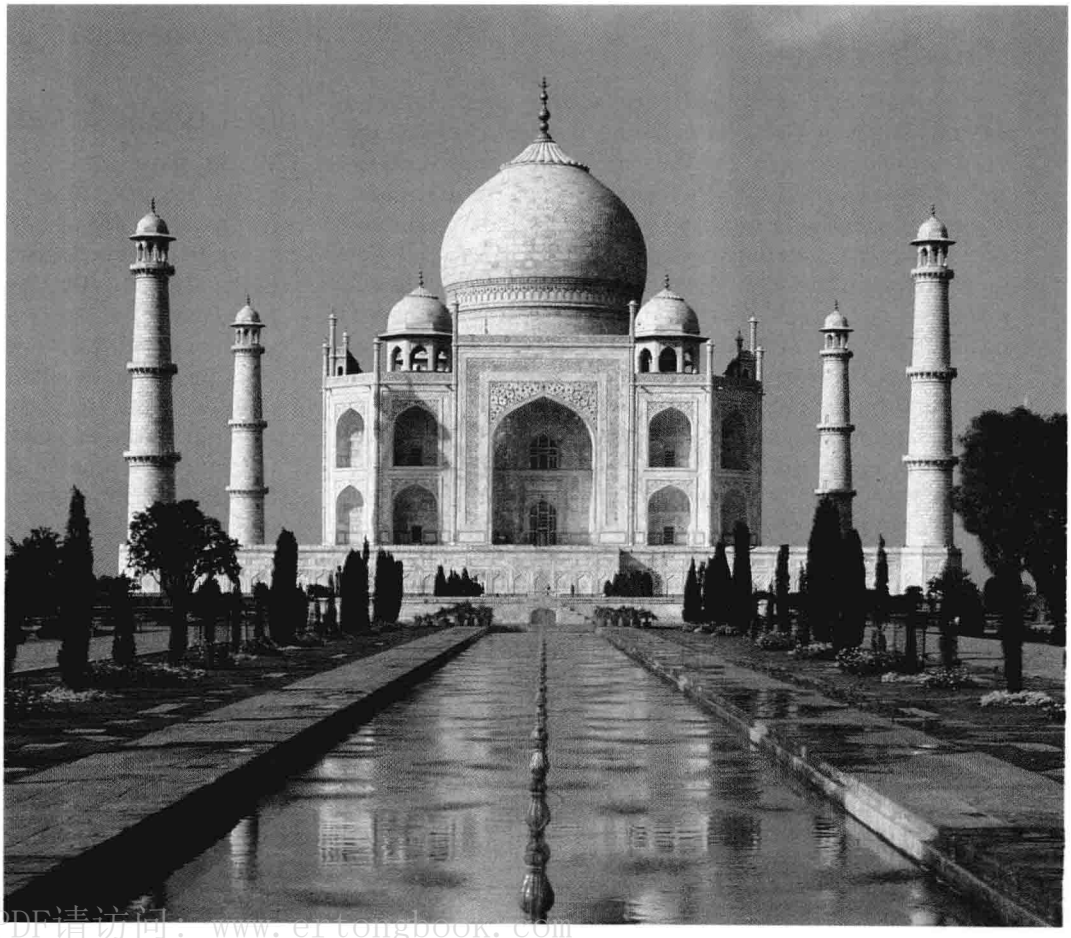
The Christian calendar, traditionally used in the West, is followed throughout this book. Other religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, have different dating systems.

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., from the Latin *anno Domini,* meaning "in the year of our Lord." The newer terms B.C.E. ("before the common era"; equivalent to B.C.) and C.E. ("common era"; equivalent to A.D.) are considered more religiously neutral. 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. When dates are approximate or tentative, they are preceded by "c.," an abbreviation for the Latin *circa,* meaning "around."

I.2 Bodyguard of the emperor Qin, terra-cotta warriors, Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.), in situ. Lintong, Shaanxi Province, China.

It is not only the features of an individual that are valued as an extension of self after death. A **patron,** someone who commissions (sponsors) works of art, often ordered more monumental tributes. For example, the Egyptian pharaohs spent years planning and overseeing the construction of their 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. In ancient China, the emperor Qin was buried with a "bodyguard" of several thousand life-sized **terra-cotta** statues of warriors, as well as chariots and horses (fig. **I.2**). Their function was literally to guard his body in the afterlife.

In fifth-century-B.C. Athens, the Parthenon was built to house a colossal sculpture of the patron goddess Athena and, at the same time, to embody the intellectual and creative achievements of Athenian civilization. Over two thousand years later, Louis XIV, king of France, built his magnificent palace at Versailles as a monument to his political power, to his reign, and to the glory of France. And in the same period in India, the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan commissioned the Taj Mahal as a memorial to his wife, Mumtaz Mahal (fig. **I.3**).



I.3 Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632–1648.

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