

7

The Eighteenth Century

7.1 The Pursuit of Pleasure

Antoine Watteau

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Embarkation for Cythera by Watteau depicts a group of men and women at the end of a visit, about to leave the island.

The playful cupids and the embracing couples suggest that their journey has been successful. Venus, in the form of a statue, seems to look on approvingly.

Watteau was accepted as a full member of the French Royal Academy (p. 110) on the basis of *Embarkation for Cythera*. However, the subject matter of elegantly dressed people enjoying themselves in an idyllic landscape did not fit any of their traditional categories of painting. To

Antoine Watteau, 1684–1721, France, *Embarkation for Cythera*, 1717, oil on canvas, 129 x 194 cm, Louvre, Paris, France, Bridgeman Art Library, London, England



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ART IN CONTEXT: An age of pleasure

Louis XIV ruled France with absolute power for over seventy years (1643–1715). During this time the royal court, as well as most of the French nobility, lived in great splendour at the Palace of Versailles. When Louis XIV died, the court was moved to Paris. Many of the nobility, tired of the pomp and ceremony of palace life, had already moved to the city. In Paris they settled in small townhouses, with boudoirs and small salons instead of grand reception rooms.

They made art forms of intimate pleasures such as conversation, letter writing, dancing and romance. The visual arts were an important part of life for this pleasure-loving society, who became great patrons of the graceful, decorative style of Rococo art and design.

accommodate Watteau's painting and others like it, the academy invented a new category of painting called *fête galantes*.

The artificial world of Watteau's *fête galantes* was strongly influenced by his love of the theatre. Many of his paintings feature theatrical characters, or figures dressed in costumes from a collection he kept in his studio. Watteau was also a great observer of people in real life. He filled many sketchbooks with figure drawings, which he used to create the animated, expressive figures in his paintings.

Watteau's paintings are characterised by luminous colour and a rich variety of textures rendered in fluent brushstrokes. These characteristics reflect the influence of artists such as Rubens and Titian, whose work Watteau studied in public and private collections in Paris.

Watteau was one of the leading artists working in the Rococo style (see box below). While Rococo art has sometimes been characterised as decorative, pretty and frivolous, the evocative mood and atmosphere of Watteau's work gave it deeper meaning and feeling. In *Embarkation for Cythera* the soft colours of late afternoon, and the lingering figures who seem reluctant to leave the island where they have found happiness, remind us of the passing of time and the fragile nature of love and happiness.

The fashion for a more severe, classical style of art later in the eighteenth century (Unit 7.4) meant that Watteau's work declined in popularity. It has been greatly admired by later generations of artists, however, including Delacroix, Renoir and Seurat.

The nineteenth-century Impressionist artist Renoir believed that Embarkation for Cythera was one of the most beautiful paintings ever made.

STYLES: Rococo

Rococo was a term used scornfully by later artists and critics to describe the decorative style of art and design that originated in France in the early eighteenth century. The term is thought to have derived from a combination of the Italian word *barocca* (meaning Baroque), and the French words *coquille* (meaning shell) and *rocaille* (meaning rock).

Rococo art tended to be small in scale to fit the niches, and wall and door panels of townhouses. Its subject matter was light-hearted, and frequently related to the pursuit of pleasure, especially love. Much Rococo art and design was inspired by the flowing, curving lines and asymmetrical forms of natural objects such as flowers and shells. Light and airy colour, delicate detail and sometimes scrolls and ribbons added to the decorative grace and sensual appeal of the style.

Although Rococo art challenged many of the values established by the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in the seventeenth century, it eventually gained some official recognition from the academy.

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

1 What evidence can you find in *Embarkation for Cythera* of:

- a luminous colour
- b a rich variety of textures rendered in fluent brushstrokes?

Use a labelled diagram for your answer if you wish.

2 Based on your understanding of the characteristics of academic art and your observation of *Embarkation for Cythera*, suggest why Rococo art challenged many of the traditional values of the Royal Academy.

7.2 Love and Romance

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 1 List some of the features in *The Enjoyable Lesson*, other than those mentioned, that can be described as artificial or theatrical.
- 2 What evidence can you find in *The Enjoyable Lesson* of:
 - a harmonies of cool blues and greens, complemented by creamy flesh tones and the warm pinks of satin and flowers
 - b curved and flowing lines, and full and rounded forms
 - c details such as flowers and bows
 - d spontaneous and fluent brushstrokes?Use a labelled copy of the painting for your answer if you wish.
- 3 Boucher once described the work of Michelangelo as 'frightening', and the work of Raphael as 'icy'. Based on your observations of the work of these three artists, suggest reasons for Boucher's opinions.

François Boucher

Can you see why this painting is called *The Enjoyable Lesson*? Games of love and romance were popular pastimes in the eighteenth century (Unit 7.1), and there are many clues in this painting to suggest that the lesson has more to do with romance than music! While the closeness of the figures suggests the possibility of romance, the symbolism in the painting makes the meaning clear. The sheep represent innocence, while the goat is a symbol of sexual passion. The classical monument in the background is crumbling and overgrown with vines. Nature therefore appears to dominate classical order.

The pleasure-loving society of the eighteenth century linked nature and country life to freedom and unspoilt beauty. Many noble women even attended fashionable social events dressed as shepherdesses in silk gowns. Pastorals reflecting this romantic and sentimental view of nature were common in Rococo art. They were also one of Boucher's favorite subjects.

The Enjoyable Lesson reflects Boucher's idyllic view of nature. He once described nature as 'too green and badly lit'. He created landscapes in harmonies of cool blues and greens, complemented by creamy flesh tones and the warm pinks of satin and flowers. His shepherds and shepherdesses have delicate skin and are dressed in silk and surrounded by flowers. His sheep are perfectly clean and tied up with satin ribbons. Lines are curved and flowing, and forms are full and rounded. Details such as flowers and bows add decorative flourish to his scenes. Boucher no doubt drew on his experience as a designer of theatre costumes and stage sets when creating the artificial world we see in his paintings.

Boucher, like many other Rococo artists, greatly admired the work of Rubens and Venetian painters such as Titian. Their influence on Boucher is evident in his use of colour, and the fluent and spontaneous brushwork that gives his paintings a sparkling vivacity and freshness. Watteau was another important influence on Boucher. Although Boucher's work never had the melancholy mood that characterised Watteau's work, Boucher greatly admired Watteau's skill in representing the human figure. One of



François Boucher, 1703–70, France, *The Enjoyable Lesson*, 1748, oil on canvas, 92 x 76 cm, Felton Bequest, 1982, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

his first important commissions was to make engravings of 125 Watteau drawings.

After the early death of Watteau, Boucher enjoyed great prestige as the leading Rococo artist. He was also the favourite artist and teacher of the influential Marquise du Pompadour, who was the mistress of King Louis XV and an important patron of the arts. After her death, the Marquise du Pompadour's brother secured Boucher's appointment as painter to the king and director of the Royal Academy (p. 110).

Jean-Honoré Fragonard

The original title of *The Swing* was 'The Happy Hazards of the Swing', which describes perfectly the scenario that Fragonard has depicted. We see an elegantly dressed young woman enjoying a swing, her silk gown fluttering around her as she flies gleefully through the air. The swing is pushed by her husband, while her lover, who commissioned the painting, enjoys the view from below! Her dainty slipper flying through the air adds a provocative touch, and suggests she knows her lover is present. Like *The Enjoyable Lesson*, the subject matter reflects the frivolous pursuit of pleasure that occupied the lives of many aristocrats. In its sparkling colour, decorative detail, rich textures, flowing line and asymmetrical composition it also reflects many of the qualities of Rococo art.

Fragonard greatly admired Boucher's work, especially his pastorals. The subject and style of some of Fragonard's paintings

also reflect his admiration of the work of Hals, Rembrandt and Rubens.

Fragonard painted many different subjects including landscapes, portraits and genre scenes. While most of his paintings show a remarkably fluent and direct painting technique, some paintings have a smooth, highly polished surface. Despite his versatility, Fragonard is most well known for his paintings relating to the pursuit of pleasure, such as *The Swing*.

Although Fragonard enjoyed great success for most of his career, his life spanned a period of dramatic social and artistic change in France. The events of the French Revolution and the rise of Neo-Classicism saw his work dismissed as frivolous, and when he died he was poor and unknown.

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

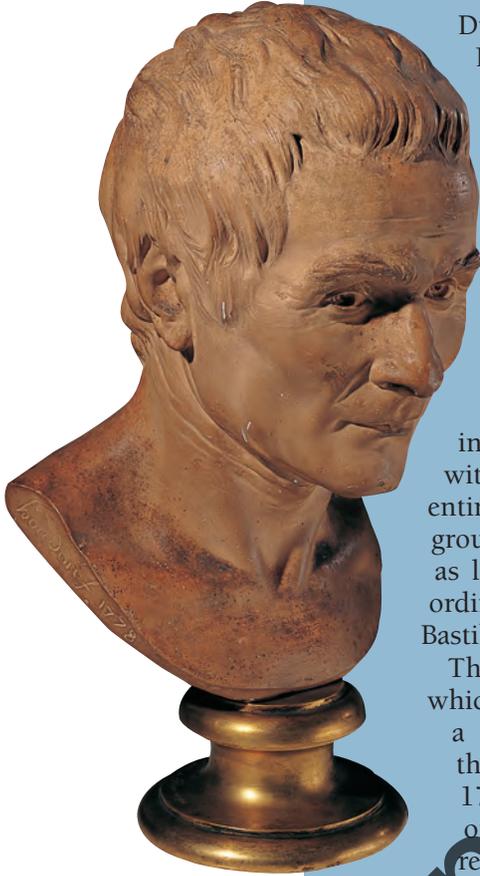
- 4 Compare *The Enjoyable Lesson* with *The Swing*. Consider the subject matter, painting technique and overall impact of each work.



Jean-Honoré Fragonard, 1732–1806, France, *The Swing* (*Les Hazards heureux de l'Escarpolette*), 1767, oil on canvas, 81 x 64.2 cm, The Wallace Collection, London, England, Bridgeman Art Library, London, England

7.3 A Revolutionary Era

ART IN CONTEXT: Enlightenment, revolution and empire



Jean-Antoine Houdon, 1741–1828, France, *Jean Jacques Rousseau*, 1778, plasterbust, h. 45.7 cm, Everard Studley Miller Bequest, 1971, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

During the eighteenth century an intellectual revolution known as the Enlightenment challenged many of the traditions and beliefs upheld by institutions such as the monarchy, the nobility and the Church. Enlightened writers and philosophers, such as Voltaire (1694–1778) and Rousseau (1712–78) took a rational and scientific approach to political, social, religious and economic issues. They encouraged people to learn more about the world in which they lived, and to question the existing order. Their ideas contributed to many of the important social and political changes that took place in the eighteenth century, including those associated with the French Revolution of 1789.

The French Revolution came about because of the many unfair privileges that were enjoyed by the monarchy, nobility and Church in French society. It began during the reign of Louis XVI (1774–93) with the formation of a national assembly that claimed to represent the entire nation. Despite opposition from the king and others, in 1789, this group created a new constitution for France. It was based on values such as liberty and equality, but maintained the monarchy. In July 1789, ordinary working people, frustrated by social injustice, destroyed the Bastille, a building that was closely identified with the monarchy.

The next years marked a period of great unrest and change, during which the monarchy was eventually abolished and France was declared a republic. In 1793 the king, his wife (Marie Antoinette) and thousands of others were guillotined in a 'reign of terror' that ended in 1794. A directory of five men took control of the country and a period of relative peace ensued. It was not long, however, before the leading republican, General Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), seized power. In 1804 he declared himself the emperor of France. He then set about making his empire as great as ancient Rome.

Jean-Antoine Houdon

Houdon was one of the leading portrait sculptors in eighteenth-century Europe, and even travelled to the United States to make a portrait of President George Washington. He made portrait busts of many of the leading intellectual and political figures of eighteenth-century France. The subject of the sculpture reproduced here is the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (see box).

Rousseau believed in the goodness and purity of the natural world. He is famous for saying, 'Man is born free, and every-

where he is in chains.' Viewing many aspects of society as repressive, he advocated a return to nature and emphasised the importance of individual feeling. His ideas were very influential in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Houdon has represented Rousseau with undraped, abbreviated shoulders, in the manner of a Roman portrait bust (Unit 2.6). There are no fashionable accessories to give us any clues about when the subject lived or who he was. This effectively elevates him above a particular place or time, so that he becomes a man for all places and all times.

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 1 Do you agree that Houdon's sculpture of Rousseau is naturalistic? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 Compare Houdon's sculpture of Rousseau with *Head of the Emperor Vespasian (AD 69–79)* (Unit 2.6).

This plaster sculpture is cast from a terracotta model, which Houdon made from a death mask he took from Rousseau's face. He has depicted Rousseau naturalistically and with great attention to Rousseau's individuality. The idealised, heroic features that characterise many official portraits have been avoided. Rousseau appears as a man of great dignity, befitting his status as a leading intellectual.

Houdon was trained at the Royal Academy (p. 110) and spent four years in Rome, where he studied classical art and became interested in the work of Bernini. While the restraint of classical art is evident in this portrait bust of Rousseau, other sculptures by Houdon have the exuberance of Baroque art.

Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun

Vigée-Lebrun began to paint when she was eleven years old. Although she received some training from her artist father and his colleagues, her greatest education came through studying and copying paintings in the many private art collections to which she had access. She particularly admired the work of Rubens and Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641, Flanders).

By the time she was twenty-five years old she was the favourite painter of the queen, Marie Antoinette (see box), who she painted many times. She enjoyed great success as a portrait painter.

Vigée-Lebrun often painted women wearing simple Grecian gowns and loosely tied hair, rather than formal gowns and hairstyles. Her sitters appear to have great life and personality. Vigée-Lebrun's paintings helped create the new image of a more natural woman, which was emerging as popular in both art and life.

Self-portrait of the Artist with Her Daughter reflects the ideal of motherhood encouraged by Rousseau, who strongly believed children should be raised and educated in a 'natural' way. Rousseau's ideas helped to make naturalistic images of mothers, fathers and domestic life very popular in the late eighteenth century. Vigée-Lebrun's painting reproduced here was so popular



Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun, 1755–1842, France, *Self-portrait of the Artist with Her Daughter*, 1786, oil on wood, 105 x 85 cm, Louvre, Paris, France, photograph: AKG London/Erich Lessing

when it was exhibited that engravings were made of it.

Despite its naturalism, the costumes and composition of this painting were inspired by a famous painting of the Madonna and Christ child by Raphael.

When Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI (see box) were arrested in 1791 Vigée-Lebrun, fearing for her life, fled from Paris with her daughter. She spent the next twelve years in Italy, Austria and Russia, where she continued her success as a portrait painter. After she returned to Paris she published her memoirs. Like her paintings, they are a vivid document of life in eighteenth-century France.

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 3 What does *Self-portrait of the Artist with Her Daughter* communicate to you about the relationship between the mother and daughter in this painting? How does the painting do this?
- 4 Why do you think Vigée-Lebrun might have chosen to base *Self-portrait of the Artist with Her Daughter* on a painting of the Madonna and Christ child by Raphael?

7.4 A Classical Revival



Angelica Kauffmann, 1741–1807, b. Switzerland, w. England and Italy, 1778, design, Entrance Hall Ceiling, painted for the ceiling at Somerset House, London, but moved to The Royal Academy, Burlington House, London in 1899, oil, oval, 132.1 x 149.9 cm, © The Royal Academy of Arts, London, England

Angelica Kauffmann

Kauffmann developed her interest in Neo-Classicism after travelling to Rome and meeting some of the leading artists and theorists of Neo-Classicism, including Johann Winckelmann (see box below).

In the painting reproduced here, Kauffman depicts herself sketching from a classical sculpture of a male torso. In the background are two large classical columns. The rich colour in this painting also reflects the influence that Venetian art had on Kauffmann's work.

While Kauffmann had great success as a portrait painter from early in her career, her first passion was history painting. History painting was regarded as the most important painting genre, but was rarely tackled by women artists. In the eighteenth century it was still considered morally unacceptable for women to work from the nude figure. This meant that women often lacked the skill and confidence in figure painting that was required for history painting.

In 1766 Kauffmann travelled to England, where she played a significant role in introducing Neo-Classicism. Her work included designs and paintings for china as well as ceiling and wall decorations. Her influence was also spread through engravings of her work.

Despite her success, Kauffmann was excluded from many art histories until recent decades. One of the reasons for this is that Neo-Classicism, like many other art styles, has often been defined by art historians according to the work of male artists, with little regard to the contribution women have made. Descriptions of Neo-Classicism as heroic and severe, for example, may relate to some of David's work, but not necessarily to Kauffmann's. Kauffmann's work in the decorative arts might also have led some art historians, who have tended to focus on grand-scale painting and sculpture, to neglect her important contribution to the classical revival in the eighteenth century.

STYLES: Neo-Classicism

Neo-Classicism is a style based on classical art. It had a significant influence on art and architecture in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was partly inspired by excitement about archaeological discoveries made at Herculaneum and Pompeii around the mid-eighteenth century. The publication of several important and finely illustrated books on classical art also helped to generate great enthusiasm for anything classical.

The German art historian Johann Winckelmann (1717–68) was an influential theorist of Neo-Classicism. He believed that the ancient Greeks had achieved perfection in their art and civilisation, and that artists could once again create great art by imitating their 'noble simplicity and calm grandeur'. His ideas inspired Neo-Classical artists to borrow heavily from classical art and to aim for an absolute beauty based on the idealisation of nature, reason and order.

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 1 Based on your understanding of academic art, why do you think Kauffmann's ceiling decoration would be appropriate for a Royal Academy?

SUBJECTS: *The Oath of Horatii*

The Oath of Horatii is a story of patriotism and self-sacrifice, from the time of republican Rome. To settle a power struggle between Rome and Alba, the three Horatii brothers of Rome were selected to fight in a 'win or die' battle against the three Curatii brothers of Alba. The Horatii brothers are shown in David's painting with their father, enthusiastically pledging their loyalty and lives to Rome.

The story is given a tragic twist by the fact that the wife of one of the Horatii is the sister of the Curatti. Furthermore, a Horatii sister is engaged to a Curatti!

The only survivor of this conflict was one of the Horatii. When he returned home, covered in the blood of his sister's fiancé, she denounced him and Rome. He then accused her of disloyalty to the state, and killed her with his sword.

Jacques Louis David

Like Kauffmann, David began working in a Neo-Classical style after spending several years in Rome (1775–80). While there he enthusiastically studied classical sculpture and admired the work of earlier artists who had been influenced by classical art such as Michelangelo and Raphael. He filled many sketchbooks with detailed drawings, which became a valuable reference for him when he returned to Paris.

The Oath of Horatii was one of several major paintings in the Neo-Classical style that helped cement David's reputation as the most important and influential artist in France. It is an austere but powerful painting. Its composition has a strong geometric order and clarity. The shallow picture space of the scene is like a stage. Our attention is clearly focused on the figures

who are arranged across the foreground of the painting. Meaning is clearly communicated through the dramatic poses and gestures of the figures, whose idealised forms clearly reflect the influence of classical sculpture.

The Oath of Horatii was commissioned by the king. However, in the unsettled political times in which it was created, its theme of heroic sacrifice for the good of the state was seen by some people as supporting the anti-royalist cause. David eventually became involved in the revolutionary cause, and even spent some time in jail for his activities.

Late in his career David made many paintings glorifying Napoleon (Unit 7.3) and his reign. In these paintings the severity of his earlier work is replaced by a greater interest in pageantry and colour.



Jacques Louis David, 1748–1825, France, *The Oath of Horatii*, 1784, oil on canvas, 326 x 420 cm, Louvre, Paris, France, Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library, London, England

Jacques-Louis David was reprimanded by his superiors when he accepted three female students in his studio in the Louvre. When he encouraged these students to submit history paintings to the annual Salon exhibition, many people were convinced that their paintings were David's work.

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 2 Do you agree that the composition of *The Oath of Horatii* has a strong geometric order and clarity? Give reasons for your answer.
- 3 Based on your observation of both the male and female figures in *The Oath of Horatii*, what evidence can you find of:
 - a the influence of classical sculpture
 - b meaning communicated through poses and gestures?
- 4 Look at other examples of work by Kauffmann and David. Using evidence from your observations, do you think descriptions of Neo-Classicism as heroic and severe are accurate or adequate? Give reasons for your answer.

7.5 Two English Portrait Painters

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 1 What, and how, does *Miss Susanna Gale* reveal about:
 - a the sitter's wealthy background
 - b social expectations of young women such as *Miss Susanna Gale* in the eighteenth century?
- 2 Look at other portraits by Reynolds. What evidence can you find of his skill at depicting different ages and types of personalities?

Paintings in the grand manner featured noble subjects, represented in a style that combined the grandeur, drama and richness of Baroque art with the formal order of classical art.

Joshua Reynolds

Susanna Gale's father was a wealthy plantation owner in Jamaica. She was in England to receive an education when Reynolds painted her portrait. She was only fourteen years old. She returned to Jamaica the year after the portrait was made, and married. Reynolds's portrait of her reveals his sitter's wealthy background and social status, while also capturing her tender beauty, gentleness and femininity.

'Damn him, how various he is,' Reynolds's colleague Gainsborough once said of him. He seemed to be able to adapt his style to capture the personality and age of any sitter, from venerable old men to innocent young children.

When Reynolds first began working as an artist during the 1740s, portraiture was known merely as 'face painting', and English artists did not have great social status. Inspired by his knowledge of art in Europe, Reynolds was determined to

elevate the status of both art and artists in English society.

He read widely and mixed in intellectual and sophisticated circles. Like most well-bred Englishmen of his day, Reynolds travelled to Rome to learn more about the classical past. While in Italy he also admired Renaissance art including the work of Carracci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian.

Reynolds wanted to create great history paintings. The main source of income for English artists were portraits, however, so he created portraits in the grand manner (see margin) to give them the dignity of history painting. In *Miss Susanna Gale* his young sitter is standing on a classical pedestal with a classical column behind her. Her pose is borrowed from a painting by Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641, Flanders), whose work Reynolds greatly admired.

Reynolds's hard work and intellectual and artistic achievements earned him wide respect. When the Royal Academy of Arts (p. 110) in London opened in 1768 he became the first president. In this role he had a great influence on English art.



Joshua Reynolds, 1723–92, England, *Miss Susanna Gale*, 1763–64, oil on canvas, 210 x 118.8 cm, Felton Bequest, 1933, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Thomas Gainsborough

Gainsborough was born in rural Suffolk, and had a great interest in nature and the landscape. Although the limited market for landscapes meant that he had to make his living from painting portraits, Gainsborough often painted his sitters in a landscape setting. These landscape settings give his portraits great mood and atmosphere, as we see in *The Blue Boy*.

This painting also reveals Gainsborough's skill in using colour and fluent brushstrokes to integrate his sitter into the landscape. Gainsborough's light and rapid brushstrokes give his work great life. Contemporary accounts of his working technique describe how he worked directly from the sitter, without creating preliminary sketches, using a long brush and quite fluid paint. In contrast to other portrait painters, he painted the whole canvas instead of employing a drapery

painter or any assistants (see margin). Reynolds marvelled at the way form emerged from what seemed to be 'random marks of painting' in Gainsborough's work.

Gainsborough was influenced by many different artists. As a young artist he earned extra money by copying and restoring Dutch landscape painting (Unit 6.7), which he greatly admired. Later in his life he also studied the landscapes of Rubens. He was especially interested in the way Rubens used light and colour. Gainsborough's portrait style was also partly inspired by the portraits of van Dyck, which he had studied in private collections in England. Unlike Reynolds, Gainsborough never travelled to Europe.

While the figures in most of Gainsborough's portraits are usually in informal poses and contemporary dress, the sitter in *The Blue Boy* is dressed in a costume reminiscent of the period of van Dyck. However it still has the natural charm and relaxed manner that characterises Gainsborough's portraits.

Gainsborough was constantly exploring new ideas in painting. He even painted a series of landscapes on glass, which could be illuminated by candles. He often painted by candlelight to capture the basic forms of his subjects. Gainsborough's love of landscape frequently distracted him from portraiture. Late in his life he undertook a sketching tour in the English countryside.

Most portrait painters in the eighteenth century painted the faces of their sitters and then employed specialist drapery painters and background painters, before adding the finishing touches to a portrait. Drapery painters usually served several portrait painters. They worked from life-size, clothed models.



Thomas Gainsborough, 1727–88, England, *The Blue Boy*, 1770, oil on canvas, 178 x 122 cm, courtesy of the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California, USA

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 3 Based on your observation of *The Blue Boy*, describe how:
 - a the landscape adds to the mood and atmosphere of the painting
 - b Gainsborough's use of colour and fluent brushstrokes helps to integrate his sitter into the landscape.
- 4 If you lived in eighteenth-century England would you choose to have Gainsborough or Reynolds paint your portrait? Give reasons for your answer based on your observation and knowledge of their work.

7.6 A Social Critic

Snuff is a tobacco powder that was once fashionable to sniff.

William Hogarth

What sort of future do you predict for the engaged young couple pictured at the far left of Hogarth's *The Marriage Contract*? There are many clues in the painting to suggest it will be gloomy. The groom to be sits with his back to his bride, while he admires his own reflection in the mirror and takes a pinch of snuff (see margin). His father, Lord Squanderfield, has frittered away the family fortune, so has arranged for his son to marry the daughter of a wealthy middle-class merchant. As Lord Squanderfield negotiates the marriage contract he proudly displays his family tree. The bride's shrewd father has paid a large dowry of money to the groom's

family, knowing he will gain great prestige in return for his daughter's marriage into the nobility. The bride to be ignores her future husband, but listens attentively to the flirtatious lawyer, Silvertongue.

This painting is the first of six in a series called *Marriage à la Mode*. Other paintings in the series reveal that soon after marriage the couple indulge in frivolous pleasures and love affairs. Silvertongue becomes the wife's lover. He is eventually discovered by the husband, whom he fatally wounds. When Silvertongue is hung for murder, the wife commits suicide.

The six paintings are full of fascinating details that graphically and symbolically reveal the artist's belief that infidelity and marriages of convenience were immoral.

William Hogarth, 1697–1764, England, *Marriage à la Mode: 1, The Marriage Contract*, before 1743, oil on canvas, 69.9 x 90.8 cm, National Gallery, London, England, Bridgeman Art Library, London, England



For example in *The Marriage Contract* the chained dogs suggest the restraints of the arranged marriage on the young couple. The groom's father is depicted with gout in one foot, a condition that was once associated with the excessive consumption of rich food and drink. In this painting we can also see Hogarth's frustration at the English preference for things French and Italian. The groom to be wears the sort of French fashion that young men typically purchased while abroad. Through the window we see a building being constructed in the latest classical style of architecture. The mortgage papers brandished by the lawyer suggest that this building is one of the extravagances that has led to Lord Squanderfield's financial ruin. *Marriage à la Mode* followed two other series of paintings by Hogarth, which also dealt with contemporary moral issues. *A Harlot's Progress* traces the downfall of a young country girl who succumbs to the vices of city life in London. *A Rake's Progress* shows how a young man ends up in debtors' prison, and then Bedlam (a hospital for the insane), after he wastes his inheritance on high living.

These paintings became widely known when they were made into engravings and sold by subscription. They were extremely

popular with the wealthy middle class, who identified with their moral messages.

Hogarth saw these morality tales as the modern equivalent of history painting. He believed the ordinary characters in his paintings were more relevant to people than ancient gods and goddesses.

While they provide a vivid picture of contemporary life in eighteenth-century London, Hogarth's modern morality tales also reflect his great skill as an artist. The dress, expression and gestures of each figure, and the composition of the paintings were carefully planned to clearly and powerfully communicate a message. Although Hogarth's art was based on his astute observations of contemporary life, it was also influenced by Dutch genre painting (Unit 6.7) and the work of artists such as Bosch and Brueghel.

Hogarth also painted many portraits and some religious paintings that reveal his ability to work in a more traditional, academic manner (p. 110). He was determined to demonstrate that English art was equal to French or Italian art. His commitment to his profession is reflected in his book *The Analysis of Beauty*, published in 1753. In it he argued that beauty in art was derived from the use of the serpentine line, as opposed to the angular line.



Reprinted and Published by W. Hogarth.

Marriage à la Mode, (Plate I)

According to the Act of Parliament's April 1773

ANALYSING & INTERPRETING

- 1 What evidence can you find in *The Marriage Contract* to show that Hogarth carefully planned the dress, expression and gestures of each figure to clearly and powerfully communicate a message?
- 2 What do you think Hogarth might have admired about Dutch genre painting and the work of Bosch and Brueghel?
- 3 Look at other examples of work by Hogarth. Choose a work that appeals to you. What does this work communicate to you, and how?
- 4 Describe how the materials and techniques used in each version of *The Marriage Contract* have influenced the appearance of the work.
- 5 Suggest what media artists may use today to create artworks to reach a wide audience.

CREATING & MAKING

Look closely at as many examples as you can of Hogarth's modern morality tales in painting and print form.

Think about the moral issues that face us in twentieth-century society. Create a contemporary morality tale that communicates some of these issues. Think about the characters in your work and what sort of scene, objects and symbols you will use to communicate your message.

Make a class display of everybody's work. Discuss what messages each work communicates, and how.

William Hogarth, 1697–1764, England, *Marriage à la Mode: Plate 1—The Marriage Contract*, 1745, etching and engraving, 38.2 x 46.7 cm, presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by P. W. Musgrave, Member 1995, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

East Meets West

French (Vincennes), wine cooler, 1753, porcelain, h. 19 cm, d. 20.3 cm, Felton Bequest, 1976, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne



inspired by Chinese art). As you can see in this example, chinoiserie tends to reflect a poetic and fanciful Western view of China. Many chinoiserie designs also incorporate elements borrowed from other Eastern art. The scene reproduced here is thought to be based on a drawing by Boucher, who provided several porcelain factories and a tapestry workshop with Eastern-inspired designs. Boucher drew inspiration for these designs from a wide variety of sources including travel books, books on oriental architecture and his own collection of Chinese paintings and decorative arts.

The Romantic movement of the early nineteenth century led many artists to look to the East for inspiration. Ingres drew on travel books as well as Persian miniatures to create a series of nudes with Eastern themes. Delacroix was one of a number of Romantic artists who travelled to the East in search of exotic and colourful subjects.

After Japan began trading with the West in the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese arts, crafts and design featured in several international exhibitions in London and Europe, and were soon widely admired and collected. The most fashionable households were decorated with Japanese and other Eastern art including folding screens, bamboo furniture, ceramics, fans and fabrics. Many Western designers also created work inspired by Japanese art, crafts and design.

Japanese prints, which could be bought cheaply in the late nineteenth century, were widely collected. They had a significant influence on many artists including the Impressionists and the Post-Impressionists (Unit 9.7).

Matisse was a great admirer of Japanese prints. His interest in colour, pattern and decoration also led him to explore the art of other Eastern cultures. In 1911 and 1912 his travels to Morocco inspired a series of paintings of oriental interiors and figures.

The East has had a significant influence on Western art. The countries known as 'the East' include China, Japan, India, Iran (formerly Persia) and Turkey. Some artists have been inspired by the unique culture and distinctive art forms of a particular Eastern country or culture. Many other artists, however, especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, have been interested in the East generally. For these artists the East offered an exotic and exciting alternative to the classical and historical subjects traditionally favoured in Western art.

Before reliable travel, multiculturalism and sophisticated communications were commonplace, interest in Eastern cultures was generally inspired and informed by the tales of explorers and adventurous travellers, and by the arts and crafts such as glass, porcelain, lacquerware and textiles that made their way from the East to the West. These objects were in great demand in the eighteenth century, as many people were fascinated by the idea of far away and mysterious lands. There was also a strong demand for Western art and designs to incorporate motifs or materials from Eastern sources.

Reproduced here is a French porcelain wine cooler. It reflects the eighteenth-century fashion for chinoiserie (designs

INVESTIGATING & DISCUSSING

- 1 Investigate the influence of Eastern art on an individual artist/designer or a group of artists/designers of your choice.
 - a What aspect(s) of Eastern art influenced this artist or group?
 - b What was this artist's or group's experience of Eastern art?
 - c Describe how the influence of the East is evident in an example of work by this artist or group. You may consider artists or groups already mentioned on this page, or investigate the influence of the East on Byzantine art, Aubrey Beardsley (1872–98, England), Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947, France), Rupert Bunny (1864–1947), Australia), Francesco Clemente (b. 1952, Italy), Charles Conder (1868–1909, England), Emanuel Phillips Fox (1865–1915, Australia), Ethel Carrick Fox (1872–1952, Australia), Jean-Leon Gérôme (1824–1904, France), E. W. Godwin (1833–86, England), Joyce Kozloff (b. 1942, USA), Matisse, Hilda Rix Nicholas (1884–1961, Australia), Preston, Renoir, James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903, USA) or Brett Whiteley (1939–92, Australia).

Relationships

Human relationships of many different sorts have been presented in a wide variety of ways.

There have been many artworks through the ages depicting couples. Like other examples of Egyptian art, *Pair Statue of King Mycerinus and Queen Kha-merer* (Unit 1.2) is made according to convention. The relationship between this couple is simply revealed by their closeness, and the queen's arms around the king. The representation of the couple in *The Arnolfini Marriage* (Unit 5.6) is also very formal, and it is possible that this painting was made as a visual marriage document. The complex symbolism in this image clearly relates to the theme of marriage.

By contrast, Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode* series (Unit 7.6) offers a satirical view of the practice of arranged marriages.

Many of the images of couples we find in twentieth-century art focus on the emotional aspects of relationships. *Birthday* was painted after Chagall's future wife, Bella, visited him on his birthday. She brought him flowers and food wrapped in beautiful embroidered shawls. We see these in the painting. What is most extraordinary about this image is the way Chagall has painted himself floating to the ceiling as he kisses Bella, whose toes barely touch the ground. Chagall rejected the limits of naturalism to create an image that celebrates the joys of love. While many of Hester's images of lovers celebrate love, they are not romantic interpretations of physical or emotional relationships. They are about complex and often subtle feelings. In Hester's *Lovers* reproduced here the woman, who appears distracted by an unseen figure, is held possessively by the man, who looks at the viewer with dark, brooding eyes. A mysterious view of a couple's relationship is presented in *The Lovers* by Magritte (Unit 10.10).

Artists have also revealed different views of relationships within families in various artworks through the ages. The dominant place that men have often had within families in the past is clear in many images. *Fowling in the Marshes* (Unit 1.2) is

one such example. Here the different sizes of the family members reflect their respective status within the family. The importance of fathers was often indicated by their central position in family portraits, as we see in *Family Group in a Landscape* by Hals (Unit 6.6). In this, and many other family portraits, the eldest son is seen looking at his father with great admiration. This reminds us that sons, especially eldest sons, were often the heirs to their father's wealth and responsibilities.

In the eighteenth century new ideas about childhood and raising children led to a greater emphasis on family life. Many eighteenth-century artists, such as Gainsborough, Reynolds and Vigée-Lebrun, made sensitive portraits of children and families that reflected these new ideas. Vigée-Lebrun's *Self-portrait of the Artist with Her Daughter* (Unit 7.3) captures the ideal of 'natural' motherhood and childhood that was championed by Jean Jacques Rousseau (Unit 7.3). Vigée-Lebrun's idealised images of mothers and children were influenced by those of Raphael. The mother and child relationship has been the subject of many other artists including Cassatt and Renoir. In the twentieth century, artists such as Kollwitz and Lange created images of mothers and children as a way of focusing attention on important social issues.



Marc Chagall, 1887–1985, b. Russia, w. France and USA, *Birthday (l'Anniversaire)*, 1915, oil on cardboard, 80.6 x 99.7 cm, acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA, photograph © 1998 The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Joy Hester, 1920–60, Australia, No title (*Lovers; Woman in Lace-Trimmed Dress*), 1956, brush and ink on ink wash on watercolour on paper, 76.1 x 49.9 cm, gift of Mrs Robert Dulieu, 1981, collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

INVESTIGATING & DISCUSSING

- 1 Do you agree that in *Birthday* Chagall rejected the limits of naturalism to create an image that celebrates the joys of love? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 Compare *Self-portrait of the Artist with Her Daughter with Migrant Mother, Pea Pickers, Nipomo, California* (p. 259). What does each image communicate to you about the relationship between a mother and her child(ren), and how?
- 3 Find an artwork that communicates something to you about a human relationship.
 - a What sort of relationship is evident in this artwork?
 - b How has the artist communicated the nature of this relationship to the viewer?

Her Story in Art 2

INVESTIGATING & DISCUSSING

- 1 Investigate the work and career of a female artist of your choice.
 - a Briefly describe this artist's work, with reference to at least one example, placing it in the context of the period in which she worked.
 - b Did any of the factors outlined on this page help this artist overcome the barriers often faced by women artists in the past? Explain.
- 2 Do you think that any of the factors outlined on this page help female or male artists pursue a career in art today? Explain.
- 3 Based on your observation of art books and/or art collections, what evidence can you find of traditional views of art history excluding women.

Many women through the ages have clearly had the talent, commitment and drive to be artists. However, one or more of the following factors have often helped women overcome the barriers that in the past have limited their participation in the visual arts (p. 112).

Many artists, including Cassatt and Morisot have had families who could afford to educate them. The families of some artists, including Anguisciola and Sutherland, have often provided important moral support for their daughters to pursue careers as artists. This financial and moral support was particularly important for women during times when it was unusual for women to pursue any career, let alone a career in art.

Gentileschi and Kauffmann are among many women artists who gained access to training and opportunities partly because of having an artist father. This was a particularly important advantage to women when they were denied apprenticeships and entry to art schools. However, some women who were trained by their fathers, including Fontana, ended up devoting more time and energy to working for their father than developing their own careers.

Many women artists, such as Cossington Smith, have devoted their adult lives to art, rather than marriage and/or children. Those who have married and/or had a family, such as Preston, have generally had a husband who supported their careers.

Periods in history that are characterised by liberal attitudes to the education and role of women have tended to foster more women artists than those periods that have not. Anguisciola benefited from living in sixteenth-century Italy (Unit 5.12).

Partly because of the limitations imposed on women artists, they have often focused on subjects in their immediate environment. At times and in places when these subjects have been popular, women have been able to work on a more equal basis with their male colleagues. The focus in Impressionism on subjects drawn from everyday life allowed Morisot and Cassatt

to work on a relatively equal basis with their male colleagues.

Although many women have successfully pursued careers as artists, this was no guarantee of them having a place in Western art history. Like any history, Western art history is a constructed history. Traditionally it has focused on monumental achievements in architecture, painting and sculpture. While women have worked in these art forms, until recently most versions of Western art history have focused almost exclusively on the work of male artists.

Many art styles or periods have even been defined according to the work of the dominant male practitioners, with little or no regard to the contribution of women. Thus Neo-Classicism has often been characterised as heroic and severe. While these descriptions fit much of David's work, they are inappropriate to Kaufmann's.

The influential (male) critics of the 1950s who championed Abstract Expressionism, and many other writers since, ignored the contribution of women in any discussion of this movement. Traditional prejudices that link males and females with different types of art have also more readily linked male artists with the large-scale, physical paintings that are generally associated with Abstract Expressionism.

Partly because women's participation in monumental architecture, painting and sculpture has been limited in many periods, they have often expressed their creativity in other ways including water-colour painting, miniature painting, embroidery, crafts and interior decoration. Work in these art forms is not as permanent or monumental as oil painting, architecture or sculpture, and it has certainly not been accorded the same status in art history.

In recent decades new perspectives on Western art that recognise, value and record the work of women artists through the ages and in a range of media have been evident in many books and exhibitions. However, much of the work of women in the past has been lost to history forever.

Some Approaches to Art Making

The following terms are often used to describe different types of artworks.

Abstract art (see page 15).

Academic art (see page 110).

The term **classical** is used specifically to describe the art of ancient Greece and Rome. More generally the terms **classical** and **classicism** are used to describe a wide range of artworks influenced by ancient Greek or Roman art. These artworks are typically characterised by balanced and harmonious compositions, clearly defined forms, idealised beauty, and restrained emotion and movement. The rational order and approach that underlies classical art means it is often seen as being the opposite of Romantic art. Many classical artworks also feature subjects drawn from ancient Greek or Roman history or mythology. A strong revival of classical styles and subjects in the eighteenth century became known as Neo-Classicism. (For example *The Crossing of the Red Sea* in Unit 6.3 and *The Oath of Horatii* in Unit 7.4.)

In **Conceptualism** or **Conceptual art** the artist's idea is more important than the physical form of the artwork. Conceptual art embraces a wide variety of artworks and takes many different forms. Found objects or appropriated images or words are often used to convey the artist's ideas. Conceptual artworks commonly question the nature of art itself, or address contemporary ideological, political and social issues. (For example *Pataphysical Man* in Unit 12.11.)

In **Expressionism** or **Expressionist art**, personal feelings, responses and thoughts, rather than the objective representation of subject matter, are emphasised. Artists convey feelings, responses and thoughts in Expressionist images through the expressive use of the elements of art and art materials. There was a strong Expressionist movement in Europe in the early twentieth century (Units 10.1 to 10.3). The widespread revival of Expressionism in the 1980s was described as Neo-Expressionism. (For example *The Green*

Vineyard in Unit 9.8, *Three Bathers* in Unit 10.2 and *Blue Poles* in Unit 11.1.)

Because art is a form of communication, all artworks are expressive in some way. In the visual arts, however, the term expressive is most frequently used to describe the way the elements of art or art materials are used in an artwork to convey the artist's feelings, responses and thoughts. For example red colours can convey feelings of energy or heat, and horizontal lines can convey feelings of calm or stillness. The expressive use of the elements of art often involves artists distorting or exaggerating real appearances in some way for emotional impact. For example colours may be made more intense or lines may be made more angular.

When an artist's use of art materials is described as expressive it means that the presence and feeling of the artist is clearly evident in the artist's handling of art materials. This often involves direct and vigorous techniques such as roughly modelled form in a sculpture. (For example *Balzac* in Unit 9.9.)

In **Formalism** or **Formalist art** the formal qualities of an art object (such as colour, line, shape, form and composition) are considered more important than narrative content or symbolic or emotional meaning. (For example *Khurasan Gate Variation II* in Unit 11.5.)

Realism or **Realist art** (see page 15).

In **Romanticism** or **Romantic art** we find an emphasis on imagination and individual feeling. Romantic artworks tend to feature dramatic or emotive subjects such as sublime landscapes and scenes of heroism, disaster or tragedy. Romantic artists often emphasise the dramatic or emotional aspects of their subject. They often do this through dynamic, complex compositions that are full of movement and energy, strong contrasts of light and shade, rich colours and expressive handling of art materials. There was a strong Romantic movement in many countries in the early nineteenth century (Units 8.1 to 8.5). (For example *Lion Hunt* in Unit 8.2.)

INVESTIGATING & DISCUSSING

- 1 For each of the terms on this page, find an example of an artwork that can be described by that term. In point form explain why each term is an appropriate description for the artwork you have chosen.
- 2 Choose one of the approaches listed on this page. Look at a range of artworks that reflect this approach. Choose two artworks, each made at different times or places, that share this approach. What similarities and differences can you find in these works, and what reasons can you suggest for these?