European Gallery Text Panels

P5

Roman to Romanesque

At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from modern-day England to Iraq, from the Danube to the Nile Rivers. The art of the empire was therefore not uniform but reflected—brilliantly—differing local artistic traditions. The stone reliefs to your left and the bronze sculptures in the case behind you exemplify the rich variety of its subjects and styles.

By the late-5th century, the continual onslaught of land-hungry barbarians and frequent internal struggles ended the Roman Empire in western Europe. The trade and prosperity fostered by the empire declined; a more agrarian, feudal society came to the fore. The Middle Ages had begun.

Economic prosperity and political stability began to return to western Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries. This was the Romanesque period. Christianity became the primary patron of European art. Over the next 200 years, the Church embarked upon a massive building program to house new monastic orders and to accommodate worshipers who traveled long distances to view relics of the saints.

Romanesque architecture provided an incentive for a rebirth of narrative sculpture. Highly expressive, carved images of Christ, the Virgin, saints and biblical characters, all represented in this gallery, appeared on the capitals of columns, over doorways and eventually across entire facades. They provided religious instruction for a populace unable to read, or without access to precious books and manuscripts. Like the capital to your right, from the Abbey of Coulombs, depicting Daniel and the Lions, Romanesque sculpture is characterized by vivid narrative content, intricate surface pattern and idiosyncratic figure styles.

Art in the Age of Faith

By the 12th century, the Roman Catholic Church had become the most powerful institution in western Europe. Endowed with land, wealth and abundant creative and intellectual resources, the Church expanded its monumental Romanesque building projects begun nearly two centuries before. In the process, a new style of art and architecture known as Gothic emerged and spread across the continent.

The Gothic architectural style of the 12th through the 15th centuries is characterized by soaring heights, tapering spires, pointed arches and an abundance of stained-glass windows. These features were also applied to other forms of art, as seen in the panel paintings displayed on this wall. The Virgin and Child were often depicted under pointed Gothic arches embellished with gold leaf symbolizing the heavenly, rather than earthly, realm. Private devotional and precious liturgical objects, including the silver gilt Reliquary displayed in the small gallery behind you, also incorporated Gothic features such as trefoils, spires and pointed arches.
Gothic art also acquired a new appreciation for feminine beauty and grace due, in part, to the so-called cult of the Virgin Mary, which elevated the mother of Christ to unparalleled heights of glory and veneration. In general, the Virgin, saints and heavenly attendants were treated with a new courtly grace and slenderness that coincided with Church architecture. This artistic vision would continue to shape the work of craftsmen and architects throughout Europe for more than four centuries.

P6
Treasury

Marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work: bright is the noble work, but being nobly bright
The work should lighten the mind so that it may travel to the True Light where Christ is the true door..."
Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis, ca. A.D. 1140

The political stability and material wealth that western Europe achieved in the Middle Ages (1000–1500) allowed for large-scale building projects. Churches and abbeys, which served as centers of monastic life, sprang up across the continent, and their decoration extended beyond sculpture and stained glass to interior furnishings. The bishop or abbot sought to inspire meditation among the parishioners on the spiritual as well as material splendor of the Church through the use of exquisitely wrought and embellished liturgical objects. When not in use, these objects were stored in a sacristy; as a number of objects were collected, they were transferred to a treasury.

The large, silver Processional Cross to your left and lion-shaped Aquamanile are examples of liturgical objects used in public ceremonies. Smaller devotional objects provided inspiration on a more intimate, personal level. Paintings, such as the 14th-century Virgin and Child by Lippo Memmi, could be contemplated in solitude in small private chapels. Books of Hours, also made for private devotional purposes, were lavishly adorned with miniature paintings. Choir books were large enough to be seen by all members of the choir at once, and many of their pages were later cut out and sold as individual works of art.

Along with religious objects, craftsmen also excelled at making objects for personal use, such as the agate Brooch with Cameo, or to commemorate special occasions, as in the richly decorated Marriage Casket.

P7
Late Gothic and Renaissance Painting in the North

In the Middle Ages, paintings were seldom hung in a cloister, since cloisters were typically open to the outdoors. (See the panel in this gallery, “Medieval Cloister”.) Because of their
religious content, however, this group of the Museum’s best examples of Northern Renaissance painting is entirely appropriate in this setting.

Many were painted for private devotion, which accounts for their comparatively small scale. Unlike most of the earlier, Gothic paintings in the adjacent Gallery P5, many of these indicate a Renaissance interest in naturalism: the illusion of receding space, the human figure and a careful description of the natural world. Settings once almost entirely confined to church interiors and decorative gold backgrounds now include private, domestic spaces.

This change from the celestial to the here-and-now is best represented by the Virgin and Child by Petrus Christus, a masterpiece of the Nelson-Atkins collection. Works by the next generation of Flemish artists, including Joos van Cleve, Jan Gossaert and Bernard van Orley, show a restless vitality attributed to Italian Renaissance influences. Some of this quality is apparent in the carved retable from the school of Brussels, which, nevertheless, retains much of the slender, tapering form of late Gothic style.

Three Graces, by German painter Lucas Cranach the Elder, is the only secular work in this group. Though a Renaissance subject, derived from classical antiquity, its still Gothic linearity is apparent when viewed next to the upright panel by the Monis Altar master from a few decades earlier.

Stained-Glass Windows

The stained-glass window is one of the most spectacular art forms ever invented, dazzling by virtue of its size and brilliance. The widespread use of stained glass was stimulated by architectural innovations in 12th-century France that made it possible to substitute large windows for masonry in the walls of a church. These walls of glass transformed the interior space through constantly changing light and color, and they illustrated religious subjects for a mostly illiterate public.

The glass was composed of silica (usually sand), potash and lime heated to a molten state, and metallic oxides were added to yield specific hues. The window-maker drew a full-scale pattern, or cartoon, of the window, which was then traced onto the surface of the glass. Cutting was achieved by passing a heated iron tool along the trace lines causing the glass to crack. Details such as facial features were painted on the glass using opaque black enamel. The individual pieces of glass were laid out in the form of the design and then joined together with lead strips, which were soldered together.

Artists working in the medium of stained glass were not individually recognized before the 15th century. At that time, the patronage of a wealthy merchant class and the new humanist attitude of the Renaissance brought individual international attention to some particularly skilled glass artists.
Medieval Cloister

The architectural features of this gallery space are believed to have been part of a much larger, 14th-century Augustinian monastery northwest of Paris. You are standing in what was once the monastery’s cloister, an enclosed and protected place that was vital to its residents for the privacy and ventilation it provided. It is typically Gothic with its vaulted roof, trefoil-shaped, pointed arches and ornamental openings. The central quadrangle would have been originally open to the sky. For this reason, a cloister was almost always laid out to the south of the church building for maximum exposure to light and warmth. It functioned as both an exercise yard and a garden where herbs and medicinal plants were grown, and oftentimes had a well at its center.

A covered walkway, known as an ambulatory, is formed between the arcade (rows of columns) and what would have been the outside walls of adjacent buildings. In some monasteries, these walls were plastered and frescoed with a cycle of paintings depicting, for example, scenes from the life of the monastery’s patron saint. The ambulatory served as a passageway providing shelter from bad weather, and some were fitted out with long, trough-like lavatories for bathing and washing clothes. At other times, monks used the well-lit, ventilated space for reading, meditation and the copying of manuscripts. Along with its central role as a focus of daily activity, the ambulatory also frequently served as a burial place for members of the resident order.

Renaissance Art

The French word *renaissance*, meaning rebirth, is used in historical context as the Renaissance to signify the period in Europe from about 1400 to 1600. The style embodied the desire to revive the forms and to match the technical skills of the ancient Greeks and Romans. As artists of the 15th and 16th centuries studied the remains of Classical antiquity, they were most impressed by its qualities of naturalism, nobility and monumentality.

The majority of the Museum’s collection of Renaissance sculpture comes from Italy—especially Florence and Lombardy, in north-central Italy. The collection is strong in reliefs, where figures or scenes are carved from a flat slab of stone or formed from clay molds. Some, such as Giovanni Gaggini’s *Saint George and the Dragon*, were carved in high relief, using the play of shadow to convey the depth of the composition. Others, such as Francesco Ferrucci’s *Madonna and Child*, were carved in low, compressed relief, reading almost like drawings or engravings.

The major centers of Italian painting in the 15th century were Florence and Venice, with Rome becoming equally important from the early 16th century. The art of Florence is here represented in paintings by Bugiardini and Lorenzo di Credi, and of Venice in a work by Giovanni Bellini, the greatest 15th-century Venetian artist.
Metal workers and ceramists fashioned functional yet highly decorative wares that were painted, engraved or cast with motifs inspired by grotesques found in classical grottoes and frescoes, as in the Armor for Man and Horse.

P11
The Later Renaissance and Mannerism

By the mid- to late-16th century, the classical principles of balance and order of the Italian High Renaissance had been undermined by the so-called Mannerist style, in which complexity and artificiality were most admired. Italian Mannerism had an international impact, as seen in the Flemish artist Joachim Wtewael’s Saint Sebastian. The saint’s and archers’ awkward, twisting poses reflect the models of Giambologna, an Italian sculptor of Flemish origin, whose Mercury is in one of this gallery’s wall cases. One of the finest sculptures in the collection, Vincenzo Danti’s Flagellation, underlines the pervasive influence of the Renaissance master Michelangelo (1475-1564), especially in the massive, rectilinear torsos of the figures. In portraiture, Bronzino’s Portrait of a Young Man reflects the aloof, formal style in vogue in Florence under the autocratic rule of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. In the more liberal Republic of Venice, High Renaissance values were more enduring, as in Titian’s stately Portrait of Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle and in the noble and dignified composition of Veronese’s Christ and the Centurion. Two paintings by El Greco demonstrate the intensely spiritual aspects of Mannerism in Spain, the Catholic superpower of the 16th century that had militantly opposed the expansion of Protestantism.

Works in other materials, such as enamel and ceramics, also display the dichotomy between the stability and harmony of the High Renaissance and the exuberance and unbalance of Mannerism. The brightly colored, intimate scenes of the Tuscan maiolica, or tin-glazed earthenware, contrast with the grisaille imagery of strange creatures and masks decorating the Limoges enamels.

P12
The Burnap Collection of British Pottery

The Frank P. and Harriet Call Burnap Collection of British Pottery is a comprehensive collection of ceramic works from the medieval period through the early-19th century. It is considered the finest of its kind outside Britain, holding important earthenwares, or low-fired clay vessels, and stonewares, manufactured before machine production replaced the work of individual craftsmen.

The Burnaps started collecting in 1925 and Mr. Burnap continued to acquire works until his death in 1957. Their presentation of the greater part of the collection in 1941 was the first major gift of art to the Nelson Gallery, and through the years they gave more than 1,300 pieces of British pottery to form the Burnap Collection.
Pre-industrial ceramics held a special appeal to the Burnaps, as these works reveal the distinctive features of the artist’s manipulation of the clay and glazes. Mr. Burnap wrote about these ceramics as “imperfect works,” in comparison to the mass-productions of machine-made pottery. The collection contains important works by masters of 17th-century slipware, Ralph Toft and Samuel Malkin, and by late 18th-century innovators Thomas Whieldon, Ralph Wood and Josiah Wedgewood.

The current display is arranged in three related themes: Cases 1-10 illustrate the history of British pottery from medieval earthenwares to neoclassical stonewares. Cases 11-15 display 17th – through early 19th-century ceramic vessels used with beverages, from posset and caudle to coffee, chocolate, and tea. Finally, the central cases(16-23) investigate more thematic approaches: commemorative and subversive politics in British pottery; prints as sources of decoration; figures and animals; and Asian and European influences on forms and decoration.

P14
Baroque Classicism

While Baroque art in Rome dazzled residents with its impressive scale, vivid color and dramatic intensity, a classical sensibility also endured throughout the Baroque era. Derived from a persistent admiration for the restraint and harmony of classical antiquity and the Renaissance, 17th century classicism was embraced by artists who sought clarity over emotional drama and balance over exuberance.

The small, encased boxwood copy of Bernini’s Apollo and Daphne provides an illustration of Italian Baroque exuberance and an interesting counterpoint to the classical influence seen elsewhere in this gallery. Bernini’s two figures contort in frantic movement with anguished expressions in a composition that appears to teeter off balance, on the verge of collapse. By contrast, Guercino’s painting behind it, Saint Luke Displaying a Painting of the Virgin, and Guido Reni’s Saint Francis both exude a sense of reassuring calm. Movement and gesture are kept to a minimum, and color and composition are carefully controlled.

This classical sensibility was embraced by non-Italian artists as well. Rome in the 17th century was a magnet for artists of all nationalities, especially the French, and the enormously influential Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain made their careers there. Poussin’s Triumph of Bacchus, in its subject matter and processional frieze of figures, was influenced by the ancient sculpture he would have seen all around him in Rome. Claude’s landscapes, while inspired by the Roman countryside, were also tributes to the peace and calm of an Arcadian past, a classicist’s nostalgia.
The Age of the Baroque

Italian Baroque art took shape in the midst of a passionate attempt to reform Europe’s wealthiest, most powerful art patron, the Roman Catholic Church. In response to the Protestant Reformation and its call for an end to corruption within the Church, the Papacy deliberately promoted painting, sculpture and architecture that would inspire a renewed intensity of religious feeling in a disillusioned populace.

Whereas Renaissance art had displayed classical harmony and stability, Counter-Reformation religious art was dynamic and psychologically riveting, appealing to the senses more than the intellect. In this gallery, the paintings of artists such as Caravaggio, Rubens and Baburen impress us with their sheer physical presence – their scale, dramatic use of color, light and space, and narrative moments fraught with dramatic intensity.

During the Counter Reformation, artists from all over Europe were attracted to Rome by the reinvigorated patronage of the Church and the city’s wealthy princely and mercantile classes. For some, the new exuberance of the Baroque was tempered by a continuing interest in Renaissance-inspired classical restraint. Most, however, Italian and non-Italian artists alike were inspired by the unprecedented drama and palpable realism of Caravaggio. As the paintings in this gallery indicate, Caravaggio’s influence became an international phenomenon, revitalizing religious painting in the process.

Later Italian Baroque

The relatively smaller scale canvases in this gallery reflect changes in Baroque style and subject matter driven by change in patronage at the end of the 17th century. Whereas much of earlier Italian Baroque art was commissioned by the Church for public display, wealthy nobles and merchants commissioned these more intimate works for their own private residences.

As a result a new more worldly character appeared in religious subject matter as exemplified by Sebastiano Ricci’s Marriage Feast at Cana. Here, a wedding party witnesses the first miracle performed by Christ who, nevertheless, is difficult to identify amongst those celebrating. Our eyes are drawn, instead, to the luxuriously clothed guests and grand architectural setting of the kind Ricci could have observed in his native Venice.

In Crespi’s Young Man with a Helmet, the artist gives us a candid depiction of an everyday character instead of the traditional formal portrait of a sitter surrounded by the trappings of prestigious social or professional status. This young man appears to be playing the role of soldier, enjoying his jest as his gaze engages our attention.
Landscape painting was also adapted to new attitudes later in the century. Salvator Rosa invests the natural setting of his *Mercury, Argus and Io* with a menacing quality appropriate to the violent end that Argus will meet. The wild qualities of Rosa’s and Magnasco’s landscapes in this gallery present a striking contrast to the classical calm of Claude Lorrain’s scenes (in the adjacent gallery) that invite us into quiet reverie.

**P17**

**The Golden Age of Dutch Painting**

Seventeenth-century Dutch art reflects a fascinating convergence of political, religious and economic circumstances. Unlike the dramatic intensity and grand scale of their Italian and Flemish counterparts (adjacent gallery), the modest-sized Dutch paintings in this gallery are marvelously descriptive records of everyday life. While Italian art was bound to the religious imperatives of the Catholic Church and aristocracy, Holland’s status as a self-governing Protestant nation altered expectations for style, subject matter and patronage. With a new system of self-government that fostered a thriving middle class, art became a mirror that the Dutch turned upon themselves.

In 1648, Holland had achieved independence from Catholic Spain, and was enjoying unprecedented prosperity through monopolies in international trade and local resourcefulness. With money to spend on art at a time of Protestant restrictions on religious imagery, affluent Dutch merchants and the artists they patronized turned to their immediate surroundings, leisure-time activities and valued possessions as subject matter. Genre paintings (scenes from everyday life), still life, landscape and portraiture became popular with Dutch citizenry. Moreover, artists were offering pictures to the Dutch public in what had become Europe’s first true open art market.

As many of the paintings in this gallery indicate, Dutch artists and patrons were mindful of the temptation of excess, an inevitable consequence of prosperity. In paintings displaying exotic luxury items obtained from the Dutch monopoly on European and Asian trade, a wilted flower or strategically placed human skull serves as a *memento mori* (memento of mortality) in Times inevitable victory over material wealth.

**P19**

**The Rococo**

Under the French kings Louis XIV (reign 1643 – 1715) and Louis XV (reign 1715-1774), France built its supremacy as the most politically powerful nation while its artists, designers and craftsmen created an opulent but refined style that culturally influenced all of Europe. Whereas the Baroque style promoted religious agendas, the Rococo style served the aristocracy’s secular desire for a life of luxury, leisure and sensuality. The bombastic and extroverted qualities of the Baroque were transformed into the more delicate style of the Rococo, which tempted the senses. In this new vocabulary, subjects became more...
mythological and light-hearted, surfaces glittered and shimmered and excess in all things was fashionable.

With the move of the French court to the Palace of Versailles, outside Paris, Louis XIV kept the aristocracy in a “golden cage” controlled by strict, court etiquette, but under his successor, Louis XV, a more relaxed attitude is apparent, which spread to other areas of Europe. Paintings illustrating this luxuriant style include Boucher’s *Landscape with a Water Mill* and *Jupiter in the Guise of Diana, and the Nymph Callisto*. Venetian scenes by the artistic rivals Canaletto in *The Clock Tower in the Piazza San Marco* and Guardi in *View of the Dogana and Santa Maria della Salute* illustrate the taste for scenic views of wealthy English and French tourists, who visited Italy on the Grand Tour.

This period also saw a lavish style in interior furnishings. Intricately worked silver objects, such as the Lamerie *Covered Cup* and exotic porcelains ordered for the Western market from China adorned tables. Augustus the Strong, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, financed the discovery of porcelain in Europe, and examples of the early porcelain factory at Meissen show the mastery of this new luxurious material prized by the aristocracy and an increasingly affluent middle class.

**P20**

**Italy in the 18th Century**

The Rococo style of the 18th century coincided with the spread of Enlightenment ideas from France, which emphasized logic and rational inquiry over religious faith. In Italy, the relatively strong influence of the Catholic Church moderated the playfulness and sensuality of French Rococo (Gallery P19), but the trend toward the secularization of philosophy and the arts made its mark on Italian art.

Gaspare Traversi remade French frivolity into malevolent satire directed toward the upper-middle classes in Naples, where he worked. Traversi’s two, intriguing paintings in this gallery, *Music and Drawing*, appear to poke fun at the cultural pretensions of the hovering, almost predatory-looking figures in the middle ground of each image.

Alongside secular painting such as Traversi’s, religious painting continued to flourish in Italy. Religious orders restored and built new churches, and the new ruling Bourbon dynasty was busy constructing new palaces. Lavish fresco decorations adorned these projects, represented here by Gaetana Gandolfi’s and Corrado Giaquinto’s studies for church ceilings, in which figures depicted in the heavens from below are seen in movement and flux.

The spectacularly intricate ivory, *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, also derives energy from the apparent centrifugal movement of interlaced, tumbling, ill-fated figures. The virtuosity it displays nearly propels the religious subject matter into the realm of fantasy, suggestive of the increasing influence of worldly, as opposed to religious, values during this time.
The Folgers Coffee Silver Collection

Presented in 2000 by the Procter & Gamble Company in honor of the 150th anniversary of Folgers Coffee, the Folgers Coffee Silver Collection at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art comprises more than 100 pieces of 18th- and 19th-century English, Irish and Scottish silver primarily related to coffee. The collection was assembled by Mr. Joseph S. Atha for the Kansas City-based Folgers Coffee Company of which Mr. Atha was president; the company was purchased in 1963 by Procter & Gamble.

Strongest in 18th-century silver, the collection illustrates this era of significant changes that transformed British international trade, social structure and, most significantly for silversmiths, dining customs. An influx of talented French Huguenot silversmiths fulfilled the patrons’ quests for fashionable plate. As Britain moved toward a more secular society of material individualism, the desire to display one’s wealth, taste and social standing translated into an unbridled consumption of consumer goods. The silver collection obsession is reflected in a 1744 letter by Horace Mann to Horace Walpole: “every inch of lace I might put on coats I will turn into plates and sauceboats.”

Stylistically, the collection represents the transition from the formal symmetry of the Baroque to the naturalistic curves of the Rococo. The introduction of coffee, tea and chocolate in the 1650s had a great effect on silversmiths, as it necessitated the creation of an entire array of new types of silver. The Folgers Coffee Collection appropriately includes more than 30 coffee pots representing the British taste for the then exotic beverage. The custom of adding milk and sugar to tea and coffee prompted the production of silver cream boats and sugar bowls.

The Grand Tour

Considered an essential component of the education of British gentlemen during the 18th century, the Grand Tour could last from a few months to eight years. Wealthy young men traveled through Europe visiting the important ancient and modern sites learning about politics, culture, art and antiquities. They spent their time, often with a tutor and their valet, sightseeing, studying, shopping and meeting their friends and making new, important contacts. Italy was the most popular destination, especially the ruins of the ancient Roman Empire, although the surrounding landscapes and vistas were also important. France was noted for its great contemporary style and sophistication, where these young men could learn the intricacies of social behavior.

While on these extended tours the young man accrued a number of impressive souvenirs illustrating his new refinement and elegance. These could be paintings of scenes of Italian daily life, such as Panini’s View of the Piazza del Popolo, Rome, the gateway to Rome for visitors from the north, or the imaginary landscapes of Marieschi. The travelers could buy...
pieces of ancient statuary or Italian-made marble table tops such as the one seen in Gallery P20.

The mid-18th century was a period of great prosperity and peace signifying the growth of a middle class that could afford expensive and luxurious goods. This led to the establishment of manufacturers of these wares, especially intricate wood marquetry furniture, such as the Lady’s Desk, and exquisite porcelains, many by the royal French porcelain at Sèvres.

**P23**
The Late 18th Century and Neoclassicism

After the florid extravagance of the French Rococo, taste in the late 18th century shifted towards a restrained and disciplined style. Inspired by the century's fascinating archaeological discoveries of the ancient Roman sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii, a passion for classical subject matter and style, termed Neoclassicism, left none of the arts untouched.

The decorative arts illustrate most clearly a return to classical proportions, motifs and imagery. In this gallery, a clock is embellished with a woman with classical robes and furnishings. Both the neoclassical style and the fascination with Asian art are displayed in the magnificent Weisweiler chest of drawers and in the Sèvres plate and cup and saucer imitating Asian lacquer work. A stunning, monumental column clock, commissioned by the French Emperor Napoleon (1769-1821), reinforced the supremacy of political leaders as descendants of ancient Roman emperors.

In early Neoclassicism, a penchant for lightness and elegance persisted, as indicated by Hubert Robert’s painting of ladies promenading on a terrace at Marly. Other paintings in the gallery anticipate a growing inclination toward what would soon be termed Romanticism (Gallery P29). Among these are Ingres’ smoldering portrait of his fellow artist Paul Lemoyné, Gainsborough’s silvery landscape with horses and Vigée Le Brun’s portrait of the Duchess of Gramont. In this last, splendid example, an informality of setting, pose and dress echoes the ideas of the French writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), advocating the merits of a simple life close to nature.

**P24**
_Salone_

_England (originated from No. 2 St. Margaret’s Place, King’s Lynn, Norfolk), ca. 1740_

_Pine with paint and gold leaf_

_Purchase: Nelson Trust, 31-116_

This room, originally exhibited as the “Georgian Drawing Room,” traces its origins to a residence, which still exists, at No. 2 St. Margaret’s Place, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, England. Although the interior architecture is in keeping with that of an English drawing room, the
room most likely served as a salone, the Italian word anglicized by the English to “saloon.” The room was used for such social festivities as gaming, dancing and musical performances.

The salone was constructed during the reign of King George II of England (1727-1760) when England was emerging as the strongest commercial power in 18th-century Europe. The architectural style of the 1730’s and 1740’s incorporated the final phase of the dramatic, symmetrical and bold Baroque style and the beginning of the fanciful and elaborate ornamentation of the Rococo style. As the English rediscovered classical architecture with its accompanying motifs of columns, shells and garlands, they combined these various forms, as seen in the salone, to create a style of restrained elegance unique to 18th-century England.

During the mid 18th century King’s Lynn boasted many wealthy merchants eager to display their successes. Walter Kirby IV, the owner of No. 2 St. Margaret’s Place from 1733-1752, and the likely builder of this salone, was one such merchant. Kirby, who served as city mayor from 1744-1745, entertained his family, neighbors and guests in this impressive room of the latest style indicating that he was not only a prominent business man, but a cultured one at that.

P26

Sitting Room

France (Quai des Celestins, Paris) ca. 1720
Carved oak panels with marble mantelpiece and mirrors
Purchase: Nelson Trust, 31-121

This petite sitting room is reputed to be from a grand house built on the Quai des Celestins along the Seine river in Paris. It represents the late Baroque style often called Régence, or Regency, after the eight-year period (1715-1723) during which Philippe II, Duc D’Orleans, served as the Regent of France for Louis XV until he became of age to assume the throne. The Régence period marked the transition from the formality of the early Baroque style to the naturalistic curves of the Rococo style that flourished in the 18th century. In this room, the symmetry of the boiserie (wood paneling) reflects the restrained aesthetics of the previous Baroque style, while the panels’ undulating, carved embellishments indicate the curvilinear forms of the newly fashionable Rococo. As the 18th century progressed, rooms were reduced in scale to create intimate settings for private entertaining. The delicate arabesques and serpentine lines of the Rococo suited these elegant rooms where aristocratic Parisians enjoyed a refined social culture amidst luxurious furnishings and interiors.

P28

Gabinetto (Withdrawing Room)

From the Palazzo Parato or Palazzo Gastaldi, Gerbido (now part of Grugliasco), Piedmont, Italy, ca. 1740-50
Japanned, painted and gilded poplar
Attributed to the workshop of Pietro Massa
Italy (Turin), active ca. 1730-50
Purchase: Nelson Trust, 54-57/1

This small withdrawing room, called a gabinetto in Italian, was originally part of a palazzo outside the city of Turin, in the northern Italian province of Piedmont. Rooms with painted panels imitating Chinese lacquer, called japanned work, enjoyed a fashion amongst the royal family of Savoy during the mid-18th century. Although such panels exist in several palaces around Turin, only two rooms are found outside Italy, with this being the sole example in the United States.

This room was originally part of a palace owned during the mid-18th century by San Martino d’Agliè di Garessio, a member of the Savoy royal entourage. The room had four points of entry: one from the central corridor of the house, most likely the primary entrance; French doors that led to a terrace (across from the viewer’s vantage point); and two smaller doors covered with red japanned panels to the right, which led to internal staircases or service areas.

The recent discovery of preparatory drawings in Turin reveal that the designs for many of the Chinese-inspired decorations on these panels come from a book published in Paris in 1735 by Jean-Antoine Fraisse. The procession on the central panel to the left and the camels and horsemen on the central panel to the right are both simplified from Fraisse’s illustrations.

P29
Romanticism

Romanticism in the visual arts flourished from the late 18th century until about 1830 and continued thereafter as an underlying trend through much of the 19th century. Romantic painters emphasized the importance of emotion, in reaction to the perceived rationality of Neoclassicism (Gallery 23). This ensured a great variety of subject matter and styles although their paintings were often characterized by a sense of nationalism.

The Romantics viewed landscape painting as an opportunity to express both the awe-inspiring and more intimate aspects of nature. The British artist John Constable produced deeply felt rustic scenes of his homeland while J.M.W. Turner explored pioneering light effects in scenes of the English coastline.

In France, the Romantic movement was dominated by Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix, who treated established religious and classical themes with a style that employed rich color and gestural brushwork to convey drama and emotional intensity. Other painters, such as Eugène Fromentin were attracted to exotic, non-European cultures, particularly those of North Africa, in response to French colonial expansion.

Following the writings of the English art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900), many decorative arts designers looked to nature as the principal source for ornament. Some drew upon a
variety of historical sources for inspiration, while still others found exotic Asian and Near Eastern patterns and forms fascinating. Classical subjects continued to play a central role in all artistic endeavors well into the mid-19th century, and scale increased as manufacturers and their consumers desired larger, more imposing works.

P30
Realism and Late-19th-Century Decorative Arts

In the wake of Romanticism, the mid-19th century saw the emergence in France of Realism, a movement that placed great emphasis on objective observation. Realism was consciously democratic and focused on social classes, such as the peasantry, that had been previously neglected in high art. In a series of major works in the 1850s and 1860s including Waiting, Jean-François Millet celebrated the nobility of peasant life while Gustave Courbet, the most prominent figure in the movement, specialized in intimate portraits of close friends.

The Realist aesthetic also influenced the landscape painters of the Barbizon school, so-called after the village some 35 miles to the southeast of Paris where they formed a colony. Narcisse- Virgile Diaz de la Peña and Constant Troyon explored luminous light effects and transient weather conditions. Despite the rise of Realism, mythological themes remained important, particularly in the sculpture of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux and François-Léon Sicard, who found a ready market for their works amongst the middle-

While painters and sculptors strove to evoke realistic depictions of nature, designers worked with an increasingly abstracted sense of the natural world. The Arts and Crafts Movement, especially in England, stressed a return to the honest use of materials, simple rectilinear forms and patterns and appropriate ornament. The ephemeral Art Nouveau Movement employed stylized, often flattened, representations of plants, insects and figures in motion fabricated of luxurious materials such as rare woods or iridescent glass.

P31
The Impressionists

The Paris-based artists known as the Impressionists were viewed as radicals in their own time, publicly challenging the French Academy’s centuries-old rules for painting. Artists such as Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro - all represented in this gallery - embraced spontaneity, realism and naturalism begun earlier in the 19th century. Their bold innovations in style and subject matter, however, paved the way for a more modern direction in painting.

The term “impressionist” was coined by a French critic who declared that a painting by Monet more closely resembled a sketch or impression than a finished work. The Impressionists openly rejected the Academy’s preference for highly refined canvases with detailed brushwork in favor of dynamic surfaces of brilliant, quick strokes. By using thickly
applied pure color – rather than thin layers of mixed color – they captured the spontaneous, fleeting effects of light reflected on form and the shifts of color from object to shadow.

The Impressionists also rejected the Academic preference for religious or history painting as subject matter. Equipped with easels and pre-mixed tubes of paint that had only recently become available, they took to the open fields and riverbanks of the French countryside, studying the changing seasonal effects of light, color and atmosphere. The Impressionists also embraced modern, urban life as inspiration for their canvases, depicting late-19th-century life in Paris, a vibrant city of perpetual movement, light and color.

P32
Post-Impressionism

During the 1880s in France, a group of young artists began to question the assumptions that underlay Impressionism. These artists were a disparate group who later came to be known as the “post-Impressionists,” a term coined by the English art critic Roger Fry in 1910. In contrast to the Impressionist focus on modern life, they explored more “primitive” and exotic cultures in a new language of luminous, non-naturalistic color. Vincent van Gogh focused on remote landscapes in the south of France, as in his Olive Orchard. His friend Paul Gauguin concentrated on the inhabitants of the distant French colony of Tahiti, as in Faaturama.

Alongside their fascination with color, the post-Impressionists also explored a more structured kind of painting in contrast to a perceived lack of form and randomness of brushwork in Impressionism. Georges Seurat developed a scientific approach to color and composition with his pioneering pointillist technique of uniform brushstrokes. Paul Cézanne produced highly geometrical, patterned landscapes such as Mont Saint-Victoire that foreshadow Cubism.

Exhibitions of Japanese art following the opening of Japan to the West in 1854 fueled an intense interest in Asian art, and designers working for major manufacturers of decorative arts attended these displays with sketchbooks in hand as to capture the bold natural ornament, bright colors, asymmetrical compositions and sense of exoticism. Most of these designers did not slavishly copy what they saw but transformed the Japanese ideas into new creations that combined East and West into a new idiom.

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1900s-1930s
Expressionism

The French Fauves (Wild Beasts) and the German Brücke (Bridge) and Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) artists are Expressionists. They use vibrant color, forceful line, heavy texture,
exaggerated imagery and distorted forms to express their inner selves. The reality they depict is subjective and highly emotive.

Expressionism emerged in Paris and Dresen in 1905, in response to African, Oceanic and Asian art, as well as to the vivid colors and strong brushwork of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin (Gallery P32). Inspired by their example, Fauve leader Henri Matisse wrote: “The chief aim of color should be to serve expression.” Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, who formulated the Brücke manifesto, wrote: “We accept all colors that reproduce the pure creative impulse.” While Fauve paintings retain harmony, those of the Brücke are often fraught with anguish.

The Blaue Reiter artists who worked in Munich between 1911 and 1914 used expressive means to achieve cosmic aims. In On the Spiritual in Art, Wassily Kandinsky, the leader of this group, spoke of the “inner sound” of color and of its power to call “forth the vibration from the soul.” These ideas remain important in his later work (Gallery P34).

While decorative arts of this period reflect an interest in color, designers, such as those of the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshops) in Austria and the Art Deco style throughout Europe, turned to simplified geometric forms. The reflective surfaces of silver and other metals contrasted with white-painted furniture to create subdued interiors for the vibrant colors of the paintings.

Timeline:
1901 - First Nobel Prizes awarded
1903 - Orville and Wilbur Wright fly first powered airplane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina
1904 - Ice cream cone invented at St. Louis World’s Fair
1907 - French writer Henri Bergson publishes Creative Evolution
1912 - Titanic sinks
1914 - World War I begins
1918 - World War I ends
1920 - 19th Amendment gives women in the United States right to vote
1922 - German writer Hermann Hesse publishes Siddhartha
1929 - United States stock market crashes

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1900s-1940s
Cubism and Abstraction

Cubism has been called the pivotal art movement of the early 20th century, for it introduced a completely new approach to pictorial space. Instead of depicting the world from a single, fixed point of view, Cubist artists portray it from multiple points of view simultaneously. Three-dimensional forms are fragmented, space is solidified and all is unified in time. Cubism paved the way for further developments in abstract art.
Working in Paris between 1907 and 1914, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque responded to the flattened geometry of Paul Cézanne’s paintings (Gallery P32) and the formal and conceptual power of African sculpture by creating an art that later was called Cubism. They and other Cubists do not faithfully reproduce the appearance of nature, but reveal what they know of it and how they experience it perceptually. Subsequent abstract art movements, including Futurism, Orphism, de Stijl, Russian Constructivism and Suprematism, Purism and Vorticism, all draw heavily upon the lessons of Cubism.

Abstraction formed the core curriculum at the German Bauhaus, the most influential art and design school of the 20th century. Located in Weimar (1919-25), Dessau (1925-32) and Berlin (1932-33), the utopian aims of this “house of construction” were 1) to give the fine and applied or decorative arts equal status, 2) to foster cooperative projects between fine and applied artists and 3) to make art and design an integral part of culture through collaboration with craft and industry. Bauhaus students furthered the cause of abstraction in their work, and today, countless studio art programs throughout the world are based on the Bauhaus model.

Timeline:
1903 - Henry Ford organizes Ford Motor Company
1905 - Albert Einstein announces Special Theory of Relativity
1912 - Austrian musician Arnold Schoenberg composes atonal *Pierrot Lunaire*
1913 - World Standard Time fully instituted
1917 - Russian Revolution and establishment of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
1918 - Weimar Republic established in Germany
1922 - French writer Marcel Proust publishes first volume of *Remembrance of Things Past*
1933 - Nazis close the Bauhaus
1937 - Nazi-organized “Degenerate Art” exhibition condemns abstract art and artists
1939 - World War II begins

1910s-1940s

Dada and Surrealism

Dada is an anarchic revolt against traditional values. Grieved and disillusioned by the failure of reason that resulted in World War I, Dadaists responded with ironic, witty, cynical, provocative and sometimes angry art that mocked the status quo. Idealistic concepts of beauty and quality were scrapped, while chance and the “readymade” were embraced. The word “dada” has playful and nonsensical associations. In French, it means “hobbyhorse” or “obsession,” in German, it means “there, there” and in many Slavic languages, it means “yes, yes.” Ultimately, Dada demeans the so-called high purposes of art.

European Dada began in neutral Zurich in 1916 during World War I. After the war, it spread to Paris, Berlin, Cologne and Hanover. New York Dada developed independently but at almost the same time. On both sides of the Atlantic, the Dada spirit is expressed in
visual art, free-word and sound poetry, literature, performance, music, films and public demonstrations.

Surrealism, the successor to Dada, began in Paris in 1924 and moved to the United States during World War II. It excavates the irrational realm of the unconscious in search of a fantastic super – or, in French, “sur” reality. By juxtaposing startling incongruities, creating in a state of pure psychic automatism uncensored by the conscious mind and portraying mythic dream imagery, Surrealists seek to release primal urges and imagery in their art. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, written by Viennese psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud in 1900, is central to Surrealist theory and practice. Like Dada, Surrealism involved all the arts and was more a way of life than a stylistically coherent movement.

Timeline:
1914 - World War I begins
1916 - German writer Hugo Ball opens Cabaret Voltaire in Zurch
1920 - First Miss American beauty pageant
1921 - Earl V. Wise introduces Wise potato chip
1923 - Cotton Club opens in Harlem, New York City
1924 - Mahatma Gandhi released from six-year prison sentence for civil disobedience
1928 - German composer Kurt Weill composes *The Threepenny Opera*
1932 - English writer Aldous Huxley publishes *Brave New World*
1933 - Dust storms ravage American Great Plains
1939 - World War II begins