

Interlude - Artistic Revolution #2

The Renaissance - Realism Period

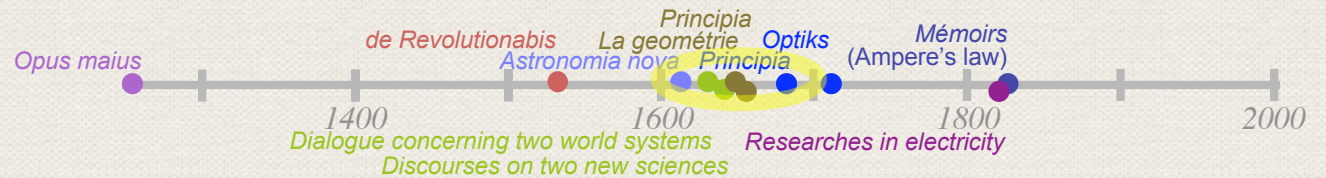
Baroque through Realism

many -isms

The pattern goes:

- Baroque - 17C
- Rococo - 18C
- Neo-Classicism - 18C-19C
- Romanticism - 19C
- Pre-Raphaelites - 19C

The tendency is toward increasing realism, with side trips into Romanticism and the cul-de-sac of Rococo...



Baroque

Like Mannerism, Baroque was originally a pejorative

- “grotesque”, “distorted”, “absurd”

used to describe the deviation from Classical style in architecture of the early 18C

The counter reformation was basically over

- The Catholic Church had regained strength and an unhappy balance was established with Protestantism

but, as we’ve seen, warfare during the 17C was essentially constant

- And, in this turbulence,

Physics was essentially born

- The complexity of nature was organized into a coherent whole
- Representation, for the first time, truly implied insight as to how Nature Is
- Method centered around experiment, demonstration and System-it was public

Truth became an explicit scientific goal

Painting shed the neo Platonic religiosity and authority that dominated the Renaissance

- At once simple and direct to the eye–yet with incredibly complex technique
- Art, and all of society was influenced by the science

Truth became an explicit artistic goal.

While the Baroque was a truly international style, as was the Rococo to follow, the most influential father of the style was an Italian: the incorrigible Caravaggio.

Michelangelo Merisi aka Caravaggio (1572-1610)

Polite society had not before seen many like him

- He was on a mission to discover truth

Dismissing traditional technique, he painted oil directly to the canvas from live models

Propriety was not a word to describe him - many of his commissions were rejected by patrons for their lack of decorum in religious subjects

Nothing, and yet everything was sacred to him



Caravaggio, Sick Bacchus, 1593, Borghese, Rome

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Caravaggio, Bacchus, 1596, Uffizi, Florence

These are not Greek Gods!

He attempts to consciously destroy the previously consistent Classical images

He has unmasked the imaginary Classical image and shown it for what it is.

This is a direct attack on polite art - he's about showing things as they are, "truth" is what he demands of himself.

We're in a new era of artistic individualism.

Light is what Caravaggio commands



Notice that Solome and her mother both have two heads coming from the same body?

This business with detached heads figures into a dozen of Caravaggio's paintings in one way or another

Caravaggio, *Solome with the Head of the Baptist*, 1609, Madrid

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remember this



Baroque-Realism Art Caravaggio, *The Taking of Christ*, 1598, Odessa

a scandal

At once, this seems a well-put together piece

balanced in color, top to bottom.

Superb lighting, enhancing the drama.

But, Caravaggio's use of a drowned girl as the model scandalized Rome.



Caravaggio, Death of the Virgin, 1606, Louvre, Paris

perhaps his masterpiece

Notice the mere hint of the halo, otherwise Christ is a regular person.

The pointing is a quotation from Michelangelo's Creation of Adam.

The light follows the gesture, falling directly on the subject of Jesus' intentions.



how many ways can you say you're sorry?

"The details of the first Roman years are unknown, but after the time of the Contarelli project Caravaggio had many encounters with the law. In 1600 he was accused of blows by a fellow painter, and the following year he wounded a soldier. In 1603 he was imprisoned on the complaint of another painter and released only through the intercession of the French ambassador. In April 1604 he was accused of throwing a plate of artichokes in the face of a waiter, and in October he was arrested for throwing stones at the Roman Guards. In May 1605 he was seized for misuse of arms, and on July 29 he had to flee Rome for a time because he had wounded a man in defense of his mistress. Within a year, on May 29, 1606, again in Rome, during a furious brawl over a disputed score in a game of tennis, Caravaggio killed one Ranuccio Tomassoni."

<http://gallery.euroweb.hu/bio/c/caravagg/biograph.html>

This led to flight to Naples and Malta, continued working. But only a Papal pardon could relieve him of his anxiety at being a fugitive.

So, he painted an apology, offering up his head as evidence of his penitence. A pardon didn't come.



Caravaggio, David, 1609, Borghese, Rome.

Caravaggio's influence was direct

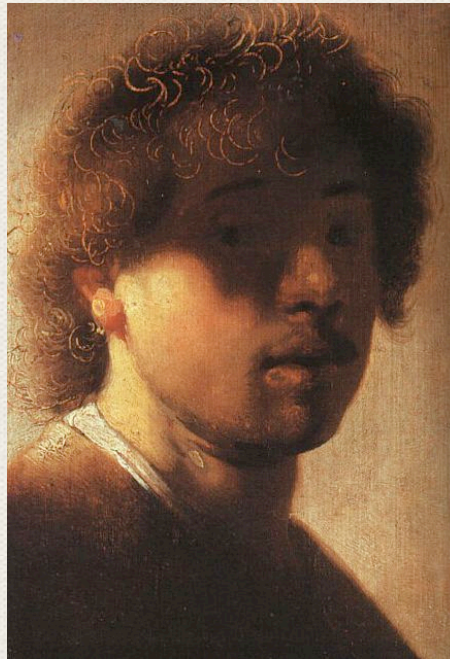
Especially to the epitome of the 17C realistic painters:

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) - the master of portraits

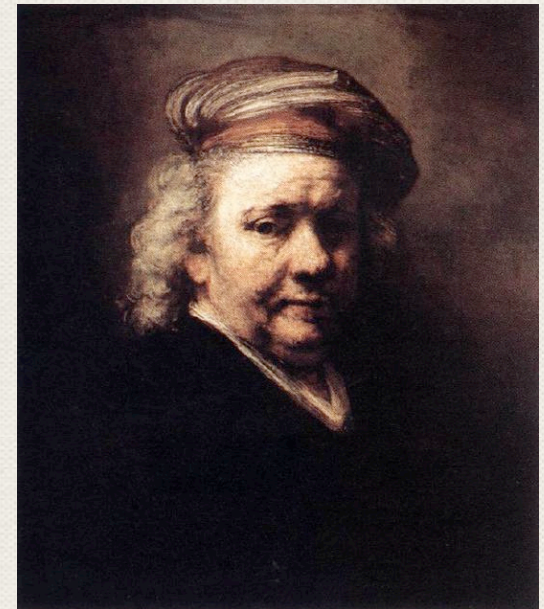


Rembrandt, Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts, 1631, Frick, NY.

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Rembrandt, Self-Portrait, 1627,
Kassel

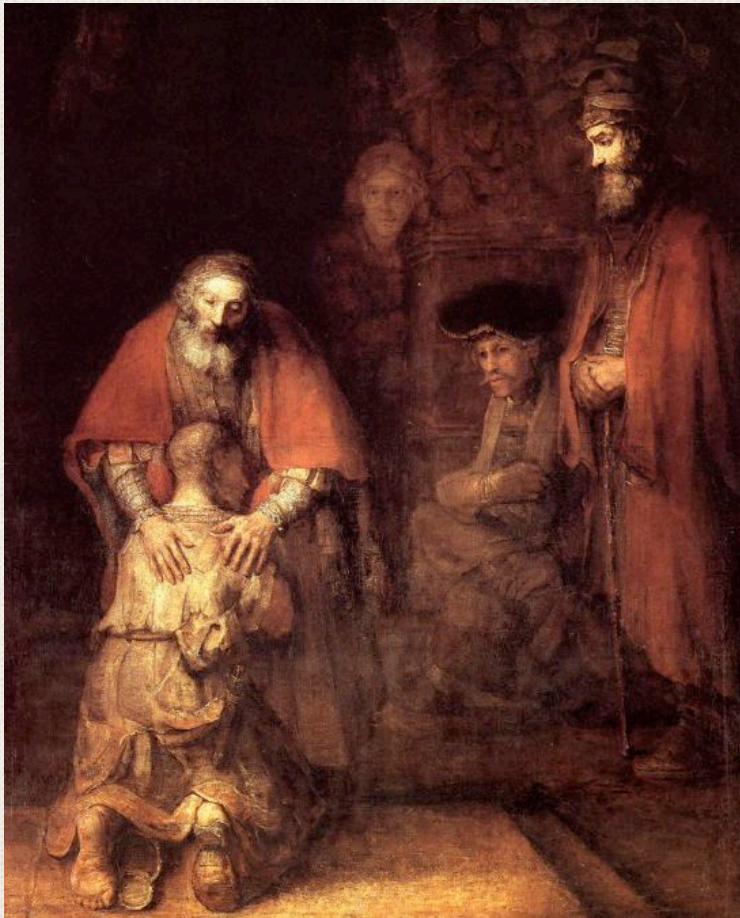


Rembrandt, Self-Portrait, 1669, Hague,
Netherlands.

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and, the master of Chiaroscuro

Like Caravaggio, his religious scenes were certainly pedestrian, egalitarian.



Rembrandt, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 1669, Hermitage, St. Petersburg.



Rembrandt, *The Holy Family*, 1640, Louvre, Paris.

and light



Rembrandt, *The Anatomy Lecture of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632, Hague.



Rembrandt, *The Blinding of Samson*, 1636, Frankfurt

his most famous

The Nightwatch



Rembrandt, *The Nightwatch*, 1642, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

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In the Dutch style, a home guard assembling for a state visit...Ceremonial.

Each member would contribute to the commission, and legend has it that those in the shadows were unhappy.

This is masterpiece of Baroque lighting and movement. The lighting is consistent with figures in and out.

The characters are an amalgom of poses from Rembrandt portraits, each self-absorbed.

The metallic shine is a memory of Caravaggio...

The painting is enormous, essentially life-sized:



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The realism continues in the Netherlands

Jan Vermeer van delft (1632-1675)

- only about 45 paintings exist, only 3 are dated.



A reproduction cannot do this justice - the glaze on the pottery and the basket is so true to life, that it's astonishing.

Essentially, photographic, but yet with texture and the impression of detail...



Baroque-Realism Art Vermeer, The Milkmaid, ~1658, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

the world is not any more available than this



Vermeer, *The Little Street*, 1657, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

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Vermeer, *View of Delft*, 1659, Hague

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Rococo

...more of an attitude, than a style

- roughly the discovery in Europe of romance, whimsy, and flirtation



Fragonard, *The Bolt*, 1778, Louvre, Paris



Hogarth, *The Orgy, from the Rake's Progress*, 1734, Soane's, London.



Gainsborough, *Mr and Mrs William Hallett "The Morning Walk"*, 1785, National Gallery, London.

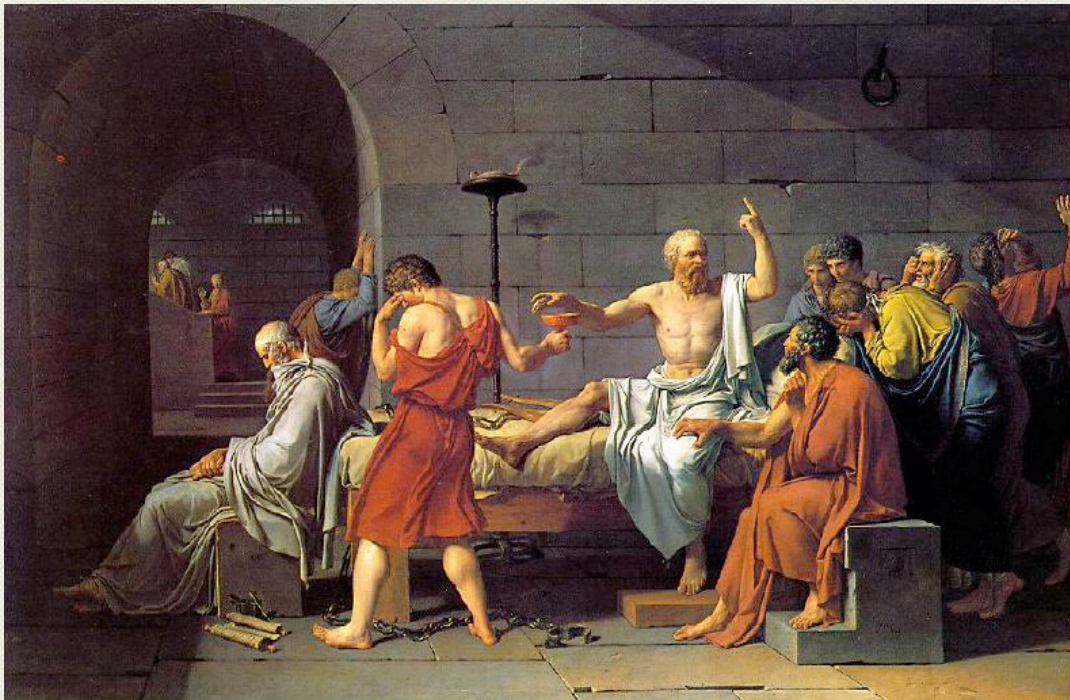
It's almost difficult to take this seriously...

Which perhaps is why realism then become an increasingly serious movement.

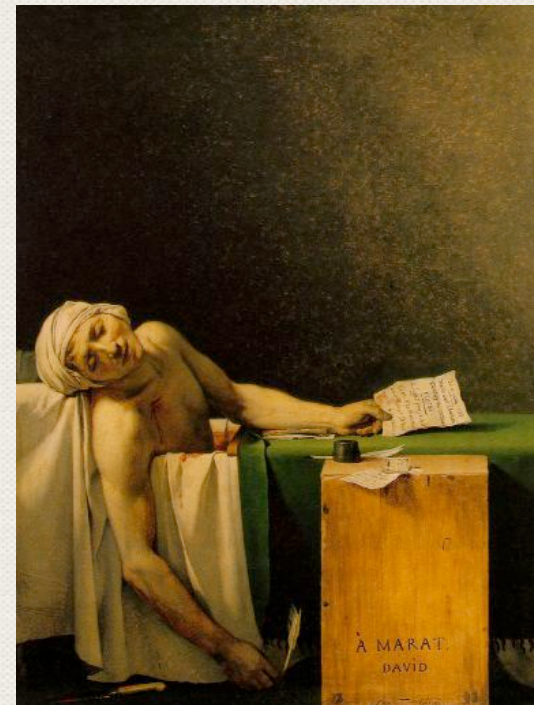
Enlightenment ~1750-1850

The times suggested that the supremacy of Reason would win out over all

- Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau - the Philosophes
- in no small part, due to Newton's success and the aftermath
- But as in art, this was a reaction to the ornate and almost silly Rococo and the result is a return to Classicism, neo-Classicism



Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates*, 1787, Metropolitan Museum, NY



David, *Death of Marat*, 1793, Brussels

Notice that the perpendiculars, especially the horizontals are prominent again...

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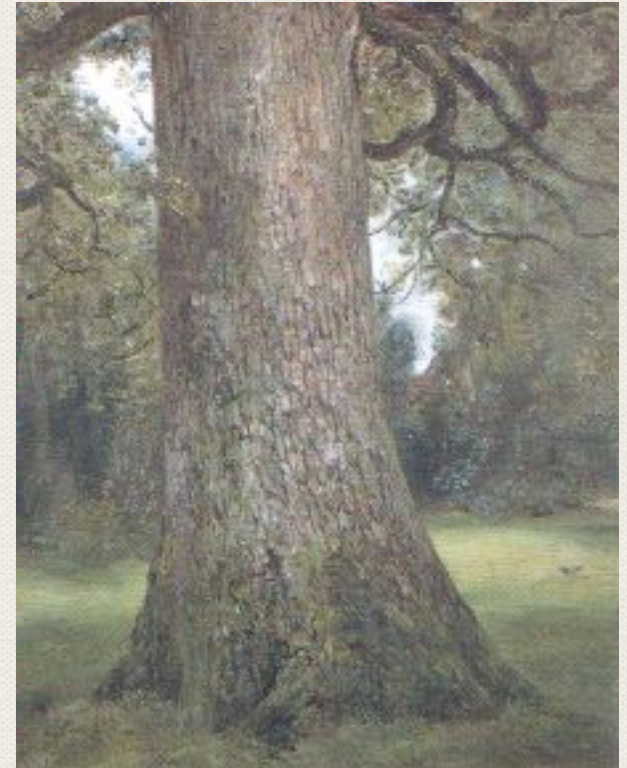
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The detail becomes intense

While at the same time, the subject matter becomes romantic - invoking feelings, longings...



Constable, *The Haywain*, 1821, National Gallery, London



Constable, *The Elm*,

I think that there is a problem with this. Nobody sees like this.

Somehow, what is Represented is getting help from detail that the artist knows...but can't see.

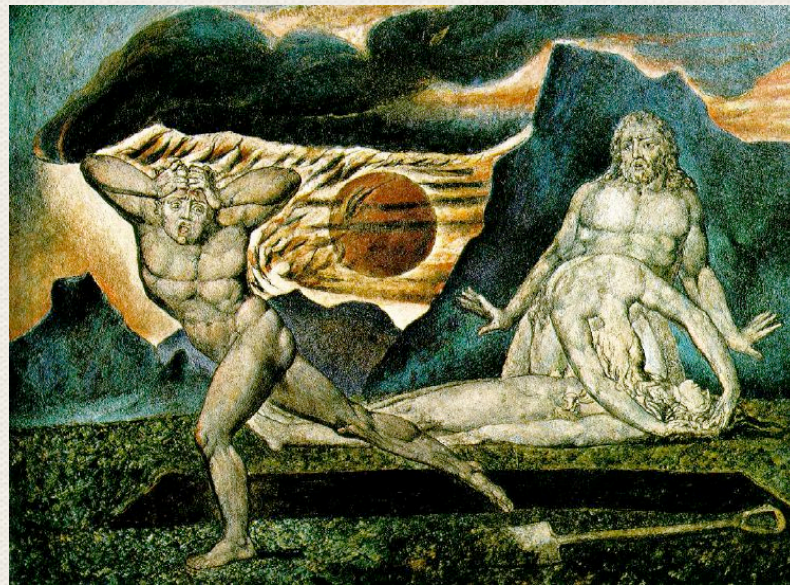
except for William Blake

who railed against Reason, Materialism, and the Age of Science

- not only in his subject matter in painting and poetry, but also in his technique



Blake, *The Ancient of Days*, 1794, British Museum, etching/watercolor



Blake, *The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve*, 1825, watercolor

All of the canons are ignored: no perspective, no correspondence to real things, odd colors...

Romanticism was dreamlike

The techniques appear to be of many previous sorts



Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*, 1818, Hamburg

While there can be a “whispyness” about some Romantic art, there is still attention to detail, rivaling the Dutch masters.

So, detail and realism are here to stay, this is a movement about *Subject Matter*.

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Eugene Delacroix, *Algerian Women in Their Apartments*, 1834, Louvre, Paris

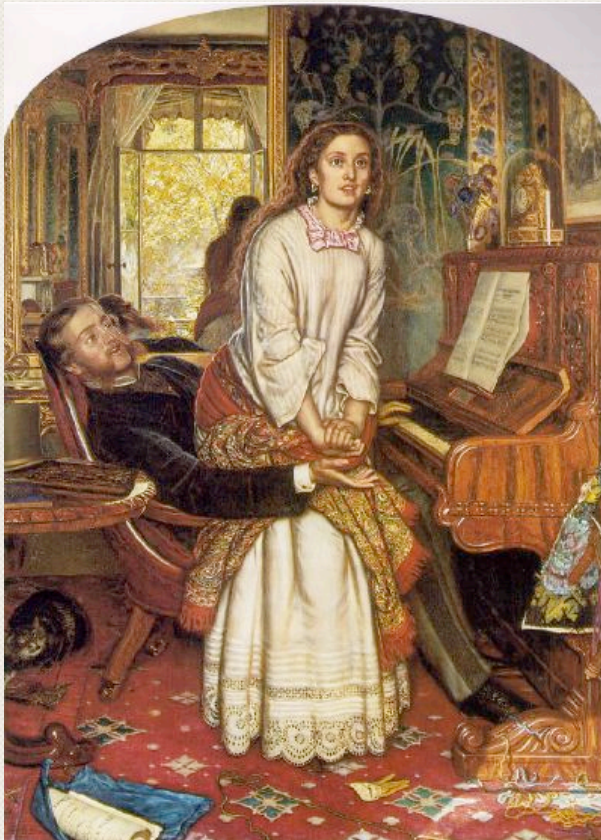


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Not everyone was pleased

There was a largely British reaction to Romantic efforts

- Blaming the lack of seriousness (“frivolous art”) on Raphael, they called themselves the Pre-Raphaelists and determined to get back to the business of telling it like it is: to the Truth of Nature.



William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853, Tate, London.

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John Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-2, Tate, London.

There is clearly a tension developing, but it is in subject matter. The details are still important, even though the Pre-Raphaelists emphasize simplicity.

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19C was a unique time in art

There developed an “otherness” to the artistic community

- It became increasingly independent in its view of itself and its product.
- It became somewhat politicized
- It became concerned with art for art’s sake
which is a new justification

So, this becomes a transition period

- for art and for science
just as the 1400’s were in art and eventually physics

Realism

Again, akin to the tension over subject matter

- a group which was often politically active

consistent with the growing disparity between rich and poor and the industrialization of the mid 19C

Socialist painters, like Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) are on the doorstep of modernism



Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849, Dresden (destroyed)

This caused a storm when it was exhibited. It was an everyday life scene ("genre") which was treated as seriously as a History painting.

Furthermore, it demonstrated a Wrong: an old man and a young boy doing work not suited to either of them.

It was done with Attitude - the paint is applied with heavy impasto, thick and rough dabs of oil, so the finish was cloth-like.

The models were really railroad workers and the painting was BIG: 5'x8', so it was in the face of the polite society art appreciation community. And, their backs are to the audience with a defiance, or worse, ignoring of that society.

the center of attention:



Courbet, *Studio of a Painter, A Real Allegory Summarizing my Seven Years of Life as an Artist*, 1854, Musee d'Orsay.

The people in the left group are not real personages - they are types. The group on the right are real - maybe patrons or admirers.

They are not present to witness a holy event - they are there to celebrate the center of attention, even though passively they don't look at him: the artist himself. Two watch: the child (innocence) and the nude (nature, who has just revealed her "truth")

The artist—what he **creates**, not just portrays or replicates—will now be the center of attention.