



A HISTORY OF

ART

PAINTING • SCULPTURE • ARCHITECTURE

Second Edition 1985

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National Gallery, London (fig. 1148)

On the back cover: RENZO PIANO and RICHARD ROGERS.
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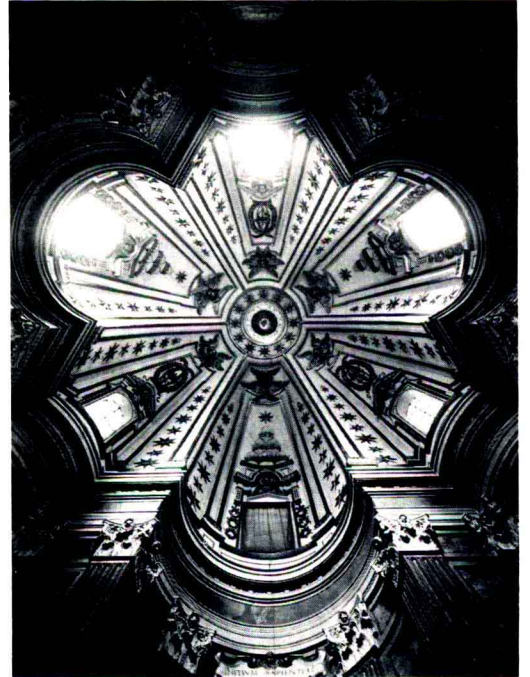
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ART

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MODERN WORLD

SECOND EDITION



A HISTORY OF PAINTING · SCULPTURE ARCHITECTURE

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TO
MEYER SCHAPIRO

Scholar, teacher, counselor, friend

PREFACE

Art is the only thing that can go on
mattering once it has stopped hurting.

Elizabeth Bowen

The purpose of this book is to give students of all ages something that really will go on mattering, once the bluebooks have been handed in and the painfully memorized names and dates have receded into dimmer levels of consciousness. To this end I have tried to put together a usable account of the whole history of artistic production in the Western world—an activity that ranks as the highest of all human achievements (so I maintain), surpassing even the most startling cures of modern medicine and the little machine hurtling past the last planets and out into interstellar space. Obviously no teacher can use all the material in these two volumes. But I respect teachers enough to give them their choice of what to include and what to leave out, and students enough to want them to have a book that they can keep and continue to explore on their own, whether or not they ever take another course in the history of art. General readers, equally deserving of respect, will surely not object to as full a picture as possible.

The revised edition is the product of many months of thought and labor. Much has had to be changed through experience, mine and that of other teachers. The format is different, with colorplates mixed in with black-and-white illustrations in closer proximity to the relevant text. The order of several chapters has been changed, in order to produce a more continuous flow of barbarian, Byzantine, and Renaissance art. The Introduction and time lines have been totally recast and illustrated. The Introduction may seem a little less “scholarly” than the original version, but it now includes guidelines on how to approach, look at, and think about works of art. Books have been written on this subject, many of them, and I have deliberately restricted my account to what can fit into an introduction. Also, the defeating columns of continuous print in the Introduction have been broken up by illustrations, chosen so as to provide immediate examples of the principles under discussion (figure numbers are supplied to refer to still more examples in later chapters).

Finally, a long-overdue attempt has been made to give women something approaching their just treatment in the history of art. But the reader should understand that the task is not as easy as it might seem. What can one say about women artists in periods when women were systematically excluded from all forms of artistic production except, let us say, embroidery? And what can one write about women as artistic leaders in later periods when they were still permitted only marginal participation? In those chapters in which women either do not appear at all or turn up in minor roles, an attempt is made to explain why. I hope the reader will also understand that what I say in the Introduction about Women in Art, and what I undertake in other chapters, has been carried out with goodwill and conviction. Time alone will tell whether it is sufficient.

The teacher-student relationship is one of the deepest and most productive of all human bonds. How can I forget what my own long career has owed to the teachers, graduate and undergraduate, who gave me my start? Fifty years ago, as a college sophomore, I registered for a class with Meyer Schapiro, and the whole course of my life was transformed. Not only did he introduce me to the fields of medieval and modern art, in which his knowledge is vast, but he opened my eyes to the meaning of art-historical studies and to methods of art-historical thought and investigation. I am grateful to other magnificent teachers, now no longer living, especially to Walter W. S. Cook, Walter Friedlaender, Karl Lehmann, Millard Meiss, Richard Offner, Erwin Panofsky, George Rowley, and Rudolf Wittkower, and to Richard Krautheimer. The faith, advice, and inspiration of Bernard Berenson stood me in good stead in many a difficult moment. I owe much to the generosity of Katherine S. Dreier who in 1935 opened to me her pioneer collection of modern art and to the rigorous discipline of the sculptor Robert Aitken who taught me what a line means.

At this moment I think also with warmth and happiness of all my students since I began teaching in 1939—of those seas of faces in the big survey courses at Smith College, Washington University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Virginia, as well as of the advanced and graduate groups, many of whose members have themselves been teaching for a quarter of a century and are now in a position to give me valued criticism and advice.

My colleagues at the University of Virginia—Malcolm Bell III for ancient art, John J. Yiannias for Byzantine and early medieval, Marion Roberts for late medieval and Northern Renaissance, Keith P. F. Moxey for Baroque, and David Winter for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—read the sections of the manuscript that pertain to their special fields, gave me the benefit of their learning and insight, and made many crucial suggestions. Once the first edition was in print, Kenneth J. Conant, Miles Chappell, and Martin S. Stanford made important corrections. My former colleague Fred S. Kleiner and my present colleague John Dobbins provided many valuable corrections and suggestions for the chapters on Greek and Roman art. Helpful suggestions were also made by Karl Kilinski II. The reviewers invited by Prentice-Hall made many comments for the revision, some mutually contradictory, others extremely useful. Marvin Eisenberg in particular gave me more and better advice for the reorganization of the book than I can ever hope to acknowledge.

I deeply appreciate the confidence of the late Harry N. Abrams for having entrusted me with the task of writing this book and am grateful to the unforgettable Milton S. Fox for starting me off on it. My thanks also go to Margaret L. Kaplan for invaluable supervisory and editorial work on both editions and for valiant assistance in the crises that inevitably beset any ambitious undertaking; to John P. O'Neill for his sensitive and careful editorship of the first edition; to Margaret Donovan who with insight and patience has edited the second, collaborating with me in the innumerable problems of revision; and to Barbara Lyons and her staff who—with infinite labor—assembled all the illustrative material. The fresh new design is by Abby Goldstein, and the beautiful new maps and time lines are the work of Robert Gray. Jeryldene Wood has helped me on many matters, especially the search for new material in libraries and the revision of the text for the time lines.

Frederick Hartt
Belvoir, Charlottesville, Virginia
Advent, 1983

THE NATURE OF ART

What is art? That question would have been answered differently in almost every epoch of history. Our word *art* comes from a Latin term meaning “skill, way, or method.” In ancient times and during the Middle Ages all kinds of trades and professions were known as arts. The liberal arts of the medieval curriculum included music but neither painting, sculpture, nor architecture, which were numbered among the mechanical arts, since they involved making objects by hand. At least since the fifteenth century, the term *art* has taken on as its principal characteristic in most societies the requirement of aesthetic appreciation as distinguished from utility. Even if its primary purpose is shelter, a great building, for example, is surely a work of art.

The word *aesthetic* derives from a Greek term for “perceive,” and perception will occupy us a little farther on. What is perceived aesthetically is “beauty,” according to the Oxford Dictionary, and beauty is defined as the quality of giving pleasure to the senses. Yet there are paintings, sculptures, plays, novels intended to produce terror or revulsion by the vivid representation of tragic or painful subjects. The same goes for certain moments in music, when loud or dissonant sounds, hardly distinguishable from noise, are essential for the full realization of the composer’s purpose. These are undeniably works of art in the modern meaning of the term, even though beauty conceived as pleasure is largely excluded—that is, unless we are willing to count the pleasure we feel in admiring the author’s ability to present reality or the not especially admirable pleasure a horror film gives to an audience seated in perfect safety.

Clearly something essential has been overlooked in the Oxford definition of beauty. To be sure, throughout history beauty has been analyzed on a far loftier plane than mere sensory pleasure, beginning in Greek philosophy with treatments of a divine order of which the beauty we perceive is a dim earthly reflection. And later writers on the philosophy of art—especially in the eighteenth century and since, culminating in the self-proclaimed “science” of aesthetics—have considered beauty from many different standpoints, constructing elaborate philosophical systems, often on the basis of limited knowledge of art and its history. Is there not some distinguishing quality in the very nature of a work of visual, literary, or musical art that can embrace both the beautiful and the repellent, so often equally important to the greatest works of art? The question may perhaps be answered in the light of a concept developed by the early twentieth-century American philosopher of education John Dewey in his book *Art as Experience*. Without necessarily subscribing to all of Dewey’s doctrines, one can assent to his basic belief that all of human experience, beautiful and ugly, pleasurable and painful, even humorous and absurd, can be distilled by the artist, crystallized in a work of art, and preserved to be experienced by the observer as long as that work lasts. It is this ability to embrace human experience of all sorts and transmit it to the observer that distinguishes the work of art.

If all of human experience can be embodied in works of art, we have then to ask, "Whose experience?" Obviously the artist's first of all. The work inevitably includes some reference to the artist's existence, but often even more to the time in which he or she lived. It may have been ordered by a patron for a specific purpose. If a building or part of a building, the work undoubtedly had a role to play in the social or religious life of the artist's time. Can we appreciate such works without knowing anything of their purpose, standing as we do at a totally different moment in history?

Perhaps we can. There are many works of prehistoric art that we cannot interpret accurately in the complete absence of reliable knowledge, but to our eyes they remain beautiful and convincing. This may be because we can easily relate them to our own experience of animals. And there are others that are impressive to us even if foreign to every kind of experience we can possibly know. Simply as forms, masses, lines, we find them interesting. Yet how much more articulate and intelligent our response to works of art can be if we know their purpose in the individual or corporate experience of their makers. We can take a part of a building that strikes us as beautiful, study how it was originally devised to fit a specific practical use, then watch it develop under changing pressures, sometimes to the point of total transformation. Or we can watch a type of religious image arise, change, become transfigured, or disappear, according to demands wholly outside the artist's control. Such knowledge can generate in us a deeper understanding and eventually an enriched appreciation of the works of art we study. If we learn to share the artist's experience, insofar as the historical records and the works of art themselves make it accessible to us, then our own life experience can expand and grow. We may end up appreciating the beauty and meaning of a work of art we did not even like at first.

Today people make works of art because they want to. They enjoy the excitement of creation and the feeling of achievement, not to speak of the triumph of translating their sensory impressions of the visible world into a personal language of lines, surfaces, forms, and colors. This was not always so. Throughout most of history artists worked characteristically on commission. No matter how much they enjoyed their work, and how much of themselves they poured into it, they never thought of undertaking a major work without the support of a patron and the security of a contract. In most periods of history artists in any field had a clear and definable place in society—sometimes modest, sometimes very important—and their creations thus tended to reflect the desires of their patrons and the forces in their human environment.

Today the desires that prompt patrons to buy works of art are partly aesthetic. Collectors and buyers for museums and business corporations do really experience a deep pleasure in surrounding themselves with beautiful things. But there are other purposes in collecting. Patrons want to have the best or the latest (often equated with the best) in order to acquire or retain social status. Inevitably, the thought of eventual salability to collectors can, and often does, play a formative role in determining aspects of an artist's style. It takes a courageous artist to go on turning out works of art that will not sell.

In earlier periods in history factors of aesthetic enjoyment and social prestige were also important. Great monarchs or popes enjoyed hiring talented artists not only to build palaces or cathedrals, but also to paint pictures, to carve statues, to illustrate manuscripts, or to make jewels—partly because they enjoyed the beautiful forms and colors, but partly also to increase their apparent power and prestige.

If our appreciation of art is subject to alterations brought about by time and experience, what then is quality? What makes a work of art good? Are there standards of artistic value? These essential questions, perpetually asked anew, elude satisfactory answer on a verbal plane. One can only give examples, and even these are sure to be contradictory. The nineteenth-century American poet Emily Dickinson was once asked how she knew when a piece of verse was really poetry. "When it takes the top of your head off," she replied. But what if a work of art that ought to take the top of your head off refuses to do so? Demonstrably, the same work that moves some viewers is unrewarding to others. Moreover, time and repeated viewing can change the attitude of even an experienced person.

Often a dynamic new period in the history of art will find the works of the preceding period distasteful. Countless works of art, many doubtless of very high quality, have either perished because the next generation did not like them or have been substantially altered to fit changes in taste. (As we shall see, there are other motives for destruction as well.) And even observers of long experience can disagree in matters of quality.

The twentieth century, blessed by unprecedented methods of reproduction of works of art, has given readers a new access to the widest variety of styles and periods. Incidentally, André Malraux in his book *The Museum Without Walls* has pointed out the dangers of this very opportunity in reducing works of art of every size and character to approximately the same dimensions and texture. There is, of course, no substitute for the direct experience of the real work of art, sometimes overwhelming in its intensity no matter how many times the student has seen reproductions.

The ideal of the twentieth century is to like every "good" work of art. There is an obvious advantage in such an attitude—one gains that many more wonderful experiences. Yet there are inborn differences between people that no amount of experience can ever change. If after reading many books and seeing many works of art, ineradicable personal preferences and even blind spots still remain, the student should by no means be ashamed of them. Barriers of temperament are natural and should be expected. But—and this is all-important—such admissions should come *after*, not before, a wholehearted attempt to accept the most disparate works of art on their own grounds; one must not merely condemn them because they are unfamiliar. The world of art is wide and rich; there is room in it for everyone who wants to learn, to experience, above all to *see*.

Women in Art

Part of the explanation of women's exclusion from artistic endeavors, as well as from others, is doubtless to be sought in their physical status in times before modern medicine. What men have historically demanded of women was a home and children. Until quite recently it took a steady round of childbearing to produce a few living heirs. Most women were married in their teens, and most married women were pregnant most of the time. Many died in or as a result of endless childbirths, and relatively few survived the childbearing age for long. Men also wanted to make sure that the children were their own. In their eyes, the hurly-burly of a studio full of apprentices and assistants was no place to maintain "chastity." In fact, the pioneer woman painter Artemisia Gentileschi was actually raped in her father's studio by one of his assistants. Nor could women be permitted to study the nude figure, in periods when such study was the foundation of all art involving human representation. As recently as 1931–34, when I attended drawing and sculpture classes at the Art School of

the National Academy of Design in New York City, women and men were required to work in separate life classes, and no male model could be shown entirely nude to women. A glance at even the bathing suits of the 1920s and 1930s (not to speak of those of the 1890s) in old photographs will show how far we have come since. Modern medicine has insured that most babies will survive, and contraception can limit the number of births to those desired. Women, in the Western world at least, now outlive men. We are still trying to cope with the moral implications of the revolution in sexual attitudes, but one by-product has surely been that women can now study the human body and engage in studio life without disapproval.

Furthermore, a woman tied to domesticity and constant pregnancy could scarcely participate in any other very arduous physical activities. In the days when architects got their start as carpenters or stonemasons, and sculptors as stonecutters, it is not hard to see why women could not join in. Even painting, in the Renaissance, involved strenuous activity high on scaffolding, carrying sacks of sand and lime and pots of water. The only women artists recorded in antiquity painted portraits, which could be done in comfortable surroundings. Alas, their work is all lost. But in the Middle Ages nuns in convents, remote from male company, were considered expert painters of illuminated manuscripts. Five splendid examples known to have been painted by women are included in this revision, for the first time in any general textbook. Then, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, painters' daughters (like Artemisia Gentileschi) began to participate, and the occasional woman painter appeared on her own. Some achieved excellence, and several are included here. But even as late as the eighteenth century women were still mostly limited to portrait painting (often with spectacular results).

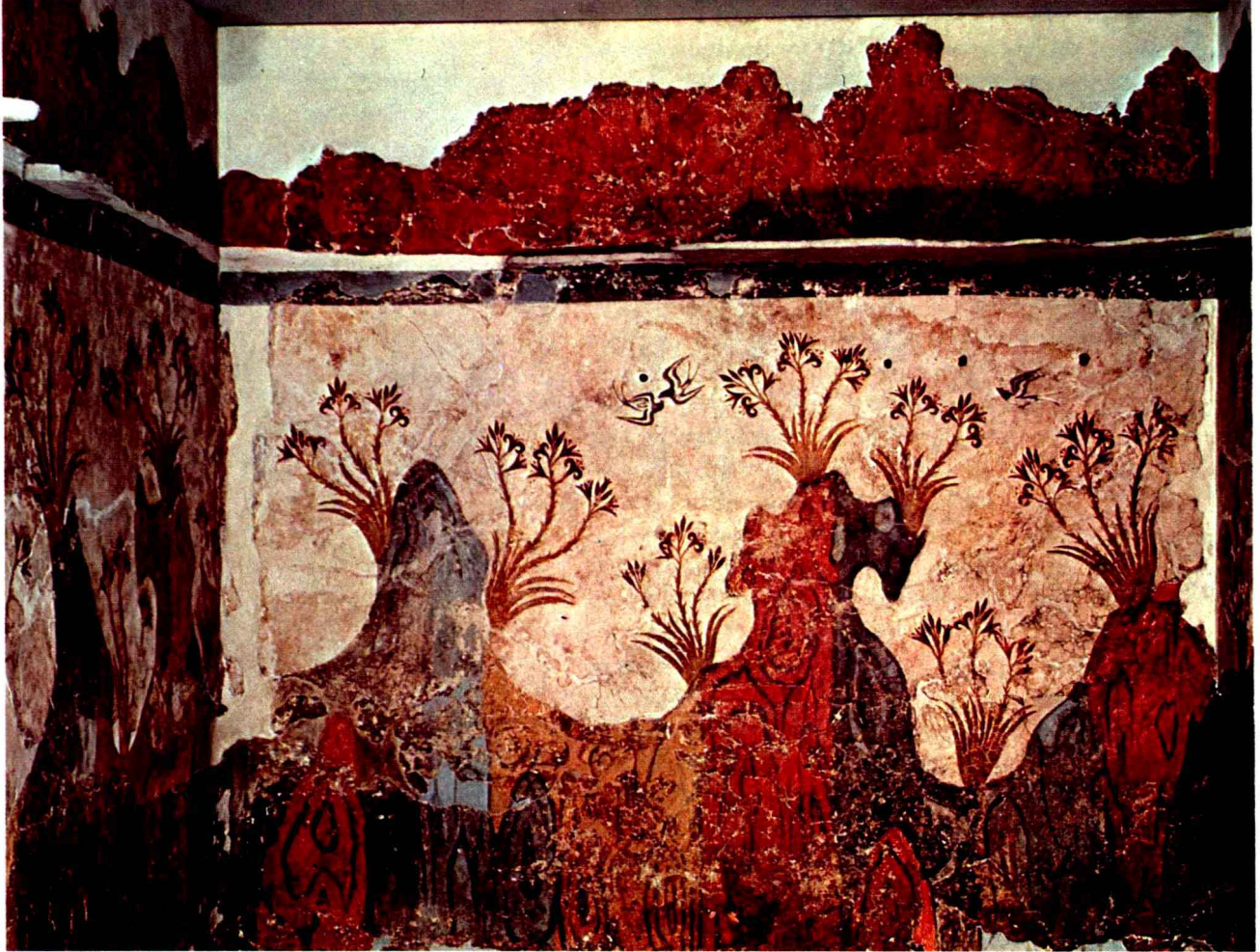
In sculpture the widespread use of the pointing machine eventually relegated stonecutting to expert workmen, and once the procedure became less physically demanding women sculptors appeared—in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And when architecture began to be taught in schools rather than springing spontaneously from woodworking or stoneworking shops women students began to attend, although they are still relatively rare.

In periods when women artists are infrequent or entirely absent I have done my best to explain why. When they begin to turn up in numbers, they take their place with the men in these pages. Since the final work of art often owes a great deal to the desires of the patron who commissioned it, consideration has also been given to women patrons, who were many times extremely imaginative and original.

PERCEPTION AND REPRESENTATION How has the artist perceived and recorded the visible world—trees, let us say—in widely separated periods in the history of art? The earliest known European landscape, a wall painting from the Greek island of Thera (fig. 1), dates from about 1500 B.C. and shows natural forms reduced to what look like flat cutouts. The contours and a few inner shapes of rocks, plants, and birds are drawn in outline (as in most very early art, or indeed the art of children or of present-day untrained adults) and simply colored in, accurately enough, however, for identification. Doubtless the occupants of the room felt they were in the midst of a “real” landscape, wrapped around them on three walls, but few today would agree, despite the charm of the murals as decoration and the bouncing vitality of the outlines.

Style

1. Room with landscape frescoes from the Cycladic island of Thera, including areas of modern reconstruction. Before 1500 B.C. National Archaeological Museum, Athens
2. GIOTTO. *Joachim Takes Refuge in the Wilderness*, fresco, Arena Chapel, Padua, Italy. 1305–6



In a work (fig. 2) painted shortly after A.D. 1300 by the Italian artist Giotto, rocks and plants are beautifully modeled in light and shade and do seem to exist in three dimensions, yet they are anything but real to our eyes compared to the figures who stand in front of them. Accounts written by one of Giotto's followers indicate that he advised painting one rock accurately and letting that stand for a mountain or one branch for a tree. Nonetheless we know that Giotto's contemporaries thought that his paintings looked very real.

A little over a hundred years later the Netherlandish painter Jan van Eyck presents in a panel from the *Ghent Altarpiece* (fig. 3) a view of rocky outcroppings and vegetation similar in structure to that of Giotto's fresco, but in a manner anyone today would easily call realistic. Van Eyck's amazingly sharp perception has enabled him to render every object, from the smallest pebble in the foreground to the loftiest cloud in the sky, with an accuracy few photographs can rival. Every tree appears entire and in natural scale, down to the last leaf, and in believable light and shade. Yet is the picture as real as it seems at first sight? Do we encounter in real experience figures looking like this, all turned toward us and lined up on a rocky ledge that is sharply tilted so we can see every object clearly?

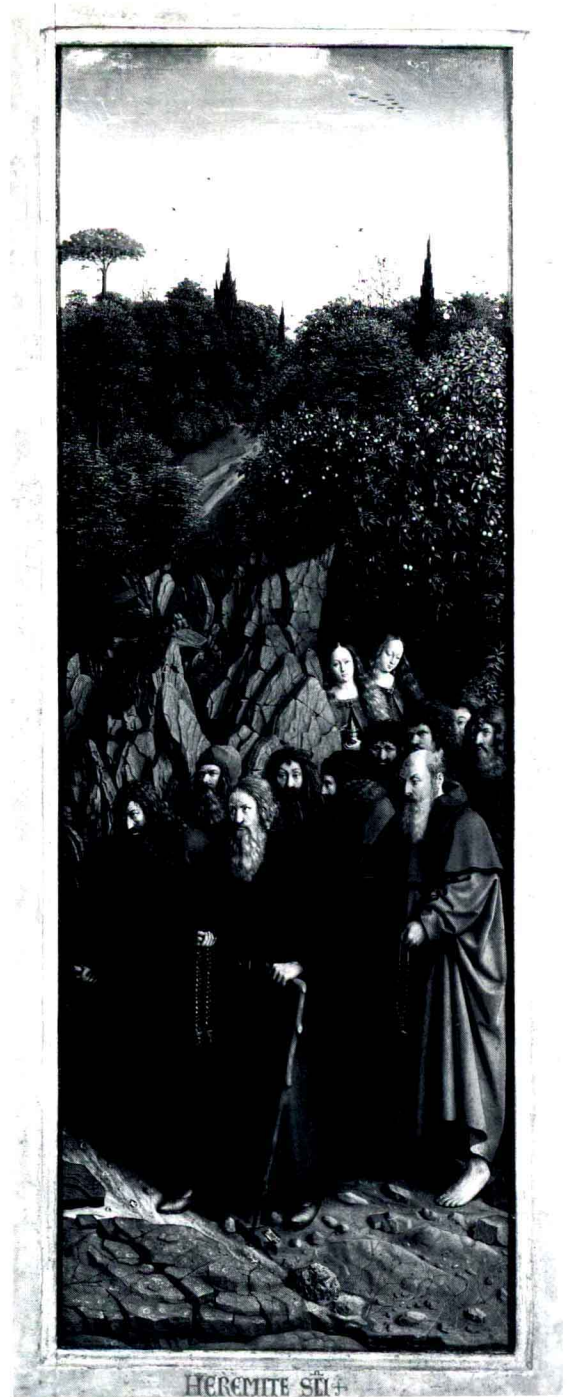
A radically different and very modern form of perception is seen in such Impressionist paintings of the late nineteenth century as Renoir's *Les Grands Boulevards* (fig. 4), in which all contours and indeed all details disappear, being blurred or lost as the artist seeks to seize with rapid brushstrokes a fleeting view of city life in bright sunlight and in constant motion. Trees and their component branches and foliage are now mere touches of the brush. This was the uncalculated, accidental way in which Renoir and his fellow Impressionists viewed the world, striving in their pictures for the speed and immediacy no snapshot photograph could then achieve and at the same time for a brilliance of color inaccessible to photography until many decades later. Today most viewers accept this image quite happily, but not in Renoir's day, when the Impressionists were violently attacked in print for being so *unreal*!

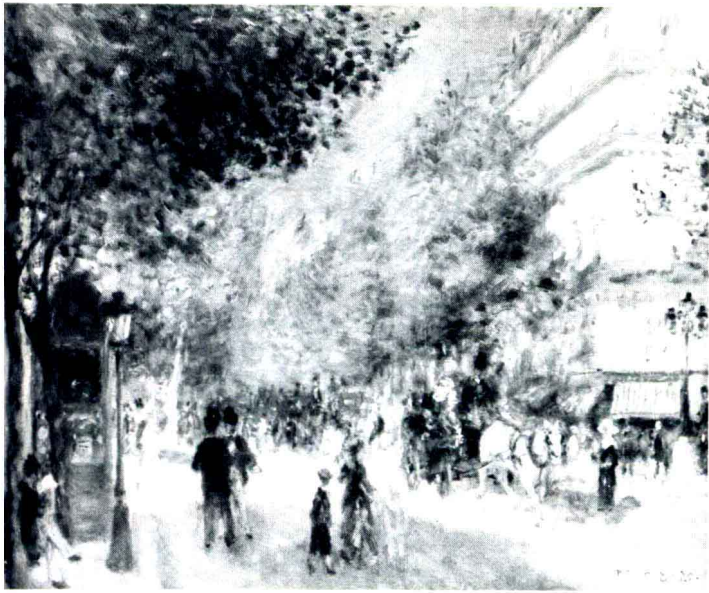
Finally, in the twentieth century, painters fully trained in both realist and Impressionist methods transformed the image of trees into a pattern almost as unreal to our eyes as that of the Thera murals, even though it is often rendered with a freedom of brushwork that owes much to the Impressionists. To the Dutch painter Mondrian, his *Red Tree* (fig. 5), overpowering in its fiery red against a blue sky, translates what may have been the color of sunset light into an expression of the ultimate reality of inner individual experience.

Optically, there can have been very little difference in the images of trees transmitted to the retinas of Mondrian, Renoir, van Eyck, Giotto, and the unknown painter of Thera. The startling difference in the results is due to the differing sets of conventions, inherited or self-imposed, according to which each artist selected, reinforced, and recombined those aspects of the visual image which seemed important. Reality, in the long run, is as elusive and subjective a concept as beauty, yet just as compelling for the artist and for us.

THE VOCABULARY OF ART

Form. The *form* of an object is its shape, usually considered in three dimensions. (The word *form* is also used in music and literature, and in the visual arts as well, to mean the interrelationship of all the parts of a work.) Visual form is perceived first of all through binocular vision, by means of which each eye sees the object from a slightly different point of





view, enabling the mind to create a three-dimensional image. The reader has only to test this proposition by closing one eye and noting the difficulty in perceiving accurately the shapes of objects and their positions in space. Form can also be perceived manually, through the sense of touch, which sends messages to the brain; by its very nature sculpture appeals to this sense. Painting, generally on flat or nearly flat surfaces, can only suggest the “3-D” effect that is the birthright of sculpture. The elements used by painting to indicate form are line, light and shade, and color, each of which as we will see can also play other important parts in the effect of the work of art.

The words *volume* and *mass* are also used almost interchangeably to indicate three-dimensionality, but without the connotation of shape, which is essential to the word *form*. *Volume* can even indicate the spatial content of an interior. The impact of mass on the observer is greatly enhanced by scale, which is an absolute quality in works of art, hence the difficulty in experiencing from small illustrations the breathtaking effect of colossal buildings like Egyptian temples or Gothic cathedrals.

Line. *Line* can be seen as an edge or contour, of one shape against another or against distance, by means of which form can be deduced. A line can also be drawn, like the lines of a diagram or those which make up a printed letter of the alphabet. This kind of line can not only convey a great deal of factual information but can also clearly delineate form, as in Greek vase paintings (fig. 6; see also figs. 1064, 1161). Lines can be independent, or several lines can cooperate in the formation of a pattern (see below). Generally in ancient and medieval art, lines are drawn firmly and appear unbroken, but sometimes a very lively effect is obtained by preserving in a sketchy line the actual motion of the artist’s hand carrying the drawing instrument, as in some medieval manuscripts. Finally, line can suggest the direction of motion (“line of fire,” for example), seen typically in such instances as the “sweep” or “fall” of folds of cloth (*drapery* is the technical term).

Light and shade. Light falling on an object leaves a *shade* on the side opposite to the source of light; this shade is distinct from the *shadow* cast by the object on other objects or surfaces. The shade may be hard and clear-

3. HUBERT(?) and JAN VAN EYCK. *Hermit Saints*, detail of the *Ghent Altarpiece* (open). Completed 1432. Oil on panel, 11' 5¼ × 15' 1½" (entire altarpiece). Cathedral of St. Bavo, Ghent, Belgium.
4. PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR. *Les Grands Boulevards*. 1875. Oil on canvas, 20½ × 25". Collection Henry P. McIlhenny, Philadelphia
5. PIET MONDRIAN. *The Red Tree*. 1908. Oil on canvas, 27½ × 39". Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

cut or soft and indistinct, according to the degree of diffusion of the light that causes it. The relationship of light and shade suggests form, but can be deceptive, since shade varies not only according to projections but to the position of the source of light. The same work of sculpture can look entirely different in photographs taken in different lights. Light and shade are also often used very effectively in strong contrast to produce effects of emotion (see figs. 906, 995, 1075).

Color. Color is subject to more precise and complex scientific analysis than any of the other elements that make up the visual experience of art. For this book the most useful terms are those describing the effects of the various ways the artist employs *hue* (red, blue, yellow, etc.), *saturation* (intensity of a single color), and *value* (proportion of color to black and white). Colors can be described in terms such as brilliant, soft, harmonious, dissonant, harsh, delicate, strident, dull, and in a host of other ways. Blue and its adjacent colors in the familiar color circle, green and violet, are generally felt as cool, and through association with the sky and distant landscape appear to recede from us. Yellow and red, with their intermediate neighbor orange, are warm and seem nearer. In most early painting color is applied as a flat tone from outline to outline. Broken color, in contrast, utilizes brushwork to produce rich effects of light. Modeling in variations of warm and cool colors suggests form, but color, modeled or not, evokes by itself more immediate emotion than any element available to the artist, to such a degree that extremely saturated color, like bright red or yellow, would be felt as unbearable if applied to all four walls and the ceiling of a room.

Space. *Space* may be defined as extent, either between points or limits, or without known limits, as in outer or interplanetary space. Since space encourages, limits, or directs human existence and motion, it constitutes one of the most powerful elements in art just as it does in life. An architect can set boundaries for space in actuality, as a painter or sculptor can through representation. The space of the Pantheon (fig. 7)—a Roman temple consisting of a hemispherical dome on a circular interior whose height is equal to its radius and therefore to that of the dome—has a liberating effect the minute one steps inside, almost like a view into the sky (itself often called a dome). The space would seem to rotate constantly if it were not held fast by a single niche opposite the entrance.

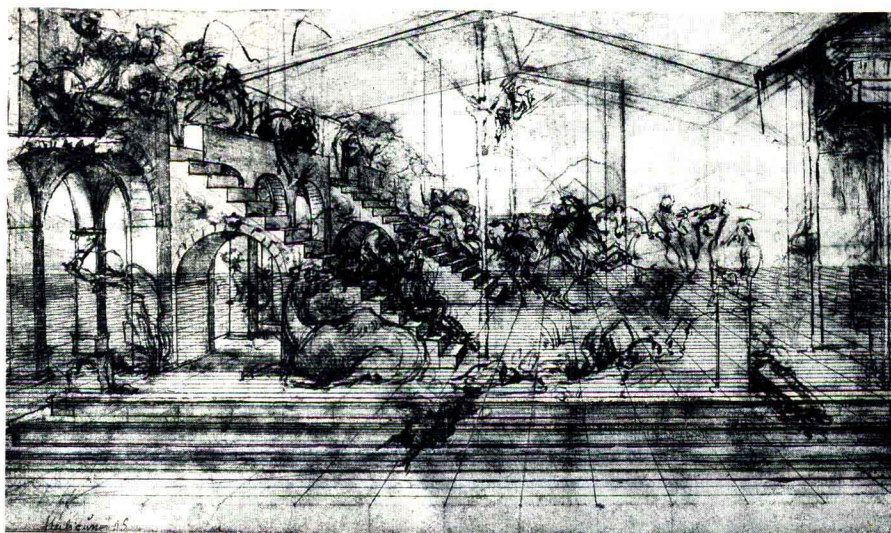
A painter or sculptor can represent space by means of *linear perspec-*



6



7



8

6. THE BERLIN PAINTER. *Ganymede* (portion of a bell-shaped krater found in Etruria, Italy). Early 5th century B.C. Height c. 13". The Louvre, Paris
7. GIOVANNI PAOLO PANNINI. *Interior of the Pantheon*. c. 1750. Oil on canvas, 50½ × 39". National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Samuel H. Kress Collection
8. LEONARDO DA VINCI. *Architectural Perspective and Background Figures, for the Adoration of the Magi*. c. 1481. Pen and ink, wash, and white, 6½ × 11½". Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
9. *King Chephren*, from Giza, Egypt. c. 2530 B.C. Diorite, height 66⅞". Egyptian Museum, Cairo



9