A WORLD HISTORY OF ART

HUGH HONOUR & JOHN FLEMING

SEVENTH EDITION

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A World History of Art

SEVENTH EDITION

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In memory of John Calmann

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FRONT COVER Raphael, *The Triumph of Galatea* (detail), c. 1511. Fresco. Villa della Farnesina, Rome.

FRONTISPIECE Wall-painting from the Villa Livia, Rome (detail), late 1st century BC. About 9ft (2.74m) wide. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.

OPPOSITE Eagle-man (detail), c. 1440–69. Fired clay, stucco and paint, 67ins (170cm) high. Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City.

PAGE ONE Gentile Bellini, *Procession in the Piazza S Marco* (detail), 1496. Tempera on canvas, 12ft ½in × 24ft 5¼ins (3.67 × 7.45m). Accademia, Venice.

A compromise between American and English spelling has been agreed by our publishers. In the transliteration of Greek and non-European names and terms we have adopted the most widely accepted spellings, using for Chinese the Pinyin system. The Christian calendar is used throughout. Dates in brackets refer to the birth and death of artists and writers and to the reigns of rulers (emperors, kings and popes).

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Preface

We have been indebted to many friends for help and encouragement in writing this book, above all to the late John Calmann, without whom we should never have had the temerity to embark on it. His death, when it was little more than half finished, deprived us of a warm friend and an outstandingly gifted publisher. Since then all possible assistance has been given to us by his sister Marianne and by his loyal staff. To Sarah Riddell's meticulous editorial skill we owe a very great deal as also to Elisabeth Ingles and Dr I. Grafe whose careful reading of the text has saved us from many errors. Susan Bolsom-Morris was indefatigable in searching for the photographs we wanted. And the book owes much to the patient cooperation and visual sensibility of the designer, Harold Bartram.

For guidance and information either on specific points or more general issues we have importuned a number of scholars, several of whom have kindly read whole chapters or sections and have given us the benefit of their specialized knowledge. They include James Ackerman, Bruce Boucher, Richard Brilliant, J. F. Cahill, Lorenz Eitner, Nicholas Gendle, Oleg Grabar, Ian Graham, Michael Grant, Francis Haskell, Howard Hibbard, Derek Hill, Robert Hillenbrand, John Dixon Hunt, Charles Jencks, Alastair Laing, Sherman E. Lee, Norbert Lynton, M. D. McLeod, Margaret Medley, Patricia Phillips, Aaron Scharf, Dorota Starzecka, William Watson and Sarah Jane Whitfield. To all of them we are deeply indebted, as also to the authors of books and periodical articles, too few of whom are recorded in our necessarily very brief bibliography, and of course to many librarians, especially those of the London Library and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence.

For help in connection with photographs and other problems we are most grateful to Naomi Caplin, Peter Carson, Françoise Chiarini, John and Thekla Clark, Anne Distel, Aastrid Fischer, Michael Graves, Andreina Griseri, Anne d'Harnoncourt, John Harris, Carlos van Hasselt, John Irwin, Arata Isozaki, Margaret Keswick, Islay Lyons, Henry P. McIlhenny, Dominique de Menil, John H. Morley, John Ross, Laurence Sickman, William Kelly Simpson, Nikos Stangos, Mary Tregear, Hermione Waterfield and William Weaver. And, finally, we must also thank, most gratefully, the friends who have helped us in more personal ways – Noel and Giana Blakiston, Milton Gendel, Nicholas and Susanna Johnston, Ornella Francisci Osti, Donald Richard, Richard Sachs, Gary Schwartz and Sebastian Walker.

Hugh Honour and John Fleming, November 1981

Preface to the Seventh Edition

The sixth edition of this book was the first to be prepared without the collaboration of John Fleming, who was able to do no more than discuss improvements to its predecessor before his death. Additions to its text have been retained in the present edition: the expansions to record recent discoveries – from the prehistoric Chauvet Cave in south-western France to the late thirteenth-century frescoes in the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome; the 'Urban Development' boxes dealing with the ancient world from Jericho to Athens, and those discussing the Roman empire, medieval Europe (contributed by Delia Gaze), renaissance Rome, seventeenth-century Islam and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and America; the quotations in the 'Sources and Documents' boxes (to which passages from Walter Benjamin's writings on photography have now been added). Also carried over from the sixth edition are the pages on the arts of Africa which were revised and partially re-written by Michael Bird, to whom I remain very grateful.

In the present, seventh edition, a significant number of the images have had the benefit of new photography, which has also allowed many of them that were formerly printed in black and white to be now in colour. Throughout, insertions have been made to clarify, or correct, remarks in the original text, and I have re-written the pages on Meso-American art in the light of the excavation of the great temple of the Aztecs in Mexico City. To other and more recent archaeological discoveries that call into question former assumptions I could do no more than allude. Two important developments in this area have been the steady increase in the corpus of prehistoric paintings, which now includes an example in England – dating from before the country was isolated from the European continent by the rise of the North Sea, and the excavations directed by Klaus Schmidt at Göbekli Tepe in south-eastern Turkey that are revealing a cult centre built soon after 9600 BC and mark a new beginning for the history of architecture and organised religion.

Most conspicuously, however, this edition differs from its predecessors in the final chapters. Chapters 21 and 22 have been completely revised and greatly expanded by Michael Archer, whose contributions in these chapters was one of the significant features of the 6th edition. In this edition, he not only revised and expanded his previous discussion, but has charted in detail the significant developments in the arts of our own troubled times. I am deeply grateful to him.

The successive editions of this book could not have been written without the help and encouragement of a number of advisers and personal friends, who are in addition to those listed in the main preface. It is a pleasure to thank by name: Eve Borsook, Michael Craig-Martin, Margaret Daly Davis, Richard Dorment, Cornelia Grassi, Claudio Guenzani, James Hall, Larissa Haskell, Walter Kaiser, Ronald de Leeuw, Michael Mallon, Vernon Hyde Minor, David Plante, Ida Rigby, Brian Robertson, Michael Rogers, Robert Skelton, Carl Strehlke, David Sylvester and Dimitros Zikos. I remain, of course, alone responsible for expressions of opinion and errors of fact. For the enthusiastic support of Laurence King Publishing – Laurence King himself, Lee Ripley Greenfield, the designer Nick Newton, the picture researcher Julia Ruxton, and above all my dedicated editors Kara Hattersley-Smith, Jessica Spencer and Donald Dinwiddie – I am extremely grateful.

Hugh Honour, December 2004

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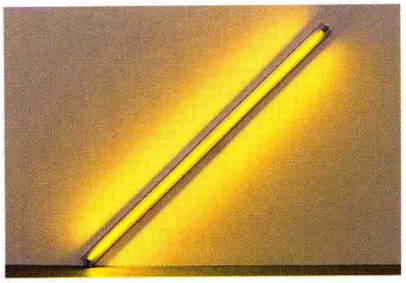

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Introduction

In writing this outline history our aims have been exploratory rather than critical. We have preferred exposition to interpretation and evaluation, in so far as they are separable. And we have tried to shed assumptions about art being intended primarily for visual enjoyment, often in alliance with social prestige, assumptions determined largely by the art market and art collecting and themselves, in turn, responsible for current Western conceptions of what 'art' is. It is not always easy to bear in mind that these conceptions are peculiar to the West and, even there, relatively recent. Until the nineteenth century few, if any, great works of art were made to be seen in art galleries. Most were made in the service of religion or magic or of some secular ideal or, more rarely, to fulfil the private longings of the artist. The essential unity of aesthetic, moral and natural experience can be felt in them in varying degrees, and they sharpen our awareness of how richly it falls on the receptive consciousness. For our senses are inextricably intertwined, the religious with the aesthetic, the aesthetic with the moral, and the moral with that of order and proportion. The appeal of a great work of art is never purely visual, simply to delight the eye. So this book seeks to explore the different ways in which men and women have given visual expression to perennial human impulses and concerns – to the appetite for sensual gratification and the need for self-knowledge and self-mastery, to exalted dreams and demonic passions, to beliefs and convictions about the ends of life and about the human environment and the supernatural powers, to hopes and fears of the beyond.

Confronting so vast a horizon in both time and space, we have been obliged to focus attention on historically prominent periods and areas, which are also those of most general interest. Chapters are arranged chronologically across a wide geographical panorama in order to allow crucial events in world history (which affected artists as much as other human beings) to stand out clearly – the aggregation of hunters and gatherers into pastoral and agricultural communities, for instance, the emergence of urban cultures with stratified social structures, the expansion and dissolution of empires, the spread and transformation of world-wide religions, the rise of industrialized states – and to permit, within these and other great historical transitions, some detailed and instructive confrontations. Juxtaposition of the 'civilized' and 'barbarian' cultures of the ancient Greeks and their neighbours in the fifth century BC, or of the works of contemporaries as dissimilar (though in some ways comparable) as Michelangelo and Koca Mimar Sinan, or of the cult of natural beauty and its expression in landscape painting in China, Japan and Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – parallels of this kind are not only mutually illuminating but sharpen awareness of the meaning and purpose of art in general. Above all, we have tried to illustrate and discuss works of art in their original contexts, dissociating them as far as possible from the museum surroundings in which they are nowadays so often confined, without, on the other hand, trying to find in them any evolutionary pattern.

In every human society, art forms part of a complex structure of beliefs and rituals, moral and social codes, magic or science, myth or history. It stands midway between scientific knowledge and magical or mythical thought, between what is perceived and what is believed, and also between human capabilities and human aspirations. As a means of communication it is akin to language, with the aim of making statements of a didactic or morally instructive nature; but at the same time it is often a means of exerting control, akin to magic, with the aim of imposing order on the physical world, of arresting time and securing immortality. Within the social group, whether it be a single village or a vast ramifying empire, motifs, themes or subjects are drawn from a common stock. The manner of the representation is restricted by the availability of materials and tools, by the skills passed on from one generation to the next and by what can only be called 'tribal' conventions, though they are often of great sophistication. Yet art is constantly regenerated like the living organisms of social and cultural structures which are always subject to modification, as a result either of internal growth or of external pressures. In stable societies, or those that seek stability, artistic changes often take place so gradually as to be barely perceptible. Even in more dynamically expansive societies artistic change may take place at one level while continuity is maintained at another. Western ideas of 'progress' have tended to distort our view of the art of the world.

ART AS CRAFT

Art, craftsmanship and technology are three terms that have seldom had meanings as distinct as those they have

acquired in the West, and only in the West, since the sixteenth century. It was at that time that painters and sculptors assumed a status superior to that of potters, furniture-makers, metalworkers, embroiderers, weavers and other practitioners of the so-called decorative arts. There is a reminder of the earlier situation, when the arts and crafts were equal, in the word 'masterpiece', which originally signified a work executed by an apprentice as a demonstration of skill in order to gain the rank of 'master' in a guild of craftsmen. Subsequently it was commonly applied to a picture or statue that seemed in some way to surpass others by the same artist or group of artists. In both senses the word implies a value judgement, but one which, until relatively recent times, was based mainly on an assessment of proficiency, or craftsmanship.

The production of any artifact is dependent on both manual skill and technical knowledge. A pottery vessel, a basket or an embroidery, no less than a temple, a painting or a statue, demands the coordination of ideas of form with dexterity of handling and a grasp of the techniques that ensure permanence. In all but the simplest utensils and buildings, however, there is a tension between ends and means, between the idea in the maker's mind and the skill needed to express it and give it form. And this tension gives art, as we understand it, a history different from that of technology. Methods of construction, carving or painting do not supersede one another in the way that a technological invention renders an older device obsolete. They often have significance apart from their function, seen most obviously in the interplay between structural and stylistic – or utilitarian and aesthetic – developments in architecture, including that of our own time.

Systems of Building

There are two basic systems of building (sometimes combined): with uprights supporting horizontal members – post and lintel, also the basis of framed construction – or with walls pierced by openings, sometimes arched. Ancient Egyptian and Greek temples, and nearly all ancient Chinese buildings, are typical examples of post-and-lintel architecture; their walls are merely fillings between uprights. Both the ancient Egyptians and the Greeks were, nevertheless, practitioners of wall architecture as well, especially for defensive purposes. Roofs to provide shelter from the elements could be supported by either system. In post-and-lintel architecture the width of the roof was limited by the length of horizontal members that could be carried by the uprights. If a building was entirely of stone the internal spaces were therefore very restricted. At an early date, and in many different places, it was discovered that a space could be completely enclosed by projecting each course of a wall slightly over that below to form a corbelled vault or dome – as in the Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae, of about 1300 BC (2.58) – though the earliest surviving example, in the Orkney Islands off the north coast of Scotland, is much earlier. It dates from about 2600 BC. The adoption of wedge-shaped stones to construct round arches and vaults, already known in ancient Egypt, was exploited by the Romans and later carried a stage further by their invention of concrete. This enabled them to span areas of an extent that was quite unprecedented and for many centuries remained unequalled. For building with concrete was abandoned in the early Christian period although other elements of Roman architecture – the columns and Classical orders and the round arch – were retained, though often in a debased and rudimentary form. In the European Middle Ages the evolution of Gothic architecture introduced a somewhat different system, with piers supporting arches and vaults of stone, as in Roman wall architecture but with the walls reduced to little more than screens, as in post-and-lintel, especially timber-framed, construction. There were radical departures from these basic systems in the twentieth century, with new developments in structural technology and the introduction of new materials, for example metal frames on which 'curtain walls' (see Glossary) can be hung, reinforced concrete shells that eliminate the distinction between walls and coverings, and 'tensile structures' with roofs of plastic webbing freely suspended on cable nets attached to masts and ground anchorages. The majority of buildings throughout the world are, however, still built in traditional ways – or designed to look as if they were.

Sculptural Techniques and Materials

Sculpture also has – or had until the present century – two basic techniques: modelling and carving. As one depends on building up clay or other malleable material and the other on reducing a piece of stone or wood, they are called additive and subtractive processes. (Cast bronze sculpture usually derived from modelling, so too did the iron statues produced mainly in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century China; but iron is nowadays more usually forged and welded – see below. Such soft metals as gold, silver and copper may be either cast in a modelled mold or hammered into shape and chiselled by techniques akin to carving.) Carvers are restricted by the natural characteristics, shape and consistency of their materials and the efficiency of tools with which to fashion them. The cylinder of a tree-trunk, for example, is like an invisible cage enclosing a statue carved from a single piece of wood. The regularity of a block of stone hewn in the quarry similarly determines the form of a figure when a carver begins by drawing outlines on its four sides. Hardness or brittleness of stone dictates the degree of delicacy with which it can be worked. Iron chisels and drills, which came into use in the West in the first millennium BC, greatly lightened the carver's task and opened up new possibilities, especially in undercutting, though they resulted mainly in increased production. Some of the most finely worked statues ever created were carved without their aid from the hardest of stones in ancient Egypt. In wood, effects of the greatest intricacy and delicacy were often obtained with the simplest implements, such as flakes of stone and seashells in Melanesia (see pp. 742–43).

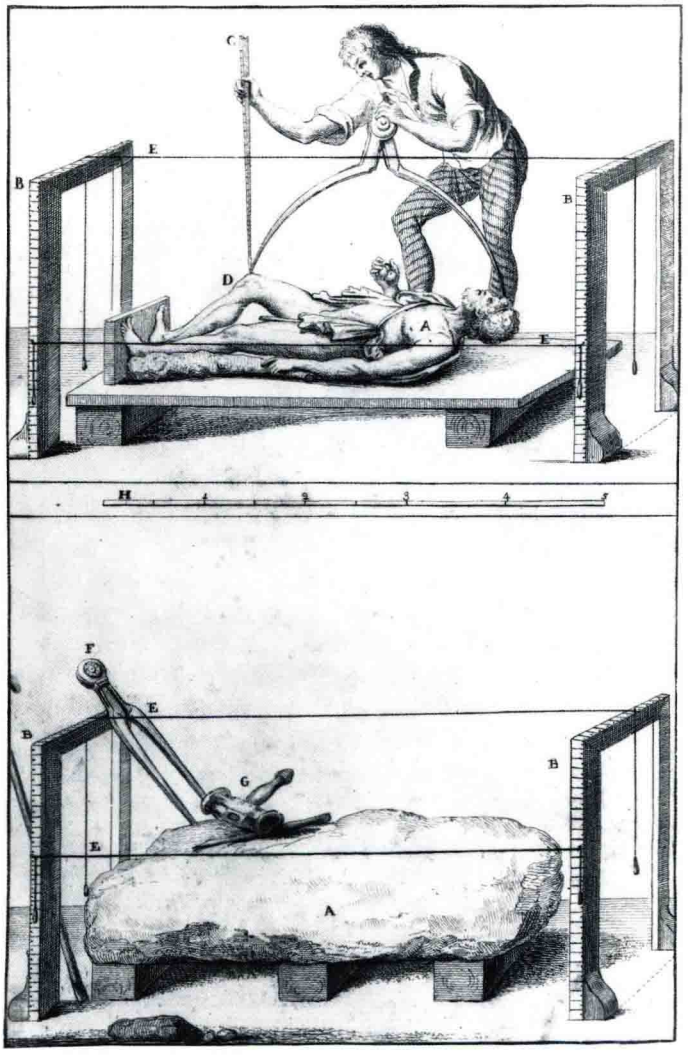
So far as the history of European sculpture is concerned, by far the most important development was the invention,

0.1 *Dionysus and Satyr*, unfinished, 2nd century AD. Marble, 28ins (71.1cm) high. National Archeological Museum, Athens.

probably in fifth-century BC Greece, of a technique that enabled a sculptor to carve in stone an accurate version of a model in clay, plaster or some other easily manipulated substance. The model was marked at extremities with 'points' and the distances between them and a plumb line or wooden framework were measured so that holes of equivalent depth could be drilled into a marble block at corresponding points. The material between these holes was then chiselled away to reveal a rough version of the model. An ancient Greek statue, abandoned at this stage, has by chance survived (**0.1**). This process was carried on unchanged until the early nineteenth century, as illustrated in manuals published for sculptors (**0.2**). Later, instruments were devised to measure any protuberance or cavity in the model from three fixed points and thus facilitate the finishing of the marble. By simple multiplication or division of the various measurements an enlarged or reduced scale version of the model could be carved. In nineteenth-century Europe this technique of working from points enabled many sculptors to confine themselves to modelling in clay and leave the arduous task of carving to assistants – in France called *practiciens*, practitioners of their craft, as distinct from creative artists.

Modellers are, however, restricted by the properties of clay, for no form extending far beyond the lump into which it naturally subsides when damp will remain standing without an interior skeleton of wood or metal. Clay figures are also impermanent unless baked hard – that is, transformed into terracotta – in an oven the heat of which must be controlled to prevent fragmentation. In the second half of the third millennium BC it was discovered in Mesopotamia (and somewhat later elsewhere) that a durable version of a clay statue could be made in bronze by a *cire perdue* or lost-wax process of casting. Two analogous procedures were later evolved. By one the figure modelled in clay was covered with wax to the thickness required for the bronze and then thickly encased in more clay, leaving apertures in this outer coating through which molten bronze could be poured and many smaller holes through which the wax – which melted on contact – could escape. Alternatively, by the negative process of casting, hollow

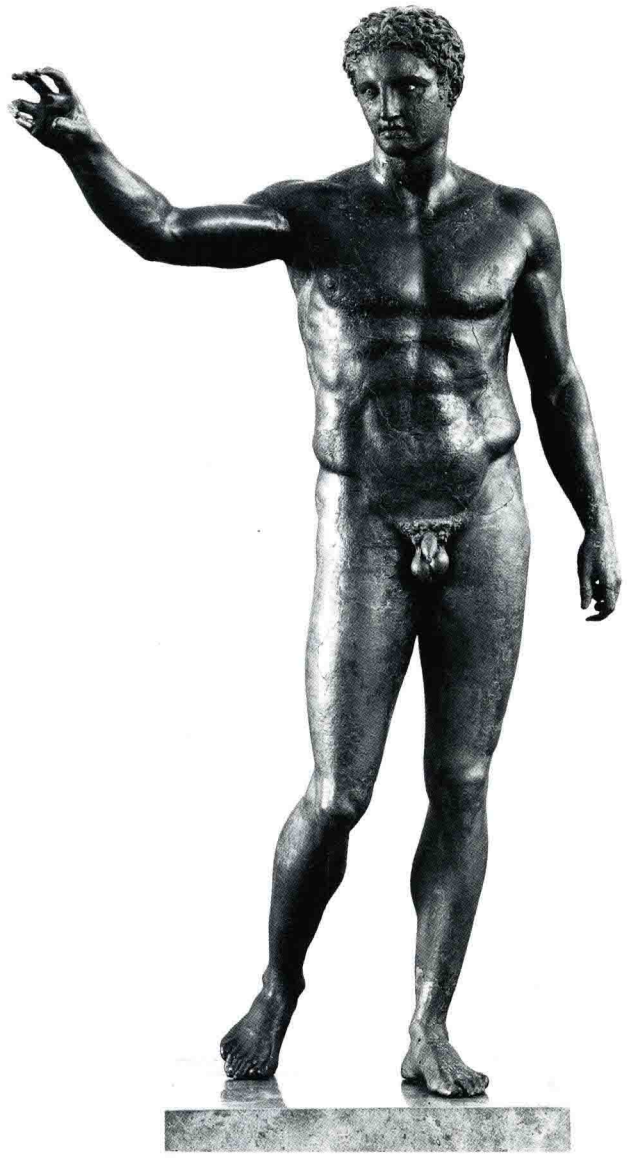
0.2 Francesco Carradori, *Istruzione Elementare per gli Studiosi della Scultura*, Florence, 1802. Plate IX.



molds were made from the two sides of a model, their interior surfaces were covered with wax of appropriate thickness, they were then joined together and filled with a core, the bronze was poured in and the wax expelled. Whichever process was adopted, the outer casing was removed when the metal had cooled and hardened, the remains of the original model or core were then shaken out, leaving a shell of bronze which was finished by hammering and scraping away any blemishes. (For casting bronze vessels a different system was developed in China in the second millennium BC; see pp. 77–79.)

As hollow bronze statues are much lighter in weight than equivalent pieces of stone (especially marble and other close-grained stones favoured for their durability) and also have some resilience, the medium permits a wider range of formal effects. Stone sculptures must be columnar, cubic or pyramidal if they are to stand upright. The legs of a standing figure cannot be placed wide apart unless a third support is provided to prevent fracture at the ankles. Bronze figures, on the other hand, may be delicately, even precariously, balanced, giving an appearance of living, breathing movement rare in marble statues. The fourth-century BC Greek *Boy from Antikythera* is a notable example (**0.3**). When a Greek bronze statue was copied in marble in Roman times, the insertion of a third support, usually a tree-stump, was necessary and the figure lost much of its vitality as a result. (This is very obvious in copies of Myron's *Discobolus*, 4.33.)

In stone and wood, as well as clay and bronze, sculptors in many parts of the world have, nevertheless, succeeded in making images that are convincingly lifelike – more so, indeed, than casts taken from living bodies. Their production involves much more than the meticulous imitation of forms and surfaces. But this has rarely been regarded as the principal aim of sculpture, most of which has been devoted to religious and otherworldly subjects – statues of the Buddha and Hindu deities, cult figures carved in Africa and Polynesia, and masks in the American north-west. In the twentieth century verisimilitude was completely disregarded by many Western artists who conceive sculpture as the art of creating three-dimensional forms often only barely, if at all, representational in intention. Many have abandoned the long-established techniques of carving and modelling as well as such traditional materials as marble and bronze. Instead, iron has been much used as a medium, wrought by the processes of forging, hammering and welding formerly used for making weapons and utilitarian objects. It was the use of iron that made possible a great revolution in sculpture during this century: the shift away from 'closed' (solid) to 'open' (constructed) form. González's work, and in particular his collaboration with Picasso in the 1920s and 1930s, was the catalyst for this breakthrough. González himself was one of its great exponents (20.23). Later, new synthetic materials were taken up and three-dimensional works were made by 'assembling' pieces of the most miscellaneous materials. Some artists have extended 'sculpture' to include their own bodies (see p. 858).



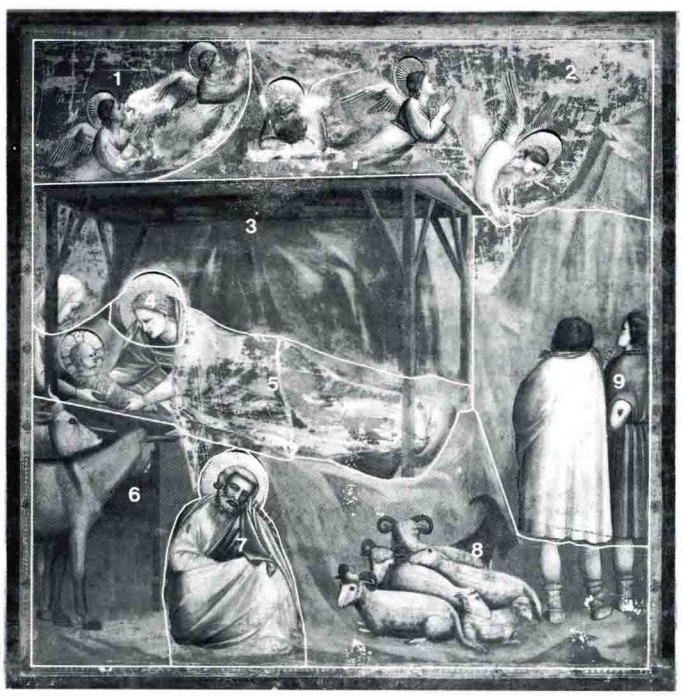
0.3 *Boy from Antikythera*, mid-4th century BC. Bronze, 6ft 3½ins (1.92m) high. National Archeological Museum, Athens.

Painting Techniques and Materials

The only basic practical problem confronting painters was that of fixing pigments to a ground in order to preserve them (though durability has not always been desired; many paintings were and are intended to last no more than a short time). There are normally three layers to a painting: a prepared ground between a film of pigment and the support, which may be a rock-face, a wall or some transportable material such as wood, paper, canvas or other textile. Pigments are basically of two types: stains that are absorbed into the ground and colored powders (mainly of mineral substances) mixed with some adhesive binding agent and applied on to the ground. The former have been used since very early times in many parts of the world to paint on absorbent plastered walls and ceilings. They are those adopted for fresco – a term which is often given to various types of mural paintings but should be reserved for those in which the pigment is absorbed into the wall surface, notably the technique perfected in Italy towards

the end of the thirteenth century by Giotto (see p. 403). For true fresco a wall or ceiling was usually covered with a fairly smooth layer of plaster which was allowed to dry before the painting was executed on another layer of plaster while it was still damp and fresh (*fresco* in Italian). As plaster dries quickly, no more than a section of the composition could be painted at a time, such a section being called in Italy a *giornata* or 'a day's work' (**0.4**). To avoid discontinuities between one completed section and the next – a hazard of this piecemeal manner of working – some fourteenth-century artists sketched the outlines of their compositions in a red ochre pigment (called *sinopia*) on to the first coat of plaster. (Some of these so-called *sinopie* drawings have been revealed in recent restorations.) Later the composition was sometimes drawn on paper (called a cartoon) temporarily applied to the dry plaster, which was marked through holes pricked around the main contours. (Raphael did this when painting the *Stanze* in the Vatican; see pp. 471 and 474.) The great advantage of fresco painting is that the pigments absorbed into the thickness of the plaster have great durability – with the corresponding disadvantage that no alterations or corrections can be made in the course of painting. Also, the range of pigments that could be used was limited. Some colors, notably blue and a few reds and greens, could be applied only after the fresco was dry (*secco* in Italian). In fifteenth-century Italy artists made increasing use of pigments applied *a secco*. But around 1500 there was a revival of pure fresco technique, which came to be regarded by art theorists as the ideal means for painting walls and ceilings, and also as the one that revealed artistic proficiency most clearly. It required, as Giorgio Vasari (see p. 491) later remarked, a hand 'dextrous, resolute and rapid', 'nimble and free'. Frescoes are large, but a somewhat similar technique was developed before the beginning of the sixteenth century for painting on small sheets of paper in watercolor. Pigments were mixed with a gum that dissolves in water and thus provides transparent stains. This, too, required rapid and free handling, for once the color had been applied and absorbed by the ground, the watercolorist, like the fresco painter, could make no changes – except by superimposing them with solid pigments or body-colors.

0.4 Giotto, *The Nativity*, with the giornate marked, c. 1304–13. Fresco, 7ft 7ins × 6ft 7½ins (2.31 × 2.02m). Scrovegni Chapel, Padua.



For painting on panels of wood, the technique generally adopted in Europe from about the twelfth century onwards was tempera: powdered pigments made workable (tempered) by egg-yolk and mixed with some form of gum. The support was covered with gesso (plaster mixed with size) on to which the composition was drawn and/or incised. If some areas were to be gilded, as they often were, they were coated with bole (a type of fine red clay) which was burnished and then covered with very thin sheets of gold leaf. Other parts were underpainted in low tones of the desired colors and finished with one layer above another of translucent tempera paint, each of which had to be completed quickly before it dried. Details could be rendered with greater delicacy than in fresco and the final work also had greater luminosity. But such effects could be more easily attained with oil paint which, in the fifteenth century, gradually superseded tempera (not to be revived until the twentieth century). Pigments had been mixed with oils for some types of painting (for example, on shields) in ancient Roman times and in the early Middle Ages. And oil painting, as the term is understood today, was not an invention, attributable to an individual at a particular moment, but a gradual, perhaps trial-and-error, development in the studios of artists some of whom mixed pigments with oils as well as egg-yolk. By the 1430s, however, Jan van Eyck and probably other painters in the Netherlands evolved mixtures that included oil (from linseed or nuts) fused with a hard resin (amber or copal) diluted with oil derived from lavender or rosemary. This was a light, fluid medium which dried easily but slowly, permitting the careful depiction of minute details. Transparent oil pigments applied in layers gave an effect of extraordinary luminosity as may be seen, for instance, in the *Ghent Altarpiece* (**0.5**). This type of oil medium was, however, suitable for painting only on panel or fine linen that was subsequently glued to a wooden support. A different mixture including a soft, rather than a hard, resin was developed in Italy for painting on canvas stretched over a wood frame, which became the preferred type of support for all but very small oil paintings throughout Europe. It permitted much freer brushwork than tempera while also offering unlimited possibilities for shading, scumbling (applying a layer of opaque or semi-opaque pigment irregularly so that some of the color beneath remains visible), retouching and superimposing glazes (transparent films which modify underlying colors). Painters evolved innumerable variants on the basic mixture in order to obtain not only the colors they wanted but also the consistency of the medium which might be either

0.5 Hubert and Jan van Eyck, *Christ Enthroned*, detail of the *Ghent Altarpiece*, completed 1432. Oil on panel. St Bavo, Ghent.

liquid or so thick it could be applied with a spatula if not the fingers. And in the course of time attempts were made to rediscover those found empirically – guided by experience and perhaps helped by accident – by the most famous painters, notably Titian (11.45, 11.46, 11.47, 11.48). Pigments that had been powdered and combined with other substances in the studios of medieval artists became, by the early sixteenth century, increasingly available ready-for-use from specialist colormen. Painters differed from one another in the pigments they used for their ground color, and still more in the mixtures they evolved to obtain the final hues. Not until the nineteenth century was the range of colors derived from natural mineral and vegetable sources expanded by the commercial production of synthetic pigments, which were similarly mixed with linseed and other oils.

Artists in the West have continued to use and exploit oil paint to the present day. There was, in fact, no other medium as satisfactory for large-scale painting on movable supports until the development in the 1960s of acrylic, a synthetic emulsion (a kind of plastic) which can be applied in the same way. Acrylic has often been adopted by artists in reaction against the mystique of oil paint (21.19) – the exaggerated prestige accorded to the medium itself, especially by connoisseurs with their admiration for bravura brushwork and their relish for the consistency of the pigments themselves, called *matière* in French with a suggestion of their luscious, juicy and other sensuously delectable qualities. (The only competitor for portraiture was pastel: painting with opaque dry chalks mixed with a little adhesive, perfected in the eighteenth century [14.18] and, after falling from favour, revived in the late nineteenth.)

The framed picture on canvas is a Western phenomenon (not imitated elsewhere before the nineteenth century) and its popularity in the West accounts for the prestige acquired by the art of painting from the sixteenth century onwards. To it is also due the distinction made between painting and the crafts. In the Middle Ages paintings on precious metals in enamel (a kind of colored glass which required great skill in handling) had been more highly prized than those in tempera which, with their gilding, were often made in emulation of them. Similarly, mosaics composed of little cubes of variously colored stones and glass, embroidered panels and woven tapestries were all more highly regarded and more costly than fresco paintings for covering walls and ceilings – not only because they required greater expenditure of time and materials. Later the relationship was reversed and oil paintings set the standard. Although tapestries remained the most expensive form of wall decoration until the late eighteenth century they were usually designed by artists distinguished as painters, and their skilful weavers ranked as subservient craftsmen. Embroidery, very often the work of women and less dependent than tapestries on models by painters, was also downgraded.

Print-making

In the production of prints there has also been, mainly in the West and since the sixteenth century, a division of labour between designers and executants. The purpose of print-making is to produce a number of copies of a single design on sheets of paper, silk or any other material that will absorb ink. The earliest technique was that of the woodcut by which the design was drawn on a smooth block of wood, the parts that were to be white on the print

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