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# AP® Art History

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## Special Focus: Art in Context



**Important Note:** The following set of materials is organized around a particular theme, or "special focus," that reflects important topics in the AP Art History course. The materials are intended to provide teachers with resources and classroom ideas relating to these topics. The special focus, as well as the specific content of the materials, cannot and should not be taken as an indication that a particular topic will appear on the AP Exam.

## Introduction

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Before we can say we understand a work of art, we must understand the context of the work: for whom or for what place it was created and why, the religious beliefs or economic realities it portrays, and why its particular subject was chosen. Since the political and social contexts fluctuate from piece to piece, every discussion should consider how the work functions within the culture and how the artwork reflects the culture surrounding it.

The following materials are designed to help high school teachers better impart the context of works of art from various eras to their students. Although the authors discuss specific works, the questions and issues raised can be applied to many similar works of art. None of these discussions should be taken as definitive, but rather as models of various ways to approach celebrated architectural monuments, paintings, and sculpture. These essays suggest that students pause and consider the work and its functions within its contextual framework rather than just as a painting, sculpture, or architectural monument slated for visual memory.

The works chosen as the focus of these sample discussions are all found in the standard introductory texts, or in the case of the African work, in Stokstad's *Art History*. It should be noted that all of the introductory texts, with the exception of Janson, present similar African works treated in context. These pieces are strong examples of their respective cultures, although not always the most obvious archetypes. For example, the Pollock under discussion is relevant as an example of the "unknown" works that frequently appear on the AP Exam. The approach to the Pollock suggests a number of questions that could be raised when preparing the class for the consideration of this type of work.

The authors chosen for this project were selected because of their knowledge of context in art history. Some are high school teachers, while others are college professors or museum educators—this diversity of perspective is reflected in the way each individual discusses their assigned works. Each author has tried to present the material in a manner useful to the high school teacher, and all have strived to provide a cogent approach. In many instances, the discussion questions included in the writings further the consideration of the interrelation between art and culture.

## Special Focus: Art in Context

I hope you will find these materials to be useful, as they seek to operate as examples of how artworks can encompass a myriad of questions important to the teaching of art history. Each approach represents a valid way one can choose to analyze and present artworks in an AP Art History classroom. The methods they employ are flexible, critical approaches that can be used to delve into the issues and themes found in works of art, and should be incorporated as a model in the teaching of high school art history.

# The Pantheon

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Teaching a class on the Roman Pantheon provides an opportunity to show students why it is necessary to discuss the context of a work of art as part of the process of art historical analysis. Analyzing context assists the student in understanding how works of art are inextricably linked to a vast matrix of historical forces. All students in the survey need to understand that the Pantheon looks the way it does because of second-century Roman Imperial political power, religious beliefs, social forces, technical knowledge, and cultural taste.

## Context

An important task in contextualizing any work of art is to first recognize what we don't know about the building and why we don't know it. The Pantheon belongs to that long list of universally popular works of art, from the Pyramids at Giza to the Mona Lisa, whose great familiarity masks their profoundly enigmatic history and meaning. While the Pantheon is *the* architectural example in the western art history canon that represents Roman Imperial ambition, it is in point of fact completely mysterious in respect to our most basic art historical understanding. There is very little ancient commentary on the work. No one knows who designed it. Remarkably, no one knows for certain why its patron, the emperor Hadrian, had the still visible bronze lettering placed on the portico acknowledging Agrippa as the builder of an earlier temple on the same site. No one knows what sculptural work actually filled the seven enormous interior niches that, in analogous buildings, were usually assigned to the planetary deities. The character of the sculpture that adorned the pediment is completely lost. No one knows precisely how the forecourt of the building looked and how it affected the way one approached. Finally, and astonishingly, no one knows exactly what the function of the Pantheon actually was. Because of this uncertainty, many survey books tend to list the dimensions of the building in great detail in place and speak with much hyperbole but avoid discussions of purpose or context. Teaching the Pantheon need not follow this example; a building as important and as imposing as this one should be used and engaged as a paradigmatic example of all kinds of contextual issues.

One fruitful way to initiate this discussion is to discuss how this absence of information came to be. First, students should be reminded that buildings undergo changes over

time in ways other media typically do not. In other words, art emerges in one context but continues to change within ever-shifting, later contexts. A Chinese scroll, African mask, or Christian altarpiece might change over time with additions and subtractions of materials, but those alterations rarely approach the fundamental changes buildings may undergo. The Pantheon provides an opportunity to see how familiar buildings may completely change in function (in this case from pagan temple to Christian church) and appearance (stripped of some decorations and embellished with new ones) from the intentions of the original builders. Students often have a unique and unusual sense of historical time—in this case they need to be reminded constantly that this particular building is almost two thousand years old, and a lot can happen over such an enormous time period. Indeed, the Pantheon's very survival depended upon its transformation and consecration as a church about AD 609, renamed as Santa Maria della Rotonda. Soon after the transformation, sculptures of the new faith replaced the old. In this sense, the Pantheon belongs to notable buildings such as the Parthenon and Hagia Sophia, which were altered to accommodate the needs of a new religion—in these cases, Islam. Here the issue is that the experience of the buildings today, both actually and in reproduction, is quite different from their intended design and purposes, and all changes need to be discussed before analysis of the original work begins. It is always useful to give historical and classroom observations a practical application, and in this case, I have my students look around our school's neighborhood to find examples of local strip malls reborn as, for example, a satellite college campus, a church, or a flea market. They begin to understand that it is common for the line between the old and the new in the built environment to blur, even after the passage of a relatively short time. Imagine then what might happen to a building almost two thousand years old.

Second, while it is important to show how immeasurably the Pantheon influenced the history of western architecture, knowledge of these later buildings does not significantly contribute to any greater understanding of the Pantheon itself. This is not historical context—this is architectural influence, however profound it may be in this case. While there is important value in showing how the legacy of the Pantheon is found in the works and writings of architects of great stature and influence like Michelangelo, Palladio, Serlio, Bernini, Lord Burlington, and Thomas Jefferson, these later artists tell us much about later cultures' interpretations of the Pantheon, not about the Pantheon itself.

The most direct way to introduce the beginning student to the Pantheon's own historical context is by discussing its patron first and its technical architectural structure next. Its form was significantly influenced by its patron, the emperor Hadrian. The emperor Publius Aelius Hadrianus (who ruled from AD 117 to 138) was the adopted successor

of Emperor Trajan, and one of the most traveled of all Roman rulers. During his reign he saw Britain, his homeland of Spain, Gaul, Greece, the Near East, and North Africa. His peculiar cosmopolitan character, tempered by his deep passion for Greek culture in general, along with his scholarly architectural interests, finds expression in the Pantheon and indeed in all of his vast projects, including his country villa at Tivoli, and his own funerary mausoleum. The Pantheon expresses, perhaps beyond anything else, the character of empire that is so profoundly Roman. It is, in a sense, a perfect reflection of earthly and heavenly imperial ambition. Like the Roman emperor who universally ruled as head of both state and church, *imperator* and *pontifex maximus*, the Pantheon connects the earth with the heavens. For example, William MacDonald, author of perhaps the best and most accessible work on the Pantheon, convincingly argues that the porch niches most likely contained sculptures of Agrippa and Augustus while the interior contained images of the gods as well as Julius Caesar. If this universal linkage of church and state is accurate, then one finds more direct thematic parallels with French Gothic cathedrals than with the Pantheon's merely stylistic descendants such as Palladio's Villa Rotonda or Jefferson's central library building at the University of Virginia.

While the building looks superficially different than when originally constructed (the brick facing of the rotunda has lost its marble revetments, the outer metal sheathing of the dome is gone, the coffer decorations were melted down, it is no longer elevated, and the original classical buildings surrounding it are all replaced), its overall structure is largely intact. Indeed, it is the best preserved of all ancient buildings, and the relationship between historical meaning and architectural structure is profound here and, because of its state of preservation, easily studied.

The Pantheon's structure may be studied as the culmination of earlier Roman building traditions. First, the Pantheon grew from a long tradition of centralized Roman plans that connect it with earlier buildings, such as the Temple of Vesta, Nero's Golden House, and the great baths, some of which contained a large round room topped by an oculus. Second, the Pantheon represents the very height of Roman building technology. The Pantheon illustrates Roman concrete building methods that arose from earlier ingenious projects like the nearby Markets of Trajan (which are a full realization of the potential of a new type of engineering: a complex groin vaulting system constructed from poured concrete, a building material itself perfected by the Romans). The application of this new system, combining the strength of the arch system with the strength of a liquid stone (concrete technology), is hidden beneath the brickwork of the rotunda but allows the building to stand. However, the Pantheon's vast, uninterrupted, unified, solemn space has no precedent in the history of architecture. It is technology realized on an imperial scale,

and in its totality, it is an ideal metaphor for Imperial Rome itself and its unique genius for bureaucratic organizing—here including organizing vast labor forces.

### Architectural Terms

1. Porch (also portico): a colonnaded entrance
2. Revetment: a facing or veneer of a wall
3. Coffer: a decoration recession in a ceiling or vault
4. Oculus: a round opening in a dome or window
5. Groin vault: a vault created by the intersection of two barrel vaults
6. Rotunda: a round building
7. Buttress: to counteract the outer thrust of a dome or vault
8. Aedicule: a richly framed niche
9. Fenestration: types or arrangement of windows
10. Orientation: how a building is sited in terms of direction

### Guiding Questions

For many of the buildings discussed in class, I use the following questions as a general guide to our discussion. I have found these to direct initial student analysis in a way comparable to the formal analysis used when discussing media such as painting and sculpture.

1. What is the **function**? Though a temple, it functioned as both a religious and a political work.
2. What type of **plan** is it? Centralized.
3. What is the **structure** or engineering system? A poured concrete rotunda, drum, and dome supported by relieving arches imbedded in thick walls serving as the buttressing system. Weight lessened by the coffers and decreasing size of the dome shell as it rises.
4. What is the **aesthetic** (ornamentation, style, vocabulary)? The rotunda was originally covered with marble veneer.
5. How is the building **sited**? The Pantheon is sited on a north-south axis and was placed in relationship to the existing building on the Campus Martius. The reason for this orientation is unknown.
6. How did one **enter** the building? A colonnaded courtyard led the Romans into the portico, from which they ascended steps into the once-elevated building.
7. Describe the **interior** space (levels, lighting, aesthetic). Three levels exist. The floor, like the building, integrates circles and squares. The ground level contains seven aediculae. The second level alternates blind fenestration with marble panels

(partially restored). The dome contains five rows of coffers (140 in all), which decrease in size to enhance the spatial illusion of depth. The oculus in the dome draws a solar disc into the interior that slowly revolves around the interior.

8. How does one **move** through the building? Unlike the axial spaces of basilica, most likely this space was experienced through circumambulation.

## Reims Cathedral

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How can the student of art history, especially one who has yet to experience firsthand a medieval cathedral, comprehend the spirit of breathtaking ambition that swept through Europe in the thirteenth century? This spirit, which began around 1140 in the Île-de-France, just outside Paris at the abbey church of St. Denis, was rooted in both religion and politics. There, Abbot Suger, a man of lowly birth, remade himself into a powerful royal advisor and transformed medieval architecture into a vision of material splendor that we now call "Gothic." This once-derisive label coined centuries later by architects of the Renaissance now evokes a sense of ethereal grandeur made possible by innovative building techniques. The Cathedral of Notre Dame at Reims stands today as testimony to that spirit. But what could possibly account for this seemingly miraculous building boom of this High Gothic period? Was this indeed an age of faith, where whole communities were moved by piety to erect a physical manifestation of the Heavenly Jerusalem at such extravagant costs? In order to help students fully understand the mind of the medieval builder and his desire to build on such a grand scale, one must analyze the cultural changes and historical events that shaped medieval life at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

One major cultural change that coincided with the emergence of the Gothic style was the growth of a robust urban environment. As trade and commerce grew in towns and cities, the Gothic cathedral began to function in an increasingly secularized world of self-made men who had freed themselves from the constraints of feudalism. These merchants and craftspeople organized themselves into guilds and purchased charters of self-government from lords in whose fiefs their towns were located. No doubt this rising autonomy of the "bourgeois" was seen as a threat to the nobility and the church. Hence, such a monument dominating the town would serve as an effective reminder not only of the omnipotence of a divine power but also of the authoritative control of both church and state over the lives of the town's citizens. And yet, without the massive contributions of skill and labor from master masons, craftsmen, and apprentices, Reims and other Gothic cathedrals like it would not have been built.

Another cultural change accounts for the portrayal of the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven amid a royal court at Reims. Most of the great Gothic cathedrals were dedicated to "Notre Dame" (meaning "Our Lady"), a royal model of virtue and chastity expressed by her soft and graceful beauty. She was seen as a "second Eve," indicating that like Jesus, she too had a role in redeeming humankind from misery and death. This "Cult of the Virgin" inspired numerous accounts of miracles, many of which survive in literature and song. Perhaps this new Gothic image of a compassionate Mary had the ability to subdue a growing population of townspeople in a way that the fearsome images of Christ as a harsh judge on Romanesque tympana could not. At Reims, Mary's tender affection for humankind is best symbolized by numerous rose windows, the largest dominating the west facade. In earlier times, the rose was sacred to Isis and Venus as a symbol of love transcending passion. As light passes through this intricate design composed of stained glass and bar tracery (which first appeared at Reims), it transforms the interior into a celestial realm. This "lux nova" or "new light," as Abbot Suger called it, could then understandably illuminate the soul so that it could unite with God, an idea made popular by Christian mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen. The rose window thus symbolizes Mary's presence as a divine intercessor.

As the Cult of the Virgin spread throughout Europe, so did a gradual dramatization of Church liturgy. The Gothic cathedral functioned less as a solemn retreat, as a monastery church would, and more as the site of popular entertainment and religious instruction for the townspeople. Squares adjacent to cathedrals became open-air theaters where mystery, miracle, and morality plays were performed, sometimes from sunrise to sunset. The popularity of these plays easily explains the extravagant costumes and ceremonial music that became commonplace in the celebration of the Catholic Mass. The jamb statues on the west facade of Reims, representing various workshops and regional influences, emerge from their architectural context and even turn to face one another as if they belong not to the past but to the present, providing the visitor with a dramatic performance of pose and gesture. These figures, along with those at Chartres, indicate the trend of Gothic sculpture towards a greater realism for visual impact. The great theologian of the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas, felt that one of the most important functions of images in a church was to stimulate the memory of the beholder. For medieval people who could not read or who did not have access to books, cathedrals were "Bibles in stone." Not only did these images need to be clearly organized in stained glass windows and sculptural reliefs so that they could be comprehended and stored away efficiently in one's memory, they needed to be visually compelling to be imprinted upon the minds of the viewer.

Such cultural changes impacted the design of the cathedral itself. When one thinks of a cathedral as a dramatic setting for pageantry and spectacle, one can easily see why all Gothic cathedrals include features such as vaults of soaring heights and large windows of stained glass. Medieval towns could not resist competing with one another to build higher vaults, making comparisons by the disgruntled to the Tower of Babel inevitable. These vaults were not supported by load-bearing walls; they were made possible by the invention of external supports called flying buttresses. The numerous innovative structural solutions at Reims indicate that the cathedral was intended as a source of pride for the thousands who contributed to its construction. For a building that had no fewer than four architects (once represented on the four corners of a maze set in the stone floor of the nave), teamwork, negotiation, and reconciliation were essential. Like the propositions of St. Thomas Aquinas, establishing a system of argument, counter-argument, and solution, the cathedral appears as a harmonious synthesis born of inquiry, compromise, and resolution. The desire of Aquinas to reconcile faith with reason seems analogous to a final design where uniformity of divergent features is achieved.

The theories of St. Thomas Aquinas indicate yet another cultural change, involving the shifting of intellectual life from remote monasteries to newly founded universities in major towns throughout Europe. His system of Aristotelian logic, known as Scholasticism, was developed by Peter Abelard at the Cathedral School of Paris. Another group of intellectuals, Platonists originating at the Cathedral School of Chartres, promoted the image of an architect by depicting God as a master builder. In this context, the cathedral could be understood as a model of a medieval universe. The reliance of its design on geometric or mathematical principles would reflect the order suggested by the cosmos created by God. Would not the seemingly miraculous application of mathematical harmony in the design of a Gothic cathedral to join earthly and heavenly realms clearly demonstrate that God has bestowed his favor on all those involved in such an unprecedented endeavor?

In addition to cultural changes, historical events played a role in how the Gothic cathedral functioned. Although some felt that Gothic cathedrals were intended to promote unity and love among believers, others saw them as monuments to excess and oppression. When the cathedral of Reims was begun in 1211, Pope Innocent III had already enlisted support from the French king Philip Augustus to wipe out a pious sect of Christians called the Cathars. These heretics were critical of the church's laxity and greed, particularly in the selling of indulgences to fund the construction of large building projects. They were also called the Albigensians

since they were concentrated largely in the region of Albi in southern France. In 1209 the crusaders massacred thousands of men, women, and children in the small town of Béziers for refusing to hand over only a few Cathars. The townspeople of Béziers saw this attack of northern barons and soldiers of fortune as acting not out of spiritual zeal but in an attempt to seize their lands. Many Catholics admired these heretics for their piety and their goodness. As news of these atrocities became known, sympathy for the victims of this so-called Albigensian Crusade grew.

One of the most far-reaching impacts of this war was the increase of power of the French king. As a link between the secular and spiritual worlds, Reims operates as an ideal expression of this increase in power. One of its primary functions was to serve as the coronation site for the kings of France, as suggested by the relief of the coronation of the Virgin in the gable above the central portal of the west facade. Above the rose window, monumental reliefs present scenes from the lives of David and Solomon, anointed kings of the Old Testament, reminding all that the French monarch is also anointed—meaning that he is able to overcome the forces of evil, just as David was able to slay Goliath. Even higher above, on the west facade in the king's gallery (a narrow arcade composed of 63 giant statues) is a statue of the Frankish king Clovis, immersed in a font and flanked by monarchs of various dynasties. In a fashion similar to that of the Roman emperor Constantine, Clovis converted to Christianity after a victorious battle by seeking baptism from the bishop of Reims. No doubt a newly crowned monarch would have seen himself as the successor of Clovis, the consummate Christian warrior against heresy. The fact that kings contributed greatly to the costs of building a Gothic cathedral explains this heavily propagandistic iconographic program at Reims.

A more sinister impact of the Albigensian Crusade was the development of an institution called the Inquisition. The Inquisition may have wiped out the Albigensian heresy, but it left a long legacy of fear and oppression that continued long after construction on Reims had ended.

The people of Reims certainly had their own share of oppression, as evidenced by another historical event. In 1233 they rebelled against an insupportable taxation imposed on them for the building of the cathedral. The townspeople attacked the archbishop's palace, forcing the bishop and the chapter (a governing body in charge of contracting work for the cathedral) to flee. The pope placed an interdict on the town and the king passed harsh sentences on the rebels. Some historians have speculated that the "Atlas" angels around the east end of Reims, straining to support

the pinnacled buttresses, may be a comment on the heavy financial burden placed on the people of Reims. These events are important to the question of whether or not the building of cathedrals was part of a larger plan for extending power and control over the people. Would not the very existence of these cathedrals in medieval times be seen as a triumph over heresy and rebellion?

Further historical events in the fourteenth century did not end the Gothic age but significantly altered its evolution. Understandably, due to the advent of war, papal rivalry, and plague in the fourteenth century, kings and bishops would have little means or motivation to build cathedrals on a scale comparable to that of Reims. The cultural and economic forces that had empowered the building of cathedrals in the Île-de-France were very much in disarray. Even though sporadic work on Reims continued into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the cathedral was never finished. Like many other Gothic cathedrals of its time, spires and towers were planned for Reims but never built. After the beginning of the Hundred Years War in 1337 and the arrival of the Black Death in 1348, the surviving population of Reims must certainly have gazed upon their cathedral and wondered whether or not an earlier age of prosperity and ambition was now over. Late Gothic churches, built in styles such as the Perpendicular in England and the fifteenth-century Flamboyant in France, appear to want to impress the visitor with tracery and detail, not size and lofty heights.

How much insight the student of art history gains from a study of Reims depends on the extent to which he or she is able to explore the structure's cultural and historical context. The growth of commerce, the Cult of the Virgin, a love of spectacle and drama, and a renewed intellectual climate all contributed to the spirit of the Gothic age. So did historical events, enabling the power and control of the king and the church to bond and increase. All of these factors are responsible for the earthly representation of Heavenly Jerusalem that we see today.

### Guiding questions:

The following questions address the **point of view** of the viewer in the thirteenth century. References to historical events and cultural changes are essential in providing an adequate answer.

1. How would the **townspeople** of Reims during the thirteenth century account for the desire to build a Gothic cathedral on such a large scale at such extravagant costs?
2. How would **scholars** of the thirteenth century (such as St. Thomas Aquinas) account for the desire to build a Gothic cathedral on such a large scale at such extravagant costs?

3. How would the **king** of France during the thirteenth century account for his desire to build a Gothic cathedral on such a large scale at such extravagant costs?
4. How would the **bishop** of Reims during the thirteenth century account for his desire to build a Gothic cathedral on such a large scale at such extravagant costs?

## Further Reading

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# Presenting and Discussing Pietro Perugino, *Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter*: A Suggested Approach

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The discussion of this significant work from the Renaissance, the 1481 fresco by Pietro Perugino in the Sistine Chapel, offers the rich opportunity to review some of the major themes of that era. Some topics that may be relevant to consider in order to fully understand and appreciate the painting include the following:

1. The scholars and artists of the Renaissance were **fascinated with classical antiquity**—with its art, literature, and all other forms of culture.
2. This interest spawned **a new interest in the natural world** as artists searched for **ways to depict what and how we see**—the fields of science, medicine, and engineering were of special interest to the pioneering thinkers of this time.
3. The **patronage of the church** provided the financial support for this work, yet artists portrayed humans and their environment in a realistic manner when visually interpreting biblical texts.
4. The concerns of the era can be said to be **"humanist" concerns—a worldview focused on human beings**, their potential, achievement, and subsequent civic responsibility.

You may wish to interweave these themes into your discussion of this painting.

## Description

When initiating an in-depth analysis of a work of art, it is helpful to begin with a detailed description of the work. Guide the students through a visual review of the painting using a slide of the entire work and details of the various portions of the painting as discussed. End with a view of the work as it exists in its setting.

*Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter*, which measures 11' 5 1/2" x 18' 8 1/2", is a fresco, a mural painting that was created with water-based pigments applied to wet plaster placed directly on a wall. Horizontally, the painting's composition is divided between the lower frieze of massive figures and the band of widely spaced buildings above. Vertically, it is divided by the open space at the center between Christ and Peter and by the symmetrical architectural forms on each side of this central axis. Triumphal arches inspired by ancient Roman monuments frame the

church and focus the attention on the center of the composition, where the vital key is being transferred. One of the major achievements of Italian Renaissance artists was the convincing integration of human figures into rational architectural settings. Here the figures are inserted into a city scene depicted in subdued colors, with a background of a distant idealized landscape and cloudy skies. The symmetrical design suggests the importance of the subject. Figures in the middle distance complement the near group, emphasizing its density and order by their scattered arrangement. At the corners of the great piazza, duplicate triumphal arches serve as the base angles of a distant compositional triangle whose apex is in the central building. Perugino modeled the arches very closely on the Arch of Constantine in Rome. The inclusion of this architectural detail reminds his viewers and his patron that Constantine was perhaps the first Christian Roman emperor (or the first to legalize the religion) and may help them recall that Constantine built a great basilica over Saint Peter's tomb in Rome. In other words, the artist is making an effort to connect the authority figures of Christ, Saint Peter, and Constantine.

**Discussion points:** Show the slide of the Arch of Constantine along with the painting and ask the students to compare the architectural details. Ask the students to identify additional ways that the artist has used formal elements, such as line, color, and form, to indicate the importance of the various figural groups.

### Subject Matter

The subject of *The Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter* is an event that is not actually described in the Bible but is suggested in Matthew 16:19. Christ is shown giving the keys to the kingdom of heaven to the apostle Peter, the first bishop, as well as the first pope, of Rome. This event provided the justification for the supremacy of papal authority, which is why Pope Sixtus wished to have this suggested biblical event portrayed on the wall of his newly erected chapel. The authority of Saint Peter as the first pope, as well as that of all those who followed him, rests on his having received the keys to the kingdom of heaven from Christ himself. This depiction helps the viewer recall Christ's statement that "upon [Peter], I will build my church." In the painting, Christ hands the keys to Saint Peter, who stands amidst an imaginary gathering of the twelve apostles and a number of Perugino's contemporaries who witness this solemn event. These figures are portrayed very solidly, each with highly individualized features. (These contemporaries may very well represent members of the aristocracy who have garnered favorite status from the Pope, either through financial contributions or in some other manner, and thus have "earned" the right to be placed in such an exalted location.) They occupy the

apron of a great stage-like space that extends into the distance toward a vanishing point in the doorway of a central-plan temple.

**Discussion points:** Discuss the role of the contemporary figures included in the painting further. Who might they be? What class of society would they have come from? Who would have suggested their inclusion in the painting? What does this tell us about Renaissance society?

## Patronage

This painting was commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV for the wall of the Sistine Chapel, located in the Vatican. The pope decided to call to Rome the best artists he could find to create fresco paintings on the walls of his newly built Sistine Chapel because he was determined—as would be the popes who would follow him—to make the monuments of Christian Rome outshine the pagan monuments of Roman antiquity. (You may wish to mention that the reason for this concern was no doubt the fact that the papacy had not been returned to Rome until 1417. The papacy had been moved to Avignon during the so-called Babylonian Captivity from 1305 to 1378. Then, during the Great Schism from 1378 to 1417, there were two popes: one in Avignon and the other in Rome.) Once the papacy had been returned to Rome, this event precipitated the restoration of not only the Vatican but the city as a whole. Buildings were built and great art was created, all in an effort to recall the city's imperial past and to solidify the glorious reputation of Rome as the rightful home of the headquarters of the Church.

Among the artists summoned by the Pope was Pietro Vannucci, called Perugino (circa 1445–1523). Perugino came from near the town of Perugia in Umbria. He had left his home some years before and had been active as an artist in Florence since 1472. While there, he had absorbed many of the artistic advances of the day and was considered to be one of the most accomplished artists of the time; he thus attracted the Pope's attention. Michaelangelo and Raphael were two other artists among many who created masterworks for the popes in the Vatican.

**Discussion points:** Show slides of a few major Roman architectural monuments to remind the students of the accomplishments of that era. Then, show the other works that comprise the decorations for the Sistine Chapel, including Michelangelo's ceiling. Ask them to consider the different impact architectural works make upon the public compared to fresco paintings.

Ask the students to consider similar building and decoration campaigns in their own time and in their own cities—mention the growth of public art programs through legislation in the 1970s, and the proliferation of architecturally significant art museums, such as the one designed by Frank Gehry for the city of Bilbao, Spain. Discuss what the museum did for that city. Examples in the United States might include the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Denver Art Museum, in addition to the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

(While papal patronage will continue into the High Renaissance, patronage from wealthy private individuals will dramatically increase in this era. Engage the students in a discussion of why this change in patronage will be important to the arts.)

## Artistic Innovations

The painting is a remarkable study in **linear** or **mathematical perspective**. The clear demarcation of the paving stones of the piazza provides a geometric grid, and as Marilyn Stokstad states in *Art: A Brief History*, this causes "the figures to stand out like chess pieces on the squares." The painting can be seen as a large triangle, with Christ and Peter standing on either side of the triangle's central axis, which runs through the temple's doorway to form the vanishing point emphasized by the lines formed by the paving stones. The placement of these central figures emphasizes the center of the triangular composition. The other figures comprising the scene, the apostles and the contemporaries, stand in two groups at the foreground of the painting's surface. At the center of the background are three buildings, with a polygonal church occupying the middle position. It is taller than the other two buildings and provides a point to the triangular composition.

The linear system sets forth the belief that a picture's surface is a flat plane that intersects the viewer's field of vision at right angles. For example, if a viewer stands in a fixed point at the center of a scene and shuts one eye, everything seen from the open eye will appear to recede into the distance at the same rate. Using this same system, the recession into the background is shaped by **imaginary lines**, called **orthogonals**, that will meet at a single vanishing point on the horizon, recalling the optical illusion that things seem to grow smaller and closer together as they get farther away from us. Linear perspective makes pictorial space seem almost like an extension of real space.

Perugino's painting is one of the first to utilize this new system of representation. It was initially demonstrated by the architect Filippo Brunelleschi in 1420 and codified

by the scholar and architect Leon Battista Alberti in 1436 in his treatise *Della Pittura (On Painting)*. Brunelleschi and Alberti were both humanists who engaged in scientific study of the world. They believed in the adage that "man is the measure of all things." Their convictions led them to invent linear perspective, a mathematical system for representing three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. Alberti's goal, and that of the artists who followed his principles, was to make a painted or sculpted representation resemble "a view through a window." Perspective conferred a kind of aesthetic legitimacy on representations by making the picture measurable and exact.

This mathematical concern underscores the Renaissance era's fascination with classical antiquity. According to Plato, measure is the basis of beauty, and the art of Greece was based on this belief. When humanist scholars in the Renaissance rediscovered Plato by reading his texts, the artists reflected this fascination by utilizing the mathematical system of linear perspective in their pictures. The importance of the projection of measurable objects on flat surfaces not only influenced Renaissance paintings; it also made possible scale drawings, maps, charts, graphs, and diagrams. The mathematical system of exact representation laid the foundation for modern science and technology.

**Discussion points:** Perugino's painting provides a clear example of the use of linear perspective and will occupy the central "box" position (where linear perspective is definitively discussed separately from the general text) for the third edition of Stokstad's *Art History*, but it certainly is not the only possible example. Show the students other examples of works employing linear perspective, including works by Masaccio such as *Tribute Money*, circa 1427, and ask them to compare and contrast the two paintings' use of perspective. Ask them to suggest what factors other than linear perspective are employed to convey the narrative of the scene. You may wish to have them create their own works of art employing linear perspective. Then, show the students a different example, such as *The Annunciation*, circa 1434–1436, by Jan van Eyck, and ask them to compare the use of media as well as perspectival systems with those of Perugino's work. Finally, show da Vinci's *Last Supper*, 1495–1498, and underscore his use of linear perspective.

Also included in *Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter* are buildings suggestive of those described in Alberti's treatise on architecture as representing the "ideal city." In this ideal city, a temple or church stands at the center of a great open space on a raised plane separated from all other buildings. Even the type of building depicted by Perugino reflects his knowledge of Alberti's treatise, since the church portrayed

in the painting is polygonal. The Pantheon was thought to be an ideal classical model for buildings, and Alberti believed that churches should be either circular or polygonal because it was "more natural." The inclusion of these ideal surroundings would supposedly bring out the best qualities in the city's people.

**Discussion points:** Display a slide of the Pantheon and discuss its similarities and differences with the church depicted by Perugino occupying the central place in the background of his painting. Briefly review the ways the painting conveys a sense of the ideal by reflecting the classical past.

## Conclusion

Perugino's painting is one of the earliest examples of the use of linear perspective by an artist. It clearly shows the use of this important discovery to enhance and promote the story in the painting. As the Renaissance progressed, many artists adopted multiple vanishing points, and this gave their work a more relaxed, less tunnel-like feeling. Yet Perugino's *Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter* remains a key work for the understanding of how formal elements and artistic innovations can be used by the artist to underscore the importance of his chosen narrative.

**Discussion points:** Patronage, biblical subject matter, media, and the linear perspective system were all important issues for consideration in discussing this important work of art. Looking forward, show the students slides of Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* (1642), David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784–1785), Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines, Paris* (1873–1874), and Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), and ask them to consider the differences presented by these works as compared to *Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter*. This should not be a lengthy discussion but should highlight the changes that art will undergo as it progresses through time.

## Bibliography

You have chosen one introductory book to use for your survey course. However, it is useful when preparing for a discussion of a key work of art to pull information on the topic at hand from the variety of excellent introductory texts. Surprising differences of emphasis will be discovered, and your presentation will be enriched. If budget permits, try to have all of these texts in your classroom for your easy referral as well as for your students to use. Encourage them to explore the various approaches found in them. Such a review of the texts need not be that

time-consuming, yet will provide a more interesting presentation. The main introductory texts consulted for the preparation of this discussion are:

Honour, Hugh and John Fleming. *The Visual Arts: A History*. 6th ed. New York: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Janson, H. W., and A. F. Janson. *History of Art*. 6th ed. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001.

Kleiner, Fred S. and Christin J. Mamiya. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. 12th ed. Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005.

Stokstad, Marilyn. *Art: A Brief History*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 2004.

Stokstad, Marilyn. *Art History*. 2d ed. rev. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 2005.

Your presentation will also benefit greatly if you have the time to consult the numerous special period books available to the art historian. Certainly, you should have the major text on the Italian Renaissance in your library:

Hartt, Frederick. *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 2003.

In addition, you may wish to consult the following accessible but very informative sources for additional information:

Freedberg, S. J. *Painting in Italy, 1500–1600*. 3rd ed. Pelican History of Art. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993.

Graham-Dixon, Andrew. *Renaissance*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000.

Paoletti, John T. and Gary M. Radke. *Art in Renaissance Italy*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001.

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## Study Essay for Judith Leyster's *Self-Portrait*

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A woman is seated before an easel with a palette and brushes in her hand, and turns to us as if to speak; the painting on the easel is one of a fiddler.

Who painted the portrait of the artist? Why would she be all dressed up to paint? Who painted the work on the easel? Why was the painting created? How does it compare or "fit in" with other paintings of its time? What is unique about it?

These are questions art historians have asked about this oil painting since it was "discovered" in the early part of the twentieth century. Today, some of the answers may seem obvious. Well, it is now called a self-portrait. So the subject is Judith Leyster (1609–1660); the artist is Judith Leyster, and the painting on the easel is hers, too. But her portrait (now housed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.) isn't signed. And we don't truly know what she looked like. There was no photography in the seventeenth century. In fact, what is obvious now wasn't so clear 80 years ago.

The painting was then attributed to Frans Hals (ca. 1585–1666); that is, art historians thought the Dutch artist, Frans Hals, who was known for his portraits (you may know the Civic Guard paintings or *The Regents of the Old Men's Alms House*) and genre paintings (perhaps you know his *Malle Babbe* or *Merry Drinker*). He was famous in his time, as he is now. It was suggested that he may have painted a portrait of his Haarlem colleague and possible student, Judith Leyster. That she was the likely subject was not doubted, since she was one of the few women artists in Holland and the only known woman painter in the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke (the painter's guild) during her lifetime. Some art historians thought Hals and Leyster painted this work together as a collaborative effort (i.e., that he painted the portrait and she the fiddler). But, by the mid-twentieth century, on the basis of style—that is, using connoisseurship—the painting was wholly given to Leyster and therefore understood as a self-portrait.

The painting is one of the boldest examples of self-portraiture, and one of Leyster's most sophisticated works. It displays her expertise as both a portrait and genre painter. An infrared photograph of the *Self-Portrait* indicates that originally a portrait of a girl was on the easel. It may even have been another self-portrait. In any case, Leyster's substitution of the fiddler for the girl is surely meant to demonstrate her expertise as a genre painter

(in painting the fiddler) as well as a portrait painter (in the painting of herself), thus displaying the versatility of her skills.

Although seated before her easel, with her palette, brushes, and wiping cloth, Leyster is not dressed to work. Surely her elaborate, large, white lace collar and her lace cuffs would get dirty and full of paint! She is dressed, with pearl earrings and lace cap, and with her cuffs and collar, in formal clothes, much like a patron of hers would be. In dress, she looks similar to other female portraits—but not in attitude, since women were usually shown in a more contained, conservative manner.

Leyster turns to us, leans back with her elbow crooked over the back of her chair, and speaks to us, with an open mouth, as we, presumably, enter her studio. A portrait "speaking" was known as a "speaking likeness"—that is, the "speaking" is a way for the artist to animate the subject. This action suggesting vitality and energy is a typical component of baroque (usually male) portraits. It also links to a more philosophical aspect of painting known as *ut pictura poesis*—"as is painting, so is poetry." This humanist concept suggests that painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture. The self-portrait as a "speaking likeness" is a deliberate reference to this and to the history of Haarlem artists.

At this point we should consider: what other self-portraits do you know? And what are the artists depicted doing? How are they dressed? Perhaps you know of some of the self-portraits by Jan van Eyck, Albrecht Dürer, Parmigianino, Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, or the many by Rembrandt. These artists, from the fifteenth, sixteenth, or seventeenth centuries, are all men, and are all dressed well (like patrons) in their portraits. And, with the exception of Rembrandt in one painting, none of them show themselves working. In their self-portraits, artists demonstrated their talents for sale. They attempted to demonstrate a variety of skills to their patrons, often so that those patrons could imagine themselves painted by the artist. Furthermore, by the seventeenth century, artists wanted to see themselves as professionals, not craftsmen. Artists were concerned with the status of painters and, dressed in the attire of wealth, suggested the place they wished to occupy in their class system.

But Leyster, although dressed well, shows herself in her studio, painting. She and other women artists (such as Artemisia Gentileschi, 1593–ca.1653, also working at about the same time), show themselves painting. In the case of women artists, their unique role as artists in their time raised their status.

So why was the painting executed? It may have been painted to mark the occasion of Judith Leyster's entrance into the Guild of St. Luke of Haarlem in 1633. Artists, according to their new charter of 1631, were to present a painting (of measurements similar to those of this self-portrait) upon their induction into the guild as a "master" (such works were, yes, to become known as "masterpieces"). This *Self-Portrait* may have been Leyster's master's piece, and thus presented to the guild.

And so the portrait of a woman artist showing her skills as a portrait and genre painter, with a popular piece at her easel, welcomes us into her studio. Leyster demonstrates her personal triumph and acceptance as a painter at a time when such professional definition was crucial. The *Self-Portrait* is a clear, self-proclaiming document of a confident and vital woman who is stating her position and raising her own status as a master in the guild.

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# Georges Seurat, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*

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In asking students to analyze a work of art, it is important to communicate to them that the quality of the question that they ask will directly influence the quality of their answer. Thus, I try to teach students to frame questions in order: first, to draw out any passive or related knowledge that they can connect to a specific work of art; and second, to list concrete art historical information that they must find in order to answer larger art critical and art historical questions. The list of questions should be flexible enough so that it can be adapted for use comparatively across art history, thereby encouraging students to practice repeatedly the critical skills of art history. I use some questions in class at an early stage in teaching a subject, when students may have little specific knowledge of an artist's work, as a way to stimulate discussion about possible answers and as a way to assign individual research tasks to students. I use similar questions later in the teaching process when students return with answers to specific questions, and later still as a tool for essay preparation. The case study outlined below is an example of a finalized narrative analysis of a work of art in response to questions about visual and narrative meaning.

## Questions to Ask of *La Grande Jatte*

**1. Description**

What does the painting look like? George Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* is huge, at 6'9" by 10'. The monumental oil painting includes some 50 figures, shown enjoying a sunny Sunday afternoon in the park on the island of La Grande Jatte. The figures either rest in the sun or in the shade or they take slow strolls through the trees or by the water. They are remarkable by their simplified, statuesque immobility. They stand or sit in eerily repetitive frozen poses. Only one small girl in the right mid-ground breaks the hazy, heat-induced inertia by running after a hoop. Seurat called his technique "chromo-luminarism," while others have described it as "pointillism" or "divisionism."

**2. Visual Meaning**

How is the work constructed visually? How does it communicate visual meaning? Is there a visual theory behind the painting's form? Seurat's visual theory was based

on the fact that pure complementary colors (opposites on the color wheel), such as blue and orange, could be laid down side by side on a canvas to create two distinct effects, depending on the distance from which they are viewed. If viewed from a distance, the adjacent complementary colors mix visually, creating the illusion of secondary colors, such as earth colors. If viewed from very close to the canvas, on the other hand, the adjacent colors remain distinct and, because complementary colors intensify the hue of each when adjacent to one another, the colors in the painting appear brighter than they were actually painted. Thus, blue and orange observed from some distance appear to mix as a muddy secondary color, but when examined close to the canvas, they appear more brilliant in juxtaposition than when viewed separately. Thus, when viewed from a distance of 15 feet, areas of *La Grande Jatte* seem almost dull and neutral in color (even allowing for the fact that the overall paint surface has faded over time), but the individual figures are perceived most clearly. At nine feet, individual colors start to become visible and the figures appear less solid. At six feet, the image vibrates before the viewer's eyes. Neither individual colors nor fused colors can be perceived separately. The mind jumps back and forth between the desire to see the colors and forms. At three feet, the viewer perceives individual paint strokes. They begin to appear as separate dots and lines. Colors become visible and appear brighter. The surface loses its integrity as an overall image and individual figures or groups of figures can no longer be read clearly. The painting transforms itself into an abstract configuration of paint strokes and brilliant color.

In *La Grande Jatte*, Seurat used only 11 of the purest colors possible (without black), which he arranged in a row on his palette and applied directly to the canvas. It is often thought that Seurat painted only in dots of paint, but in fact he used a variety of brushstrokes, ranging from long lines to short fast strokes to small dot-like strokes, depending on the speed and direction that he wanted the eye to move over the canvas. He also conformed to a strict geometry of forms, considering that upward inclining lines lifted the viewer's spirits, downward inclining lines depressed the spirits, and horizontal or vertical lines calmed the spirits. He used a strict grid of horizontal and vertical lines or carefully controlled spirals in most of *La Grande Jatte* to calm the spirits (the intention of the Sunday afternoon stroll). He also believed that visual harmony demanded an overall unified tone, and made some 30 small tonal conté crayon drawings, some 40 small oil sketches (*croquetons*), and three very large oil sketches in preparation for *La Grande Jatte*. Thus, Seurat believed that with the right balance of color, line, tone, and form, he could achieve visual, perceptual, and subjective harmony in art.

**3. Contextual Meaning/Function**

Did the artist paint the work at a significant moment in his or her artistic career or life? How did the artist intend the work of art to function? Why did the artist paint the picture? Was it part of an **avant-garde**?[1] Who was the patron? What was its exhibition history? Was it even intended to sell? Georges Seurat was born in 1859 in Paris and died suddenly of meningitis in 1891 at the age of 31, by which time he had already established himself as major avant-garde painter in late-nineteenth-century France. Seurat trained at the **École des Beaux Arts**[2] from 1878 to 1879. In 1880, he established a professional studio and began to study contemporary theories on the nature of color and light. He read Michel-Eugene Chevreul's 1839 treatise on color, Eugene Delacroix's 1836–1838 color notes, and the 1881 French translation of Ogden Rood's *Modern Chromatics*.

In 1884, Seurat painted the *Bathers at Asnières* (201 x 300 cm), which was rejected by the official Paris Salon of 1884, but was hung in the first alternative Salon des Indepéndants (Salon of Independent Artists) in 1884. This single work gained Seurat entrée to the inner circle of the French avant-garde. He formed a particularly close friendship with the artist Paul Signac, who had similar interests in the scientific application of color to painting. The two artists worked together over the next year to develop a neo-impressionist theory[3] of painting based on the restriction of the palette to high-hued complementary colors applied directly to the canvas in small regular strokes.

Even before Seurat exhibited *Bathers at Asnières*, however, he had begun to plan his grand work, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. He started planning in

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[1] The avant-garde literally means the "advanced guard" or the front line of troops in military terms. In nineteenth-century French art, the avant-garde came to mean a small, radical art movement with self-defined objectives that were precise, short-term, usually revolutionary, and set in direct opposition to the long-term dominance of the state-funded academy of art.

[2] The École des Beaux Arts (the School of the Fine Arts) was one of the three state-supported art institutions that dominated nineteenth-century France. The others were the Académie des Beaux Arts (the Academy of Fine Arts), the organization for professional artists, and the Salon, the annual exhibition of the Academy.

[3] Neo-impressionism is a term coined by the critic Félix Fénéon in a review of the eighth and final impressionist exhibition, entitled "Les Impressionists" in *La Vogue* (Paris, 1886) to describe the art of Camille and Lucien Pissarro, Paul Signac, and Georges Seurat. These artists, like the impressionists, used contrasting color in their paintings, but unlike the impressionists, the neo-impressionists believed that color contrasts should be derived according to rules and scientific principles. They did not, however, believe that color should necessarily be applied to the canvas according to codified rules or dry formulae.

1883, began painting in May 1884, and finished the large painting in March 1885. He had planned to exhibit *La Grande Jatte* in the second Salon des Indepéndants, but the exhibition was cancelled. Seurat spent the next year revising the piece. He exhibited *La Grande Jatte* at the eighth Impressionist Exhibition (1886), at the second Salon des Indepéndants (1886), and at the Musée de L'Art Moderne in Brussels (1887). About twenty critics reviewed the painting. Some were shocked, but a few recognized it as avant-garde, new, and significant. Henry Fèvre wrote:

> Little by little, one understands the intention of the painter; the dazzle and blindness lift and one becomes familiar with, divines, sees, and admires the great yellow patch of grass eaten away by the sun, the clouds of golden dust in the treetops, the details that the retina, dazzled by light, cannot make out; then one understands the stiltedness of the Parisian promenade, stiff and distorted; even its recreation is affected.[4]

Maurice Hermel hailed it as Seurat's "manifesto painting" and "the banner of a new school."[5] Neo-impressionism as a movement lasted less than three years and of its three main proponents, Seurat, Signac, and Pissarro, only Seurat enjoyed the fruits of its swift rise to fame. Within a year, however, Seurat and Signac parted ways, and while Seurat painted many important works of art, his critical success began and ended with *La Grande Jatte*. Seurat exhibited *La Grande Jatte* only three times during his life; he did not attempt to sell it. He sold only smaller works that he exhibited with it. The painting passed to Seurat's mother after his death, and remained in the family until it was sold to a Chicago couple in 1924 for $20,000. In 1926, it was acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago, where it has remained ever since as one of the museum's centerpieces.

**4. Narrative Meaning/Subject**

What is the obvious narrative of the painting? What does the painting say about the society at the time and place portrayed? Is there a larger narrative? What does it tell us about the people portrayed? On the surface the subject of *La Grande Jatte* is simple—the painting represents people enjoying a Sunday afternoon in the park. But what does the choice of location, day of the week, languid atmosphere,

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[4] Fèvre as quoted in Thomson, *Seurat*, 184.

[5] Hermel as translated into English and quoted in Thomson 1985: 114. The quotation in its original French can be found in Clark 1984: 316, note 17, which reads "Hermel in *La France libre* 28 May, 1886: 'Le table manifeste de M. Seurat, enseigne d'une école nouvelle, dite de la Grande Jatte.'"

and the cast of characters signify? Who are these people, what are they doing, and why are they there? What was Seurat trying to tell us about Sunday afternoons in Paris in 1886? *La Grande Jatte* is a long thin island on the River Seine about two kilometers long, roughly four kilometers northeast of Paris. It is a short walk from the railway station of Asnières, to which the railway was connected from the city center in 1837. In the 1880s, it was an "excursion" from Paris. On one side of *La Grande Jatte* lay Asnières and Carbevoie, semirural boating towns earlier in the century, but by the 1880s rather tawdry lower-middle-class amusement towns. On the other side lay Clichy and Levallois-Perret, towns dominated in the 1880s by factories, gasworks, tenements, and shanty settlements. The park on *La Grande Jatte* was not a fashionable city park of the likes of the Bois de Bologne, but it was very popular among the growing Parisian population of petit bourgeoisie (urban middle classes), who numbered roughly 100,000 in the 1880s, and by the Parisian *demi-monde* (urban lower middle classes, often assumed to be individuals of questionable morals). The figures in the painting are usually read as "types" that would have been readily recognizable by nineteenth-century Parisian viewers. Henry Fèvre described them as a class of Parisians trying to affect the mannerisms of a higher class; as stiff, stilted, and affected, and not quite comfortable at leisure. Sunday had just recently been legislated by the French government as the (nonreligious) official day of rest when workers were expected to spend time with their families, and Seurat's characters are petit bourgeoisie dressed up in their "Sunday best."

There are three main figure groups in *La Grande Jatte*. The first group, to the right of the picture, includes the large figure of a strolling man and his female companion, with a dog and a monkey. The male figure is usually identified as a boulevardier, a citified dandy who wears "affected" English clothes to imitate French aristocratic fashion: a top hat, high collar, cane, and cigar. The female figure is usually identified as a cocotte, a single woman of the *demi-monde* attired in a little hat with tiny bows, a slightly old-fashioned tight jacket with a slim skirt, and a fashionably up-to-date small bustle. Her costume suggests that its various parts were mass-produced rather than custom-made, and were purchased at one of the city's new department stores. Her small pug dog was usually caricatured as the lap dog of *demi-monde* women, while the monkey on a chain was a clear favorite of prostitutes.

The second group of figures forms a triangle to the lower left third of the painting. This group includes an arrangement of two men, a woman, and another dog. Another boulevardier sits stiffly looking out at the water. A second single woman sits slightly behind the boulevardier, sewing. Two cast-off novels and a white fan

with elaborately long tassels lie beside her. The lower reclining male figure is often described as a *canotier*, a working-class man, probably an oarsman, because he wears a bell shaped hat, sleeveless shirt, and colored pants, and has the muscled upper body of an oarsman. The *canotier* reclines, smoking lazily. He is unaccompanied except for a mongrel dog that sniffs behind him like a stray. Some scholars suggest that the dog sniffing the woman's fan symbolically underscores both the woman's and the *canotier's* presumed promiscuity. The major figure groups on both the left and right of the painting are in deep shadow.

The third group of figures in the center of the painting includes two unaccompanied single women sitting in the shade, one holding flowers and the other a parasol. Some scholars suggest that in 1880s Paris, two single women together in public like this would openly suggest their "availability." Above them a mother and daughter walk straight ahead toward the viewer, isolated in bright sunlight, and almost studiously ignoring the surrounding figures. The mother and daughter have been regarded by scholars as the most respectable pair of figures in the painting, and some argue, the key to the painting's meaning. Since Sunday was the prescribed family day in France, one would expect the park at *La Grande Jatte* to be filled with family groups. But, in fact, there is not one single nuclear family in the entire painting. The closest Seurat comes to a respectable family is the central mother and daughter. Two soldiers, just right of center in the painting, appear almost toylike. The child in the center with a hoop does not seem to belong to anyone in particular. A set of paired figures to the right of the mother and child represent a wet nurse viewed from behind, identified by her traditional hat with long ribbons. A hunched-over elderly woman accompanies her. Both are childless. One standing and one seated woman appear to fish, but with little enthusiasm. It has been suggested that they are prostitutes literally fishing for men.

**5. Change in Meaning/History of Scholarship**

Has there been a significant shift in how art historians have interpreted this work of art? *La Grande Jatte* was all but ignored by scholars until it was acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago in 1926. In 1935, Daniel Catton Rich published an analysis of the visual innovations of the painting; Meyer Schapiro first raised the possibility of its political and social implications; and a treatise on the visual and symbolic significance of the work, that Signac originally wrote just after Seurat's death, was published. However, analysis of the visually avant-garde character of the painting dominated the scholarship until John House (1980) and T.J. Clark (1984) resurrected Schapiro's class-based analysis of *La Grande Jatte*. In 1987, Richard R. Brettell and

John House organized a symposium of major Seurat scholars at the Art Institute to celebrate the painting's centennial and to examine and extend the state of research on the painting. There are other interpretations. One psychological study suggests that the painting may even have been a personal commentary on Seurat's own dysfunctional family.

Most scholars agree that *La Grande Jatte* is an extremely complex painting. On a visual level, it embodies Seurat's theories of color, line, and tone. On a narrative level, it can be read as a critique of contemporary French social conventions, and even of the transformation of Paris from a medieval city into a modern industrial city of grand boulevards in which each person, like each color on the palette, had its place. We can assume that Seurat intended the painting as a grand manifesto piece, epic in scope, scale, and style. He probably meant it to be read as visually and formally experimental, as theoretically avant-garde, and as a commentary on modern life.

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# Eshu Dance Staff

## Yoruba, Nigeria;
## University of Iowa Museum of Art, the Stanley Collection

Victoria Rovine
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### African Art: Context and Individual Artistry

This object was made to be viewed on an altar or in the hand of its owner at a religious ceremony, rather than in a brightly lit case in an art museum setting. This staff, more specifically called a dance wand, depicts and honors the Yoruba deity Eshu. Such sculptures were among the objects owned by a religious specialist, carried in the hand or hooked over the shoulder when he or she appeared in festivals and ceremonies. When not in use, it was probably placed on a shrine along with sacred stones, vessels filled with offerings, and other sculptures. Like most African art, it was made to serve a clearly identifiable function (though many artists today create objects intended for museum display). Works of art may contain or symbolize power. They may be used to heal, to entertain, to teach, to tell histories, or to adorn bodies and architecture. The study of African art, therefore, places great emphasis on the cultural contexts in which objects are used.

Because Western observers of African art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century considered African art to be purely "traditional," passed down unchanging from generation to generation, they did not acknowledge the creativity of individual artists. Many Western artists, including Picasso, were inspired by the powerful forms of African objects though they knew little about their original functions. As a result of this separation of objects from their intended contexts, few artists' names were preserved when objects were collected. The study of African art has only in recent decades begun to focus attention on recovering the identities and histories of specific artists, like Olowe of Ise, who was famous in his day but whose work has only recently been identified and assembled for a solo exhibition. Much of this work has been focused on the arts of the Yoruba, using stylistic analysis and historical documents to reconstruct the oeuvre, or body of work, of individual artists and their workshops.

**Questions:**

1. Does this object appear to be purely functional, or does it also have an aesthetic component? Are aesthetic concerns and functionality mutually exclusive?

2. Is context only important in African art, or is it also crucial to understanding Western art history?

## Woodcarvers and Woodcarving

Yoruba culture has a long and rich history. Its sophisticated artistic traditions can be traced back at least as far as AD 1000, when people living in complex urban cultures near the contemporary city Ife in southwestern Nigeria created sculpture in stone, terra-cotta, and, most famously, cast metal. Woodcarving may well have been an important art form as well, though wood did not survive archaeologically.

Some occupations are traditionally gender-specific among the Yoruba. In the realm of artistic production, men work in wood and metal, while women are the potters and weavers. Sculpture in wood is predominantly figurative, depicting people, spirits, and animals. The tools of woodcarving include adzes, chisels, and knives, all of which would have been made by local blacksmiths and kept razor sharp by the carver. The adze is the primary tool of Yoruba woodcarving, used from the initial stages of roughing out a block of wood to the finishing stage, which requires great skill.

The training of sculptors usually takes place through years of apprenticeship to a master artist. Boys would begin with the making of simple objects like spoons and bowls, and later learn the skills and information required to make figurative sculpture and masks. In some families, woodcarving was a profession passed from fathers, uncles, and other relatives down to male descendents. Artists who were particularly skilled or innovative became well known and might receive commissions from distant towns and cities. Today, some Yoruba carvers travel internationally, selling their work and demonstrating the carving process.

**Questions:**

1. How might the apprenticeship system differ from education in professional art schools?
2. Why might certain professions be associated with different genders? Is there any way in which this system might help cultures maintain their indigenous arts?
3. How might the international presence of Yoruba artists influence the reception of Yoruba sculpture abroad?

## The Yoruba Orisha

Yoruba religious worship is based on a vast amount of information in the form of literature (much of it oral); botanical science; philosophy; and belief in the power of ancestors, nature spirits, and deities. Works of art are often directly related to these residents of the spirit world. Masquerades honor ancestors and depict nature spirits, shrines are dedicated to spirits and deities, and figures are carved as aids to communication with all of these beings. The deities, called *Orisha*, each have their own iconography; many are associated with specific colors, animals, and objects.

Eshu, also known as Elegba or Legba, is a key *Orisha*. He (or she, as Eshu sometimes appears in female form) embodies the uncontrollable forces of fortune; the unpredictability that makes religious worship necessary in order to influence fate in one's favor. Although Eshu is capricious and mischievous, he might be viewed as the most powerful of Yoruba deities, for he is the messenger who communicates between human beings and the gods. No sacrifice, no matter how generous, will capture the attention of other deities if Eshu does not bring the message from earth to the spirit world. A blacksmith who might seek the support of Ogun, the deity associated with war and ironwork, must make sacrifices to both Eshu and Ogun in order to ensure that his request reaches Ogun.

Eshu is particularly crucial in the practice of *Ifa* divination, a complex system by which the will of spirits is read through tosses of sixteen nuts or shells, interpreted through an extensive system of proverbs and verses. Eshu appears frequently in the art associated with divination, for he carries messages back and forth between the diviner, the client, and the spirit world. Like so many aspects of Yoruba religious thought, Eshu is neither positive nor negative, but responds to the requests of human beings depending upon his mood and myriad other factors.

**The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Stanley Collection, 1986.284.**

## Symbols of Eshu

This object is immediately recognizable as a representation of Eshu because of its iconography, or use of visual symbols. Like most Yoruba sculpture, it is naturalistic—immediately recognizable as a human figure—and idealized—emphasizing those aspects of the human form that are considered to be most important and visually powerful.

The deity's most notable attribute is the protrusion that emerges from the top of his head. The pointed form embodies Eshu's power and aggression, like a knife blade or a flame. It may also be read as a phallus, or male sexual organ, a symbol of male potency and procreative energy. The towering projection also emphasizes the head itself, a reference to the philosophical emphasis on the head as the seat of an individual's identity and life force, or *Ase*. This sculpture incorporates another element of Eshu's iconography: the whistle, a reference to his childlike, impetuous personality.

While many depictions of Eshu incorporate whistles and the projection from the head, this piece is exceptional for the addition of a second head that emerges from atop the figure, part of the projection itself. This face is bearded, with what appear to be wrinkles on its cheeks. The face may be a reference to Eshu's paradoxical identity—powerful yet irresponsible, creative yet destructive, male and female—by giving him the dual identity of youth and old age.

**Questions:**

1. In what ways is this depiction of Eshu naturalistic? In what ways is it idealized?
2. How do contradiction and paradox function as a part of religions other than that of the Yoruba?

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## An Insider's Discussion of Jackson Pollock's *Mural*, 1943

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It has been my pleasure and my responsibility to have Jackson Pollock's *Mural* under my care as a curator of painting and sculpture at the University of Iowa Museum of Art for more than 13 years. These thoughts represent the distillation of my study and thinking about this singular painting, an icon of modern art. The comments here have formed the basis of my lectures on the painting through my years as curator and are offered now to you for your use and consideration.

For many of you, this image will appear as an "unknown"—it does not appear in the standard art history texts. It is included with these materials as a suggested way to address a work of art that is an unknown. Discussion of an unknown slide has been and will remain an important part of the AP® Art History Examination. While no one expects students to reiterate all of the issues presented in this essay, myriad points are included that can be used to elicit comments and discussion from your class.[1]

The biography of Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) reads like the plot of a movie: he was born in the still-wild American West; his father deserted the family when Jackson was very young, and his school career was marked by frequent troublemaking and expulsions. Jackson struggled with alcoholism, had a tumultuous relationship with his artist wife, and he died the archetypal American death—in an automobile. What this script omits, however, is Pollock's singular, improbable achievement, for which *Mural* was the foundation—he changed the course of American art.

[1] There are many informative and scholarly sources on Jackson Pollock. Kirk Varnedoe with Pepe Karmel, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998) is the most complete reference, presenting much of the earlier scholarly research as well as new discoveries on the artist and his work.

**The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Gift of Peggy Guggenheim, 1959.6.**


Pollock was born in Wyoming in 1912 and grew up in California. He became interested in art as a teenager through magazine reproductions of work by artists like Matisse, Franz Marc, and Picasso. His high school art teacher encouraged his interest. A letter to his brothers, written when he was 17, describes well his state of mind:

> As to what I would like to be. It is difficult to say. An Artist of some kind. If nothing else I shall study the Arts. People have always frightened and bored me. Consequently I have been within my own shell and have not accomplished anything materially.[2]

Pollock went to New York City in 1930 to study art with Thomas Hart Benton, a major figure in the American art movement called regionalism. Benton became Pollock's surrogate father and confidante.

These were the Depression years, and like many young American artists, Pollock found work through the Federal Art Project, part of the Works Progress Administration. Pollock also was among a Greenwich Village coterie of young artists who were joined by refugees from wartime Europe. Through them Pollock learned about the idea that art should

[2] Varnedoe, "Comet: Jackson Pollock's Life and Work", p. 21, identified in footnote 17 as letter from Jackson Pollock to Charles and Frank Pollock, October 22, 1929, as cited in Francis V. O'Connor and Eugene V. Thaw, *Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Drawings, and Other Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), chapter 4, p. 207, D6.

be an expression of the unconscious mind. Like many artists who matured during the Depression and the Second World War, Pollock was trained in American art, primarily regionalism, and intrigued by surrealism and abstraction, the foremost European modernist movements. But Pollock broke the mold, early and notably, to create his *Mural*, a work so different from anything else at the time that his standing in the art world is unique. He began to explore the possibilities of creating art with his whole body, using sweeping gestures and brushstrokes that emphasized the effort and energy of the act of painting.

As part of a contract with Peggy Guggenheim, the leading dealer of modern art in New York at that time, Pollock was commissioned in 1943 to create a mural painting for the entry to her new townhouse. (The terms of the contract were $150 a month and a settlement at the end of the year if his paintings sold. Pollock was to have the mural done by the time of his one-man show in November.) Guggenheim was eager to present in her home a symbol of support for the new American brand of art she was beginning to champion in her gallery. The choice of subject was to be his, and the size, immense—8'11" x 19'9", meant to cover an entire wall. At the suggestion of Guggenheim's friend and advisor Marcel Duchamp, it was painted on canvas, not the wall itself, so it would be portable. In order to accommodate the large canvas, Pollock had to tear out a wall between two rooms in his apartment.[3]

However, as the time approached for Pollock's exhibition, the canvas for the mural was blank. Guggenheim began to pressure him. Pollock spent weeks staring at the untouched canvas, complaining to friends that he was "blocked," and seeming to become both obsessed and depressed. Finally, according to all reports, he painted the entire canvas in one frenetic burst of energy around New Year's Day of 1944 (although the painting bears the date 1943). Pollock told a friend years afterward that he had had a vision: "It was a stampede . . . [of] every animal in the American West, cows and horses and antelopes and buffaloes. Everything is charging across that goddamn surface."[4] Pollock's "vision" may have been a memory from his childhood in the American West. While there is some suggestion of figuration within *Mural*, its overall impact is that of abstraction and freedom from the restrictions imposed by figures.

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[3] Stephen Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1989), p. 468. Naifeh and Smith have written a biography of Pollock that is a complete record including a compilation of all letters, scholarship, and other pertinent information woven into the fascinating story of Pollock's life.

[4] Ibid., p. 468.

As soon as the canvas was dry to the touch, Pollock broke down the stretcher, rolled the canvas, and transported both to Guggenheim's townhouse. Some accounts have said that the painting was too long for the space by almost a foot, and when Pollock discovered this he became quite hysterical. Marcel Duchamp and another artist were said to have cut eight inches from one end before it was installed. However, close examination by numerous experts over the years has revealed no evidence of this alteration.

Where Pollock's early works were dark interpretations of Thomas Hart Benton's figurative regionalism, *Mural* displays an abstract, expressionist vigor. There are many influences from Pollock's life and studies present in *Mural*—Benton's energetic rhythms, the swirling colors of the American artist Albert Pinkham Ryder, and even the harsh blacks of the Spanish baroque artist El Greco. The work of the three great Mexican muralists, Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros, offered additional inspiration, as did the abstraction bordering on the figurative that originated with the artist to whom Pollock owed the most, Picasso. We can also see influences from his Jungian psychoanalysis; from the Native American art he had seen as a child; and from the surrealist technique of automatism, which attempted to abandon conscious control in order to allow the unconscious mind to guide the hand.

When Pollock painted *Mural*, he redefined not only the limits of his own abilities but also the possibilities of painting. At this time, during the middle of World War II, modern art was languishing. The American styles of the 1930s, social realism and regionalism, seemed irrelevant, and the foreign influences of the surrealists and geometric abstractionists had lost their impact. Pollock's past associations with Thomas Hart Benton's paintings of the common man, with the Federal Arts Project, and with the workshop of the Communist painter and Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siquieros gave him a unique perspective. Pollock's innovation provided a new direction for artists—he had combined the method of easel painting and an abstract style into the large scale of the traditional mural.

*Mural* was immediately recognized as a turning point for American art. Art critic Clement Greenberg had written encouraging but less than wholehearted endorsements in his Pollock reviews. After he saw the big mural in Guggenheim's townhouse he reacted differently. From this point on, throughout the forties, Greenberg was a firm advocate of Pollock's art, and in turn Pollock's success canonized Greenberg's judgment. By 1947, Pollock had begun to create the large-scale drip paintings that constitute the most famous part of his legacy. He himself articulated his intentions when he said:

> I intend to paint large movable pictures which will function between the easel and mural. I have set a precedent in this genre in a large painting for Miss Peggy Guggenheim which was installed in her house and was later shown in the "Large-Scale Paintings" show at the Museum of Modern Art. It is at present on loan at Yale University ... I believe the easel picture to be a dying form, and the tendency of modern feeling is towards the wall picture or mural. I believe the time is not yet ripe for a full transition from easel to mural. The pictures I contemplate painting would constitute a halfway state, and an attempt to point out the direction of the future, without arriving there completely.[5]

By 1947 Guggenheim had closed her gallery and returned to Europe. She had no room for *Mural* in her new quarters in Venice. She wrote to Lester Longman, then head of the University of Iowa School of Art and Art History, on October 3, 1948, reminding him that she had offered to give *Mural* to the university if he would pay to have it shipped from Yale. He responded with great interest and began negotiating with the administration for the cost of freight. Finally, in October of 1951 the painting was shipped to Iowa.[6]

Pollock went on to create many large-scale paintings incorporating his famous drip technique, and he continued to make an impact in the world at large. A *Life* magazine feature in 1949 asked, "Is he [Pollock] the greatest living painter in the United States?" In 1951, his show at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York was the setting for a Cecil Beaton fashion shoot for *Vogue* magazine.

Yet none of the later paintings had the same definitive impact as *Mural*. While critics praised the technique of the later works, in *Mural* it is the bravura of the brushwork—

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[5] Varnedoe, p. 43, from Jackson Pollock's application for a Guggenheim Fellowship reprinted in O'Connor and Thaw, chapter 4, p. 238, D67.

[6] Just why Guggenheim chose to give *Mural* to Iowa has been a matter of some speculation. Most probably, Guggenheim's acquaintanceship with Lester Longman was the reason for the gift. Before the UI had a museum, the School of Art and Art History presented summer exhibitions of modern artists' work. Some of the museum's most prominent paintings, including Max Beckmann's *Carnival Triptych* (1943), were acquired by the faculty after being included in these exhibitions. The UI was called "Greenwich Village West" at that time and it is probably for this reason that Guggenheim thought to offer her oversize canvas to Iowa. The museum was built in 1969 and since that time *Mural* has been on view.

objective, yet ambiguous—coupled with the vast size (it is the largest painting that Pollock ever painted) that gives it its unique status. With *Mural* Pollock liberated painting from the confines of scale. Paradoxically, its size may tempt us to view it from afar, but it was painted for an intimate space and meant to be seen up close, not from billboard distance. In the shallow space of a hallway, it resists our close scrutiny, pushing its rhythms outward, but at the same time, invites that scrutiny with its intricacy. Its power comes from its purposive frenzy ready at any moment to break free of the confines of the canvas.

## Some Brief Comments About Abstract Expressionism

The group of artists called the abstract expressionists lived and worked in New York in the 1940s and 1950s. With their aesthetic philosophy, and an activism fired by their desire to promote the new, American way to paint, they changed the world of art. New York became the artist's magnet city and abstract expressionism became the symbol of American freedom in the early years of the cold war.

For these artists, their works incorporated one meaning of the term "abstract"—a simplification of forms found in nature (as opposed to geometric or mathematical in origin)—combined with "expressionist" qualities such as vibrant color, strong brush marks used to express an emotion or a state of mind. The term that combines both—"abstract expressionism"—was first used in Berlin, then reappeared in the United States to describe paintings by Wassily Kandinsky. These were works that combined improvisational brushstrokes in many colors to express exuberance or joy. The term was resurrected in the mid-1940s in a New Yorker review of Hans Hofmann's art.

No one seems to have liked the term very much, but nevertheless, as with other names invented by art critics and historians, this one stuck. The group to which it is applied is also called the New York School and their work is sometimes labeled "action painting" and "American-type painting." These painters used large canvases covered with all-over painting, following the lead of Jackson Pollock and his *Mural*.

They joined an art scene enriched by the presence of many wartime refugee artists. They built a unity of philosophy and aesthetics, following each other's work closely and keeping tabs on what everyone else was painting, and why.

The artists shared a conviction that art faced a crisis in subject matter, which seemed to be incorporated into their critiques of socialism, nationalism, and utopianism and the artistic styles identified with these philosophies—social realism, regionalism, and geometric abstraction, respectively.

## Special Focus: Art in Context

The works created by the abstract expressionists can be seen as records of the process of painting itself. For them, the canvas was an arena in which to act, rather than a space on which to reproduce, redesign, or analyze an object. The artists turned their own private visions and insights into an anxious search for psychic self-expression. However, their exploration was thoroughly grounded in a study of older artistic styles and techniques such as surrealism and ancient myths and symbols.

Their urgent pursuit of expressing meanings that felt truer to their experience gave rise to new ways of seeing and to formal innovations as well. By the end of the forties it was clear that there were two main trends within the group: gesture painting and color-field painting.

The first, characterized by distinct, often vigorous brushstrokes expressing energy, included the work of Pollock and Willem De Kooning. The second attracted artists who painted in monochromatic fields of smoothly applied paint suggesting a calmer, more meditative or rationalized approach.

Most abstract expressionist art is not easy to understand at one glance: these works require close-up viewing, thought, and often some knowledge of each artist's intentions before the viewer can fully appreciate them.

The early reactions of many art critics to abstract expressionism were mixed. Eventually, the critical and public reception to the artists and their work changed—prompted by the influential people supporting their cause. The art market capitalized on the furor caused by the artists, espousing the "new art" through galleries such as Peggy Guggenheim's Art of this Century.

In 1958 and 1959, an official U.S. government–sponsored exhibition of abstract expressionist work toured Europe, embodying for the world America's new dominance in art. With their self-made unity, convictions, and diverse approaches to history and aesthetic thought, the New York artists had created whole new forms of art.

## Contributors

*Information current as of original publish date of September 2005.*

### About the Editor

**Pamela Trimpe** is an adjunct assistant professor of art history, law, and museum studies at the University of Iowa, where she teaches Introduction to Museology as well as Art, Law, and Ethics. She was curator of painting and sculpture at the University of Iowa Museum of Art for 13 years and has recently accepted the position of assistant director of the Pentacrest Museums at the University of Iowa. She was a former high school English teacher and has taught an introductory course in art history at the college level. Currently, she is working with the Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development to offer workshops for art teachers teaching AP Art History at the high school level. She has been a Reader, a Table Leader, and a Question Leader, and currently serves as Exam Leader, for the AP Art History Exam. Dr. Trimpe is a British Victorian art specialist and in 1997 curated a major exhibition on Victorian fairy painting that opened at the Royal Academy of Arts and traveled to the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Frick Collection, as well as to the University of Iowa. She has written on British art—her book on George John Pinwell was published by Peter Lang in 2001—and is organizing a major exhibition and book of British farm animal portraits for presentation in 2007. She has also curated and written widely on American modern art and is currently at work on a history of the University of Iowa Museum of Art to be published in 2006.

**Michael Bieze** has taught AP Art History at Marist School in Atlanta for the past 19 years. He has been an AP Art History Reader, Table Leader, Question Leader, and member of the AP Art History Development Committee. His dissertation on the ways Booker T. Washington employed photography to reach diverse audiences received the 2004 History of Education dissertation of the year award.

**Douglas Darracott** teaches AP Art History and AP Studio Art at Plano West Senior High School in Plano, Texas. He has taught AP Art History since the 1997–1998 school year. He holds an MFA in painting and drawing from the University of North Texas.

**Frima Fox Hofrichter** is professor and chair of the History of Art and Design Department at Pratt Institute. She is a specialist in Dutch art and writes about issues of social history in art, including women artists and the role of gender, family, and class. She has written several articles on Judith Leyster as well as authoring the standard monograph on this artist, *Judith Leyster, A Woman Artist in Holland's Golden Age* (Davaco, 1989). Hofrichter was also curator of the exhibitions and wrote the catalogues for *Haarlem, the Seventeenth Century* (New Brunswick, 1983) and *Leonaert Bramer, 1596–1674: A Painter of the Night* (Milwaukee, 1993). She is a contributor to and coauthor of *Janson and Janson's A Basic History of Western Art* (7th ed., 2005) and *Janson and Janson's History of Art* (7th ed., forthcoming in 2006).

**Victoria Rovine** received her MA and PhD (1998) from Indiana University. From 1995 to 2004, she was curator of the arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at the University of Iowa Museum of Art, where she mounted more than 30 exhibitions of African and other non-Western art. She also taught at the University of Iowa and at Grinnell College. Her current research concerns African fashion designers in global markets. She has received a Getty Foundation Curatorial Research Grant and a Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Study Center residency to pursue this project. She is the book review editor for *African Arts* magazine and has been active in various capacities on the Arts Council of the African Studies Association.

**Joy Sperling** is associate professor of art history at Denison University in Ohio. She teaches a range of classes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American and European art history, History of Photography, and the Western Art History survey. She is the author of *Famous Works of Art in Popular Culture* (Greenwood Press, 2003) as well as a number of articles, book chapters, and exhibition catalogues on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American and British art, patronage, and taste. Joy Sperling is vice president of the American Culture Association, an editorial board member of *The Journal of American Culture*, and is Chief Reader Designate for AP Art History. She has served as Reader for the AP Art History Exam since 1998.

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