

# Introduction to Art History

## Introduction to Art History – Study Guide

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### 1. What Is Art History?

| Aspect               | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>Definition</b>    | The scholarly study of visual arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, decorative arts, performance, media) within their cultural, social, and historical contexts.                                                                        |
| <b>Purpose</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trace the evolution of artistic styles and techniques.</li><li>• Understand how art reflects and influences societies.</li><li>• Develop visual literacy – the ability to “read” images.</li></ul> |
| <b>Key Questions</b> | <i>Who</i> created the work? <i>When</i> and <i>where</i> was it made? <i>Why</i> was it produced? <i>How</i> does it function within its culture?                                                                                         |

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### 2. Chronological Framework (Western Tradition)

| Period                                 | Approx. Dates          | Major Characteristics                                                  | Representative Artists / Works                               |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Prehistoric</b>                     | c. 40,000?–? 2,000?BCE | Cave paintings, portable figurines; symbolic, ritualistic              | Lascaux Cave paintings; Venus of Willendorf                  |
| <b>Ancient Near East &amp; Egypt</b>   | c. 3,500?–? 300?BCE    | Monumental architecture, hieratic style, narrative reliefs             | Pyramid of Giza; Narmer Palette                              |
| <b>Classical Greece &amp; Rome</b>     | c. 800?BCE? –?500?CE   | Idealized human form, balance, proportion, perspective in architecture | Parthenon; Michelangelo's <i>David</i> (Renaissance revival) |
| <b>Early Christian &amp; Byzantine</b> | c. 300?–? 1450         | Iconography, gold backgrounds, spiritual focus                         | Hagia Sophia; Icons of St. ? Mark                            |
| <b>Romanesque</b>                      | c. 1000?–? 1150        | Thick walls, rounded arches, narrative frescoes                        | St. ?Sernin, Toulouse                                        |
| <b>Gothic</b>                          | c. 1150?–? 1500        | Pointed arches, stained glass, verticality                             | Chartres Cathedral; Giotto's <i>Scrovegni Chapel</i>         |
| <b>Renaissance</b>                     | c. 1400?–? 1600        | Humanism, linear perspective, anatomical study                         | Leonardo da?Vinci, <i>The Last Supper</i>                    |

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| Period                         | Approx.<br>Dates   | Major Characteristics                                   | Representative Artists /<br>Works                       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mannerism</b>               | c. 1520?–?<br>1600 | Elongated forms, artificial poses,<br>tension           | Pontormo, <i>The Deposition</i>                         |
| <b>Baroque</b>                 | c. 1600?–?<br>1750 | Drama, movement, chiaroscuro,<br>grandeur               | Caravaggio, <i>The Calling of<br/>St. Matthew</i>       |
| <b>Rococo</b>                  | c. 1700?–?<br>1780 | Lightness, pastel palette, playful<br>themes            | Fragonard, <i>The Swing</i>                             |
| <b>Neoclassicism</b>           | c. 1750?–?<br>1830 | Return to classical order, moral<br>seriousness         | Jacques-Louis David, <i>Oath<br/>of the Horatii</i>     |
| <b>Romanticism</b>             | c. 1800?–?<br>1850 | Emotion, nature, exoticism                              | Eugène Delacroix, <i>Liberty<br/>Leading the People</i> |
| <b>Realism</b>                 | c. 1840?–?<br>1880 | Everyday life, social critique,<br>unidealized subjects | Gustave Courbet, <i>The<br/>Stone Breakers</i>          |
| <b>Impressionism</b>           | c. 1860?–?<br>1890 | Light, color, visible brushwork,<br>modern life         | Claude Monet, <i>Impression,<br/>Sunrise</i>            |
| <b>Post-<br/>Impressionism</b> | c. 1886?–?<br>1905 | Personal expression                                     |                                                         |