

Handout #21

Art In A Cultural Context

Artists are just like you and me. They are born into a family that lives in a community. They learn from their parents and their neighbors what is the proper way to act and dress. There are traditions for celebrations and sorrows. Religion shapes their beliefs about their place in the world. The community has rules that organize its life and provides services to its people.

The artist may learn from a master then serve an apprenticeship or they may attend a school. Sometimes the artist follows the traditions of their culture but sometimes they experiment and try new things. Artists who worked before them influence their work. In turn, they influence artists who follow them.

As you study the life of an artist, look at the community around them for the traditions that influence them. You will have a better understanding of the artist's work and the many cultures around us. Our five areas for researching an artist and their culture are below.

I. Religion

- a. Is there one religion that dominates all parts of people's lives, from how they should act to what work that they can do?
- b. Does the community believe that higher beings determine when they will have good harvests or if individuals will be successful?
- c. Does the religion require people worship in a certain place and at certain times?
- d. Are there priests or officials who organize the church and/or the community?
- e. Is religion a small part of people's lives? are there are a number of different religions that are in a community?

II. Organization of the Community

- a. Do people live in small communities that have contact only with other communities just a few miles away?
- b. Do people live in towns or city-states with a government and compete with other cities?
- c. Do people live in towns that are part of a country or empire with a well-organized government and do they deal with many other people?

- d. Do people live in large cities that are the center of the culture of the country. People come to that city from far away?
- e. Does the government encourage or discourage certain activities, such as trade, travel or education?

III. Peace or War

- a. Is there peace? Do people feel safe and there is more trade and exchange of ideas between different cultures?
- b. Is there war? Are people afraid? Is there less trade, travel and exchange of ideas – about religion, art, manufacturing?
- c. Is there prosperity? Are there many artists and do they work together and encourage each other? Is it easy to get the materials they need to create their artwork?
- d. Are people poor? Do they spend most of their time trying to feed and clothe their families? Do they have time for the arts?

IV. Patronage

- a. Does the artist depend on the support of a patron to pay for their materials and their salary?
- b. Does the artist create the art to satisfy themselves or to satisfy a buyer?

V. Artistic Influences

- a. Does the artist work with others as a master or an assistant?
- b. Does the artist break with tradition and add new ideas, themes or a style to the arts in a culture?
- c. Is the artist a leader and do they teach others to experiment and try new forms, colors, symbols or styles?

A Selection of Artists For Research Projects

Pre-Renaissance Artists

Bosch, Hieronymus 1450 - 1516
Giotto 1266 – 1337
Martini, Simone 1315 - 1344

Renaissance Artists

Botticelli, Sandro 1444 - 1510
da Vinci, Leonardo 1452 – 1519
Francesca, Piero Della 1416 – 1492
Mantegna, Andrea 1431 - 1506
Raphael 1483 – 1520

16th Century

Caravaggio 1571 – 1610
Durer, Albrecht 1471 – 1528
Greco, El 1541 - 1614
Holbein, Hans, the younger 1497 - 1543
Michelangelo 1475 – 1564
Titian 1485 – 1576

17th and 18th Century

Blake, William 1757 - 1827
Bruegel, Han 1568 – 1625
Copley, John Singleton 1738 - 1815
David, Jacques-Louis 1748 – 1825
Gainsborough, Thomas 1727 - 1788
Goya, Francisco 1746 – 1828
Gentileschi, Artemisia 1593 – 1652
Hals, Frans 1580 – 1666
Peale, Charles Wilson 1741 - 1827
Ruisdale, Jacob van 1628 - 1682
Stuart, Gilbert 1755 - 1828
Velasquez, Diego 1599 – 1660
Watteau, Jean-Antoine 1684 – 1721
West, Benjamin 1738 - 1820

19th Century

Bierstadt, Albert 1830 - 1902
Cassatt, Mary 1844 - 1926
Cezanne, Paul 1839 – 1906
Constable, John 1776 – 1837
Eakins, Thomas 1844 - 1916
Gauguin, Paul 1848 – 1903
Delacroix, Eugene 1798 – 1863
Homer, Winslow 1835 - 1910
Ingres, Jean-Auguste 1780 – 1867

Manet, Edouard 1832 - 1883
Monet, Claude 1840 – 1926
Morisot, Berthe 1841 – 1895
Renoir, Pierre 1841 – 1919
Rodin, Auguste 1840 – 1917
Rousseau, Henry 1844 – 1910
Sargent, John Singer 1856 - 1925
Seurat, Georges 1859 - 1891
Turner, J. M. W. 1775 - 1851
Van Gogh, Vincent 1853 – 1890

20th Century

Adams, Ansel 1902 - 1984
Bearden, Romare 1914 - 1988
Boccioni, Umberto 1882 - 1916
Bonnard, Pierre 1867 - 1947
Chagall, Marc 1887 – 1985
Christo, Javacheff 1935 -
Dali, Salvador 1904 – 1989
Davis, Stuart 1894 - 1964
Escher, Maurits 1898 – 1972
Frankenthaler, Helen 1928 -
Hopper, Edward 1882 - 1967
Kahlo, Frida 1907 - 1954
Kandinsky, Wassily 1866 – 1944
Klimt, Gustav 1862 – 1918
Kollwitz, Kathe 1867 – 1945
Lawrence, Jacob 1917 -
Leger, Fernand 1881 - 1955
Magritte, Renee 1898 - 1967
Matisse, Henri 1869 – 1954
Miro, Joan 1893 - 1983
Mondrian, Piet 1872 – 1944
Moore, Henry 1898 - 1986
Munch, Edvard 1863 – 1944
Oldenburg, Claes 1929 -
Picasso, Pablo 1881 – 1973
Pollack, Jackson 1912 – 1956
Ringgold, Faith 1930 -
Savage, Augusta 1892 - 1962
Sloan, John 1871 – 1951
Steichen, Edward 1879 - 1973
Warhol, Andy 1928 – 1987
Weston, Edward 1886 - 1958
Wright, Frank Lloyd 1869 – 1959
Wyeth, Andrew 1917