

I'm not a robot





















drama, influenced by stage design. Theater's influence could be seen in the innovative ways painting and decorative objects were woven into various environments, creating fully immersive atmospheres.Detail work flourished in the Rococo period. Stucco reliefs as frames, asymmetrical patterns involving motifs and scrollwork, sculptural arabesque details, gilding, pastels, and tromps l'oeil are the most noted methods that were used to achieve a seamless integration of art and architecture. The term "rococo" was first used by Jean-Fouquet in his Premier Livre de forme rocaille et cartel (First book of Rococo Form and Setting) (1736), with illustrations that depicted the style used in architecture and interior design. The term was derived from the French rocaille, meaning "shell work, pebble-work," used to describe High Renaissance fountains or garden grottos that used seashells and pebbles, embedded in stucco, to create an elaborate decorative effect.Progression of Art1717Artist: Jean-Antoine Watteau This painting depicts a number of amorous couples in elegant aristocratic dress within an idealized pastoral setting on Cythera, the mythical island where Venus, the goddess of love, birthed forth from the sea. The gestures and body language are evocative, as the man standing below center, his arm around the waist of the woman beside him, seems to earnestly entreat her, while she turns back to gaze wistfully at the other couples. A nude statue of the goddess rises from a pedestal that is garlanded with flowers on the right, as if presiding over the festivities. On the left, she is doubly depicted in a golden statue that places her in the prow of the boat. Nude putti appear throughout the scene, soaring into the sky on the left, or appearing between the couples and pushing them along, and nature is a languid but fecund presence. Overall, the painting celebrates the journey of love. As contemporary critic Job Perl wrote, "Watteau's paired lovers, locked in their agonizing, delicious indecision, are emblems of the ever-approaching and ever-receding possibility of love." As art critic Holly Brubach wrote, "Watteau's images are perfectly suspended between the moment just before and the moment after... the people he portrays are busy enacting not one but several possible scenarios." His figures are not so much recognizable individuals, as aristocratic types, with smooth powdered faces, that together create a kind of chorography of color and pleasure. With this work, Watteau's reception piece for the Academy, he pioneered the fête galante, or courtship painting, and launched the Rococo movement. As Jonathan Jones wrote, "In the misty, melting landscapes of paintings ... he unequivocally associates landscape and desire; if Watteau's art looks back to a courtly lovers of the middle ages it begins the modern history of sensuality in French art." Oil on canvas - Musée du Louvre, Paris c. 1718-19Artist: Jean-Antoine Watteau This painting (formerly known as Gilles) depicts Pierrot, a traditional character in Italian commedia dell'arte. He is elevated on center stage in what appears to be a garden and he faces the viewer with a downcast expression as his white satin costume dominates, its ballooning midsection lit up. He seems almost like a two-dimensional cut-out figure. Other stock characters surround him but Pierrot remains separate as if he has stepped out of their scene. The negative space in the upper left further emphasizes Pierrot's isolation. As Jonathan Jones wrote, "Watteau makes the fiction of the picture manifest," as the character, "in his discomfort and alienation, rebels not only against his stock character role in the comedy, but his role in this painting. His stepping out of the play is also a stepping out of the fiction painted by Watteau." Watteau pioneered the artistic representation of theatrical works, a distinctive Rococo genre, and he also recast the character of Pierrot from a kind of bumbling, lovelorn fool into a figure of alienated longing. As Jones wrote, "representation of theatrical, socially marginal worlds, following Watteau, is central to French modern art, from the impressionists' café singers to Toulouse-Lautrec's dancers and prostitutes and Picasso's Harlequins." As the figure of Pierrot became a figure of the artist's alter ego, this painting influenced a number of later art movements and artists, including the Decadents, the Symbolists, and artists like André Derain, as seen in his Harlequin and Pierrot (c. 1924). The influence also extended to pop culture as shown in David Bowie's early performance in Lindsay Kemp's Pierrot in Turquoise (1967) where Bowie said, "I'm Pierrot. I'm Everyman. What I'm doing is theatre, and only theatre. What you see on stage isn't sinister. It's pure clown. I'm using myself as a canvas and trying to paint the truth of our time." Oil on canvas - Musée du Louvre, Paris c. 1730Artist: Canaletto This noted landscape depicts the entrance to the Grand Canal in Venice, with a number of gondoliers and their passengers maneuvering horizontally across the canals. Their asymmetrical placement creates movement as three gondolas extend upward in the center and draw the viewer's eye into the distance, further emphasized by the perspective of the buildings on the right and the church on the left. The subtle use of local colors give the piece a golden feel and a sense of the idyllic life of the times, which was informed by the Venetian school's love of Arcadian landscapes that heavily informed the Rococo aesthetic. Canaletto was a pioneer in painting from nature and conveying the atmospheric effects of a particular moment, which has led some scholars to see his work as anticipating Impressionism. As Jonathan Jones wrote, "the delicate feel for light playing on architecture... makes Canaletto so beguiling." At the same, his innovative use of topography, rendering a locale with scientific accuracy, influenced subsequent artists, as art historian John Russell noted, "he took hold of his native city as if no detail of its teeming life was too small or too trivial to deserve his attention." Venice was a noted stop for British aristocrats on the Grand Tour, and most of Canaletto's work was sold to this audience. The British art dealer Owen Swiny encouraged him to paint small, even postcard-sized, topographical views to sell to tourists, and the banker and art collector, Joseph Smith, became a noted patron, selling a large number of his works to King George III. In 1746 Canaletto moved to London where he painted scenes of London, such as his Westminster Bridge (1746). Ever since his work has retained its popularity and influence: it was featured in the David Bickertstaff film Canaletto and the Artist of Venice (2017), and this painting was used in the video game Merchant Prince II (2001). Oil on canvas - Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas 1733-34Artist: Jean-Baptiste Simeon Chardin This painting depicts two children at play. An older boy, leaning forward, blows through a reed, expanding a luminous soap bubble. A younger child in shadow, wearing a cap with a plume, peers over the ledge, his gaze also focused on the shimmering bubble. The color palette, muted with various shades of rich brown and black, emphasizes the contrasting light and ruddy glow of the boy's hands and face, so that the viewer too becomes aware of the hushed absorption in childhood play. The paint applied with a thick impasto conveys the tactile textures of stone, fabric, and skin. The work creates a feeling of childhood innocence focused on an ephemeral fly, while also being allusive, as the artist's contemporaries would have registered the soap bubble as a symbol of life's transience. Influenced by Dutch Golden Age genre painters, Chardin's realistic genre scenes were his unique contribution to the Rococo period. Unlike most artists who focused on the aristocracy and its entertainments, he depicted domestic scenes, children at play, and still lifes, reflecting the Rococo's homage to leisurely pastimes. As Jones also wrote, Chardin painted "the world of middle-class pleasures" and the "French aesthetic of the everyday ...appears for the first time in Chardin's paintings and made him a cult figure for modern French artists and writers." His work influenced Gustave Courbet, Paul Cézanne, Edouard Manet, and Vincent Van Gogh, among others. Oil on canvas - The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1751Artist: François Boucher This portrait depicts a nude Madame de Pompadour in the guise of Venus, the classical goddess of love, attended by three cherubs and two white doves. She sits on a chaise longue, its back framed with gold rocaille topped with a statue of a reclining cherub. Blue drapes, lustrinescent with light and shadow, open to a partial view of a beautiful garden, frame the scene with an atmosphere of leisure. The figurative treatment is idealized, almost air-brushed, while the setting is ornately detailed and decorative, creating an overall effect that embodies the concept of luxury itself. Boucher transformed the Rococo period with his sensual depictions of the era's notable citizens, social celebrities, and past times, creating his own distinct, pictorial brand. A veritable "who's who of the time", Madame de Pompadour commissioned Boucher to paint this work for her private dressing room in the Chateau de Bellevue. The painting was a tribute to her, as she had played the title role of Venus in La Toilette de Venus (1750) at Versailles. As art historian Melissa Lee Hyde wrote, Boucher's portraits often pointed "to an interesting conflation of theatrical/performed identities and lived identities," showing "a passion for what we might call the art of appearance and an understanding of that art as a vehicle for fashioning and representing identity." Within a few decades, Neoclassicism repudiated Boucher's work for the same qualities that made it so popular among the aristocratic class. His work has only recently begun to be re-evaluated by art historians such as Melissa Lee Hyde and Jed Peri, and contemporary artists John Currin and Lisa Yuskavage have cited Boucher as a direct influence. Oil on canvas - The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1756Artist: François Boucher This full-length portrait of Madame de Pompadour emphasizes stylish elegance, as she reclines in an exuberant green silk dress with a pattern of pink roses across her bodice and neckline. The room's interior, framed by gold brocade draperies with an elaborate gold cartel clock displayed over the fireplace, is equally resplendent. The details are also symbolic, as the bookcase full of books, the books scattered on the floor, and the clock shaped as a lyre and decorated with laurel, symbolize the love of literature, music, and poetry. She conveys both an air of confidence and pleasurable relaxation, her pink high heels peeking from below her skirt, two beautiful roses lying at her feet. Yet the work also depicts her intellectual influence, an open book in her left hand, a writing quill and an envelope on the table to the right. Turning her gaze to the left was, at the time, a pose that represented being engaged in philosophical thought. As a result, the work is a kind of social iconography, each element, carefully chosen and stylistically unified to create an exemplary image. Described by art critic Suzy Menkes, as "one of the earliest and most successful self-image makers," Madame de Pompadour commissioned this portrait, along with others by Boucher, and requested to see them, while they were in progress, so she could direct how she wished to appear. As Menkes noted, Boucher's "flattering and decorative paintings" were an early artistic example of "the celebrity tabloid treatment." In 1756 Pompadour was appointed lady-in-waiting at the court, and art historian Elise Goodman suggests that the moment depicted here, noted by the 8:20 on the clock, was meant to commemorate, "her elevation, when, at the height of aristocratic self-confidence...she withdrew to her library-boudoir to luxuriate in her new position and enjoy the activities she loved." Boucher's images of Madame Pompadour so characterized the Rococo movement that the writers Jules and Edmond de Goncourt were to write, "In a letter on the taste of the French, which is part of a collection of manuscript ephemera dating from 1751... I found carries a la Pompadour, cloth in the couleur Pompadour, ragouts a la Pompadour... there is not a single scrap pertaining to the toilette of a woman that is not a la Pompadour." Oil on canvas - Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany 1767-68Artist: Jean-Honoré Fragonard This iconic work depicts a fanciful woman flying on a swing in a vast garden, her dress blooming like an extravagant pink flower, as a young dandy falls back into the bushes on the left, his face blushing with excitement to look up her skirt. In the shadows at the right an older man is pulling on the swing's ropes to propel the young woman forward. Beneath her are two embracing cherubs and at the left, another cupid stands on a pedestal holding his hand up to his lips in admonition. The image was scandalous for its time because of its densely layered sexual allusions. Fragonard's expressive brushstrokes create a swirling flow between figure and foliage, so that nature itself seems to be caught up in the excitement of the moment. At the same time, the artist used light and shadow to direct the viewer's eye toward discovering the work in stages. The viewer notices first the woman on the swing, then the young man, and, finally, the older man in shadow at the right. The effect is one of a kind of stage lighting, creating drama and narrative. Fragonard's work was rediscovered by the writers Edmund and Jules de Goncourt in L'Art du XVIIIe siècle (Eighteenth-Century Art) (1865), and his work subsequently influenced the Impressionists, particularly Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Berthe Morisot, who was also his granddaughter. The Swing has become an artistic and cultural icon. It was revisited by contemporary artists Yinka Shonibare and Kent Monkman in their own work. Balloon artist Larry Moss referred to it in his 3D installation The Swing for his Masterworks series at the Phelps Art Center in 2013. Oil on canvas - Wallace Collection, London 1752Artist: Tiepolo This gorgeously festive depiction of the sun's course across the sky is presented in an operatic splendor of swirling arabesques, color, and light. At left of center, the Greek sun god Apollo stands with the radiant orb behind him, calling up the sun horses on his right. On the cornice, groups of allegorical figures with representative animals denote Europe, Asia, America, and Africa, while the gods, symbolizing the planets, swirl around the sun god. Mars, the god of war, is reclining with a nude Venus, on a dark cloud and beneath Apollo, while Mercury with his caduceus in hand flies down from the upper left. This painting was made for a dazzling staircase ceiling he created at the Würzburg Residenz in Germany for the prince-bishop Carl Philipp von Gräffenklau. Painted on an enormous vault, Tiepolo's trompe l'oeil treatment created a dramatic impression in contrast to the white marble Neoclassical staircases designed by Balthasar Neumann. Tiepolo's painting of the Europe section includes a portrait of the architect, as well as von Gräffenklau. Additionally, the artist portrayed his son Giandomenico and the artist Antonio Bossi, both of whom worked with him on the project, and a self-portrait. This fresco remains the largest in the world, composed so that the painting's individual sections could be viewed from a particular stopping place, as if the perspective adjusted to the position of the viewer. Tiepolo's innovation was his arrangement of pastels in a complementary scheme, so that the tension in the color would emphasize the narrative movement and the dramatic poses of the figures to create a lively effect. The result was called sprezzatura, or a "studied carelessness." As art historian Keith Christiansen wrote, Tiepolo "celebrates the imagination by transposing the world of ancient history and myth, the scriptures, and sacred legends into a grandiose, even theatrical language." It was this quality of Tiepolo's imagination that influenced Francisco Goya throughout his career, both in his early tapestry designs and later in his etchings as he drew upon Tiepolo's mysterious and sometimes bizarre prints in the Capricci (c. 1740-1742) and the Scherzi di fantasia (c. 1743-1757). Oil on canvas c. 1770Artist: Thomas Gainsborough This full-length portrait depicts a boy, wearing blue satin knee breeches and a lace-collared doublet as a girl in pink, Pinkie (1794), the work has taken on further cultural relevance, as both paintings have been used in the TV pilot for Eerie, Indiana (1991) and as set decorations on episodes of Leave It to Beaver (1957-1963). Oil on canvas - Huntington Library, San Marino, California 1782Artist: Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun This self-portrait emphasizes both aristocratic but casual elegance and artistic prowess. Dressed in shimmering silk, her white cuffs drawing attention to her extended right hand, her white collar emphasizing the daring cut of her neckline, she holds a palette and brushes in her left hand. The wide brimmed straw hat, encircled with vibrant flowers and sporting, becomes a focal point of the work's emphasis on the outfit of a cavalier, worn by aristocratic Royalists after the 1630s. His posture and facial expression play the part as well, for cavaliers were defined not only by their stylish clothing but their nonchalant and swashbuckling attitude. Thus, the work, Gainsborough's most popular, is a tour de force, combining masterful portraiture with a costume study and his artistic reply to the works of Anthony van Dyck, famous for his portraiture of King Charles I's court and the cavaliers who supported him. Yet, by primarily using blue, traditionally thought to be more suited for background elements, Gainsborough also challenged traditional aesthetic assumptions. The work carries Rococo's traditional visual appeal and play with costumed figures, but Gainsborough also added innovative elements of realism, as seen in the buttons tightly lacing the doublet together, and prefigured Romanticism by portraying a solitary figure outlined against a turbulent sky. Gainsborough came to exemplify British Rococo with society portraits of his wealthy clients. The painting was immediately successful at its 1770 debut at the Royal Academy of Art in London and became so identified with British cultural identity that, when in 1921 the Duke of Westminster sold it to the American tycoon Henry Huntington, it caused a scandal. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's silent film Knabe in Blau (The Boy in Blue) (1919) was inspired by the painting, as was Cole Porter's song Blue Boy Blues (1922). Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg and contemporary artist Kehinde Wiley were inspired by the work, and artist Alex Israel referenced it in his Self Portrait (Dodgers) (2014–2015). Shown at the Huntington Museum, paired with Thomas Lawrence's portrait of a girl in pink, Pinkie (1794), the work has taken on further cultural relevance, as both paintings have been used in the TV pilot for Eerie, Indiana (1991) and as set decorations on episodes of Leave It to Beaver (1957-1963). 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