

History of art

Not to be confused with the academic discipline of [art history](#).

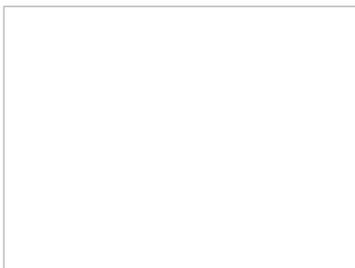


[The Creation of Adam](#) (1508–1512), by [Michelangelo](#), in the [Sistine Chapel](#)

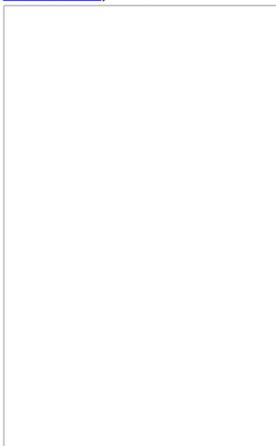
The **history of art** focuses on objects made by humans in visual form for [aesthetic](#) purposes. [Visual art can be classified in diverse ways](#), such as separating [fine arts](#) from [applied arts](#); inclusively focusing on human creativity; or focusing on different media such as [architecture](#), [sculpture](#), [painting](#), [film](#), [photography](#), and [graphic arts](#). In recent years, technological advances have led to [video art](#), [computer art](#), [Performance art](#), [animation](#), [television](#), and [videogames](#).

The history of art is often told as a chronology of [masterpieces](#) created during each [civilization](#). It can thus be framed as a story of [high culture](#), epitomized by the [Wonders of the World](#). On the other hand, [vernacular](#) art expressions can also be integrated into art historical narratives, referred to as [folk arts](#) or [craft](#). The more closely that an art historian engages with these latter forms of [low culture](#), the more likely it is that they will identify their work as examining [visual culture](#) or [material culture](#), or as contributing to fields related to art history, such as [anthropology](#) or [archaeology](#). In the latter cases art objects may be referred to as [archeological artifacts](#).

Prehistory



[Aurochs](#) on a cave painting in [Lascaux](#), France



[Venus of Willendorf](#), [Naturhistorisches](#)

[European art history](#)

- [Medieval](#)
- [Renaissance](#)
- [Mannerism](#)
- [Baroque](#)
- [Neoclassicism](#)
- [Romanticism](#)
- [Realism](#)
- [Modern](#)
- [Contemporary](#)

[History of art](#)

- [Prehistoric](#)
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- [Painting \(Western\)](#)

[Art history](#)

[Museum](#)

Main article: [Prehistoric art](#)

The oldest human art that has been found dates to the [Stone Age](#), when the first creative works were made from shell, stone, and paint. During the Paleolithic (25,000–8,000 BCE), humans practiced [hunting and gathering](#) and lived in [caves](#), where [cave painting](#) was developed.^[1] During the Neolithic period (6000–3000 BCE), the production of [handicrafts](#) commenced.

The earliest human artifacts showing evidence of workmanship with an artistic purpose are the subject of some debate. It is clear that such workmanship existed by 40,000 years ago in the [Upper Paleolithic](#) era, although it is quite possible that it began earlier. Engraved shells created by [homo erectus](#) dating as far back as 500,000 years ago have been found, although experts disagree on whether these engravings can be properly classified as 'art'.^[2]

Paleolithic

Main articles: [Paleolithic art](#) and [List of Stone Age art](#)



[Bison Licking Insect Bite](#), in carved [antler](#), Museum of Prehistory, [Les Eyzies-de-Tayac-Sireuil](#)

The [Paleolithic](#) had its first artistic manifestation in 25,000 BCE, reaching its peak in the [Magdalenian](#) period (±15,000–8,000 BCE). Surviving art from this period includes small carvings in stone or bone and [cave painting](#). The first traces of human-made objects appeared in southern [Africa](#), the [Western Mediterranean](#), [Central](#) and [Eastern Europe](#) ([Adriatic Sea](#)), [Siberia](#) ([Baikal Lake](#)), [India](#) and [Australia](#). These first traces are generally worked stone ([flint](#), [obsidian](#)), wood or [bone](#) tools. To [paint](#) in [red](#), [iron oxide](#) was used. Cave paintings have been found in the [Franco-Cantabrian region](#). There are pictures that are [abstract](#) as well as pictures that are [naturalistic](#). Animals were painted in the caves of [Altamira](#), [Trois Frères](#), [Chauvet](#) and [Lascaux](#). [Sculpture](#) is represented by the so-called [Venus figurines](#), feminine figures which may have been used in [fertility cults](#), such as the [Venus of Willendorf](#).^[3] There is a theory that these figures may have been made by women as expressions of their own body.^[4] Other representative works of this period are the *Man from* [Brno](#)^[5] and the [Venus of Brassempouy](#).^[6]

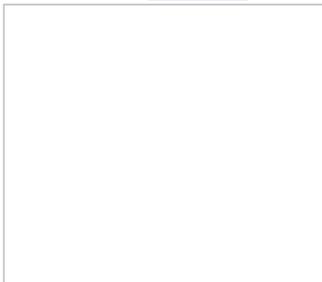
Mesolithic

Main article: [Mesolithic](#)

In Old World archaeology, Mesolithic ([Greek](#): μέσος, *mesos* "middle"; λίθος, *lithos* "stone") is the period between the [Upper Paleolithic](#) and the [Neolithic](#). The term [Epipaleolithic](#) is often used synonymously, especially for outside [northern Europe](#), and for the corresponding period in [the Levant](#) and [Caucasus](#). The Mesolithic has different time spans in different parts of [Eurasia](#). It refers to the final period of [hunter-gatherer](#) cultures in Europe and West Asia, between the end of the [Last Glacial Maximum](#) and the [Neolithic Revolution](#). In Europe it spans roughly 15,000 to 5,000 BP, in Southwest Asia (the [Epipalaeolithic Near East](#)) roughly 20,000 to 8,000 BP. The term is less used of areas further east, and not all beyond Eurasia and North Africa.

Neolithic

Main article: [Neolithic](#)



Dotted pottery pot, semi-mountain type; dating from 4700 to 4300 years; by the [Yangshao culture](#); [Gansu Provincial Museum](#) ([Lanzhou](#); China)

The Neolithic period began in about 8,000 BCE. The [rock art of the Iberian Mediterranean Basin](#)—dated between the Mesolithic and Neolithic eras—contained small, schematic paintings of human figures, with notable examples in [El Cogul](#), Valltorta, [Alpera](#) and Minateda.

Neolithic painting is similar to paintings found in northern [Africa](#) ([Atlas](#), [Sahara](#)) and in the area of modern Zimbabwe. Neolithic painting is often schematic, made with basic strokes (men in the form of a [cross](#) and women in a [triangular](#) shape). There are also cave paintings in [Pinturas River](#) in [Argentina](#), especially the [Cueva de las Manos](#). In [portable art](#), a style called [Cardium Pottery](#) was produced, decorated with imprints of [seashells](#). New materials were used in art, such as [amber](#), [crystal](#), and [jasper](#). In this period, the first traces of urban planning appeared, such as the remains in [Tell as-Sultan](#) ([Jericho](#)), [Jarmo](#) (Iraq) and [Çatalhöyük](#) ([Anatolia](#)).^[7] In South-Eastern Europe appeared many cultures, such as the [Cucuteni-Trypillia culture](#), from Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Another region with many cultures is China most notable being the [Yangshao culture](#) and the [Longshan culture](#).

Metal Age



[Stonehenge](#), a complex [megalith](#)

The last prehistoric phase is the Metal Age (or [Three-age system](#)), during which the use of [copper](#), [bronze](#) and [iron](#) transformed ancient societies. When humans could smelt metal and forge metal implements could make new tools, weapons, and art.

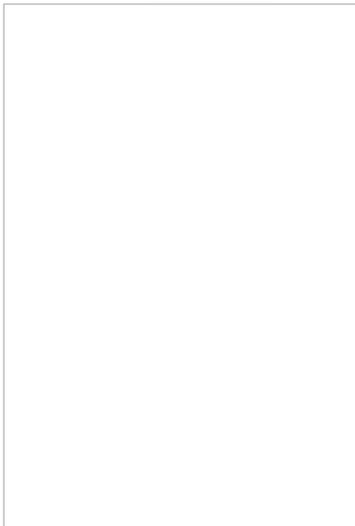
In the [Chalcolithic](#) (Copper Age) [megaliths](#) emerged. Examples include the [dolmen](#) and [menhir](#) and the [English cromlech](#), as can be seen in the complexes at [Newgrange](#) and [Stonehenge](#).^[8] In Spain the [Los Millares](#) culture was formed which was characterized by the [Beaker culture](#). In [Malta](#), the [temple complexes](#) of [Ħaġar Qim](#), [Mnajdra](#), [Tarxien](#) and [Ġgantija](#) were built. In the [Balearic Islands](#) notable megalithic cultures developed, with different types of monuments: the [naveta](#), a tomb shaped like a truncated [pyramid](#), with an elongated burial chamber; the [taula](#), two large stones, one put vertically and the other horizontally above each other; and the [talaïot](#), a tower with a covered chamber and a false [dome](#).^[9]

In the [Iron Age](#) the cultures of [Hallstatt](#) ([Austria](#)) and [La Tène](#) ([Switzerland](#)) emerged in Europe. The first was developed between the 7th and 5th century BCE by the [necropoleis](#) with tumular tombs and a wooden burial chamber in the form of a house, often accompanied by a four-wheeled cart. The pottery was [polychromic](#), with [geometric](#) decorations and applications of metallic ornaments. La Tène was developed between the 5th and 4th century BCE, and is more popularly known as early [Celtic art](#). It produced many iron objects such as [swords](#) and [spears](#), which have not survived well to the 2000s due to rust.

The [Bronze Age](#) refers to the period when bronze was the best material available. Bronze was used for highly decorated [shields](#), [fibulas](#), and other objects, with different stages of evolution of the style. Decoration was influenced by [Greek](#), [Etruscan](#) and [Scythian art](#).^[10]

Ancient art

Main article: [Ancient art](#)



[Diorite Statue I](#), patesi of

[Lagash](#) (2120 BCE), [Louvre](#)

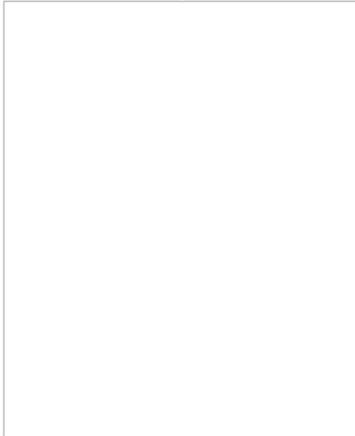
In the first period of recorded history, art coincided with [writing](#). The great civilizations of the [Near East: Egypt](#) and [Mesopotamia](#) arose. Globally, during this period the first great cities appeared near major rivers: the [Nile](#), [Tigris](#) and [Euphrates](#), [Indus](#) and [Yellow](#) Rivers.

One of the great advances of this period was writing, which was developed from the tradition of communication using pictures. The first form of writing were the [Jiahu symbols](#) from neolithic China, but the first true writing was [cuneiform script](#), which emerged in Mesopotamia c. 3500 BCE, written on [clay](#) tablets. It was based on [pictographic](#) and [ideographic](#) elements, while later Sumerians developed [syllables](#) for writing, reflecting the [phonology](#) and [syntax](#) of the [Sumerian language](#). In Egypt [hieroglyphic writing](#) was developed using pictures as well, appearing on art such as the [Narmer Palette](#) (3,100 BCE).

Ancient Near East

Main article: [Mesopotamian art](#)

See also: [Mesopotamian architecture](#)



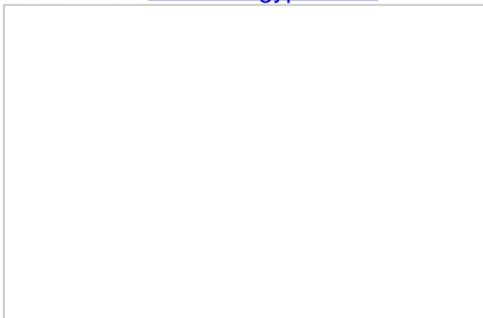
Detail from a stele of the [Code of Hammurabi](#)

[Mesopotamian art](#) was developed in the area between [Tigris](#) and [Euphrates](#) Rivers in modern day [Syria](#) and [Iraq](#), where since the 4th millennium BCE many different cultures existed such as [Sumer](#), [Akkad](#), [Amorite](#) and [Chaldea](#). [Mesopotamian architecture](#) was characterized by the use of [bricks](#), [lintels](#), and [cone mosaic](#). Notable are the [ziggurats](#), large [temples](#) in the form of [step pyramids](#). The tomb was a chamber covered with a false [dome](#), as in some examples found at [Ur](#). There were also [palaces](#) walled with a terrace in the form of a ziggurat, where gardens were an important feature. The [Hanging Gardens of Babylon](#) was one of the [Seven Wonders of the Ancient World](#)

[Relief](#) sculpture was developed in [wood](#) and [stone](#). Sculpture depicted religious, military, and hunting scenes, including both human and animal figures. In the [Sumerian](#) period, small statues of people were produced. These statues had an angular form and were produced from colored stone. The figures typically had bald head with hands folded on the chest. In the Akkadian period, statues depicted figures with long hair and beards, such as the [stele](#) of [Naram-Sin](#). In the Amorite period (or Neosumerian), statues represented kings from [Gudea](#) of [Lagash](#), with their mantle and a turban on their heads and their hands on their chests. During Babylonian rule, the stele of [Hammurabi](#) was important, as it depicted the great king Hammurabi above a written copy of the laws that he introduced. Assyrian sculpture is notable for its [anthropomorphism](#) of cattle and the [winged genie](#), which is depicted flying in many reliefs depicting war and hunting scenes, such as in the [Black Obelisk](#) of [Shalmaneser III](#).^[11]

Egypt

Main article: [Ancient Egyptian art](#)



[Pyramids](#) of [Giza](#)

One of the first great civilizations arose in [Egypt](#), which had elaborate and complex works of art produced by professional artists and craftspeople. Egypt's art was religious and symbolic. Given that the culture had a highly centralized power structure and hierarchy, a great deal of art was created to honour the [pharaoh](#), including great monuments. Egyptian art and culture emphasized the religious concept of immortality. Later Egyptian art includes [Coptic](#) and [Byzantine](#) art.

The [architecture](#) is characterized by monumental structures, built with large stone blocks, lintels, and solid [columns](#). Funerary monuments included [mastaba](#), tombs of rectangular form; [pyramids](#), which included step pyramids ([Saqqarah](#)) or smooth-sided pyramids ([Giza](#)); and the [hypogeum](#), underground tombs ([Valley of the Kings](#)). Other great buildings were the [temple](#), which tended to be monumental complexes preceded by an avenue of [sphinxes](#) and [obelisks](#). Temples used [pylons](#) and [trapezoid](#) walls with [hypaethros](#) and [hypostyle](#) halls and [shrines](#). The temples of [Karnak](#), [Luxor](#), [Philae](#) and [Edfu](#) are good examples. Another type of temple is the [rock temple](#), in the form of a [hypogeum](#), found in [Abu Simbel](#) and [Deir el-Bahari](#).

Painting of the Egyptian era used a juxtaposition of overlapping planes. The images were represented hierarchically, i.e., the Pharaoh is larger than the common subjects or enemies depicted at his side. Egyptians painted the outline of the head and limbs in profile, while the torso, hands, and eyes were painted from the front. [Applied arts](#) were developed in Egypt, in particular [woodwork](#) and [metalwork](#). There are superb examples such as [cedar](#) furniture [inlaid](#) with [ebony](#) and [ivory](#) which can be seen in the tombs at the [Egyptian Museum](#). Other examples include the pieces found in [Tutankhamun's](#) tomb, which are of great artistic value.^[12]

Greek and Etruscan



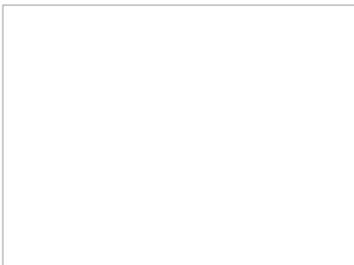
[Mask of Agamemnon](#), a gold funeral mask, dated 1550–1500 BCE

See also: [Cycladic art](#) and [Minoan art](#)

[Greek](#) and [Etruscan](#) artists built on the artistic foundations of Egypt, further developing the arts of sculpture, painting, architecture, and ceramics. Greek art started as smaller and simpler than Egyptian art, and the influence of Egyptian art on the Greeks started in the Cycladic islands between 3300–3200 BCE. [Cycladic](#) statues were simple, lacking facial features except for the nose.

Greek art eventually included life-sized statues, such as [Kouros](#) figures. The standing Kouros of Attica is typical of early Greek sculpture and dates from 600 BCE. From this early stage, the art of Greece moved into the [Archaic Period](#). Sculpture from this time period includes the characteristic [Archaic smile](#). This distinctive smile may have conveyed that the subject of the sculpture had been alive or that the subject had been blessed by the gods and was well.

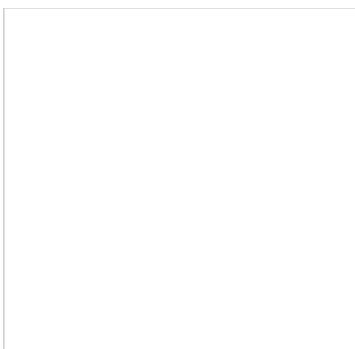
Etruscan



[Sarcophagus of the Spouses](#), [Cerveteri](#), 520 BCE, [Louvre](#)

[Etruscan art](#) was produced by the [Etruscan civilization](#) in [central Italy](#) between the 9th and 2nd centuries BC. From around 600 BC it was heavily influenced by [Greek art](#), which was imported by the Etruscans, but always retained distinct characteristics. Particularly strong in this tradition were figurative sculpture in terracotta (especially life-size on [sarcophagi](#) or temples), wall-painting and [metalworking](#) especially in bronze. Jewellery and [engraved gems](#) of high quality were produced.^[13]

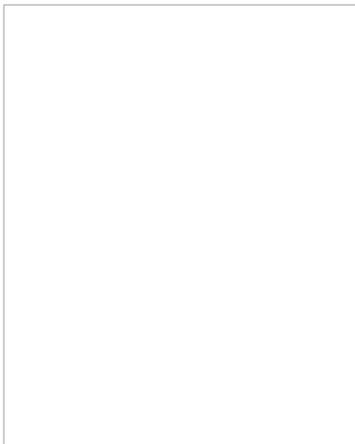
Dacian



Gold bracelet with horse heads from [Vad-Făgăraș, Brașov County](#) at Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.^{[14][15]}
See also: [Dacian bracelets](#)

[Dacian art](#) is the art associated with the peoples known as [Dacians](#) or *North Thracians*; The Dacians created an art style in which the influences of [Scythians](#) and the Greeks can be seen. They were highly skilled in gold and silver working and in pottery making. Pottery was white with red decorations in floral, geometric, and stylized animal motifs. Similar decorations were worked in metal, especially the figure of a horse, which was common on Dacian coins.^[16]

Pre-Roman Iberian



The [Lady of Elche](#), an iconic [sculpture](#) for the pre-Roman Iberian art; circa 450 BC; discovered in 1897 at L'Alcúdia; [limestone](#); National Archaeological Museum of Spain.

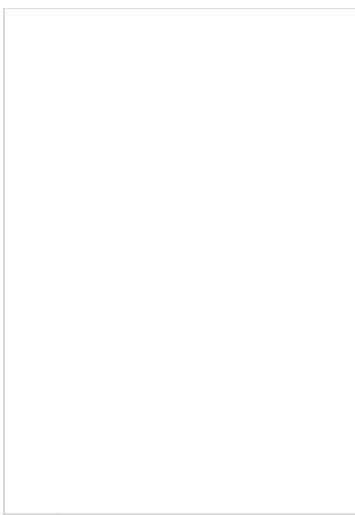
Main article: [Iberian schematic art](#)

See also: [Iberian sculpture](#)

Pre-Roman Iberian art refers to the styles developed by the [Iberians](#) from the [Bronze age](#) up to the [Roman conquest](#). For this reason it is sometimes described as "Iberian art".

Almost all extant works of Iberian sculpture visibly reflect [Greek](#) and [Phoenician](#) influences, and [Assyrian](#), [Hittite](#) and [Egyptian](#) influences from which those derived; yet they have their own unique character. Within this complex stylistic heritage, individual works can be placed within a spectrum of influences- some of more obvious Phoenician derivation, and some so similar to Greek works that they could have been directly imported from that region. Overall the degree of influence is correlated to the work's region of origin, and hence they are classified into groups on that basis.

Hittite



The [Ivriz relief](#), king [Warpalawas](#) (right) before the god [Tarhunzas](#)

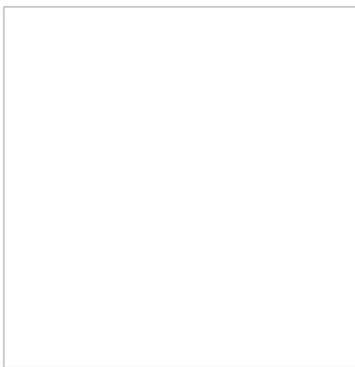
Main article: [Hittite art](#)

Hittite art was produced by the [Hittite civilization](#) in ancient [Anatolia](#), in modern-day [Turkey](#), and also stretching into [Syria](#) during the second millennium BCE from the nineteenth century up until the twelfth century BCE. This period falls under the Anatolian [Bronze Age](#). It is characterized by a long tradition of canonized images and motifs rearranged, while still being recognizable, by artists to convey meaning to a largely illiterate population.

“Owing to the limited vocabulary of figural types [and motifs], invention for the Hittite artist usually was a matter of combining and manipulating the units to form more complex compositions”^[17]

Many of these recurring images revolve around the depiction of [Hittite deities and ritual practices](#). There is also a prevalence of hunting scenes in Hittite relief and representational animal forms. Much of the art comes from settlements like [Alaca Höyük](#), or the Hittite capital of [Hattusa](#) near modern-day [Boğazkale](#). Scholars do have difficulty dating a large portion of Hittite art, citing the fact that there is a lack of inscription and much of the found material, especially from burial sites, was moved from their original locations and distributed among museums during the nineteenth century.

Bactrian



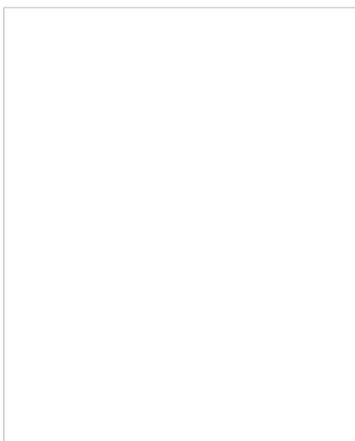
Seated female statue made of [steatite](#) (the head) and [chlorite](#) (the dress) in circa late 3rd–early 2nd millennium BCE, in the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)

See also: [Bactria–Margiana Archaeological Complex](#) and [History of Turkmenistan § Ancient history](#)

The Bactria–Margiana Archaeological Complex is the modern archaeological designation for a [Bronze Age civilization](#) of [Central Asia](#), dated to c. 2300–1700 BCE, located in present-day northern [Afghanistan](#), eastern [Turkmenistan](#), southern [Uzbekistan](#) and western [Tajikistan](#), centred on the upper [Amu Darya](#) (Oxus River). Its sites were discovered and named by the [Soviet](#) archaeologist [Viktor Sarianidi](#) (1976).

BMAC materials have been found in the [Indus Valley Civilisation](#), on the [Iranian Plateau](#), and in the [Persian Gulf](#).^[18] Finds within BMAC sites provide further evidence of trade and cultural contacts. They include an Elamite-type cylinder seal and a [Harappan](#) seal stamped with an elephant and Indus script found at Gonur-depe.^[19] The relationship between Altyn-Depe and the Indus Valley seems to have been particularly strong. Among the finds there were two [Harappan](#) seals and ivory objects. The Harappan settlement of [Shortugai](#) in Northern Afghanistan on the banks of the [Amu Darya](#) probably served as a trading station.^[20]

Celtic



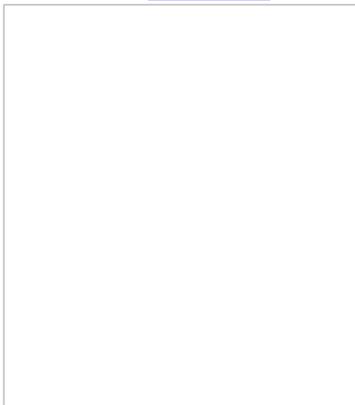
[Stone head from Mšecké Žehrovice](#), Czech Republic, wearing a [torc](#), late La Tène culture

Main article: [Celtic art](#)

Celtic art is associated with the peoples known as [Celts](#); those who spoke the [Celtic languages](#) in [Europe](#) from pre-history through to the modern period. It also refers to the art of ancient peoples whose language is uncertain, but have cultural and stylistic similarities with speakers of Celtic languages.

Rome

Main article: [Roman art](#)



Fresco from the [Villa of the Mysteries](#), [Pompeii](#), 80 BCE

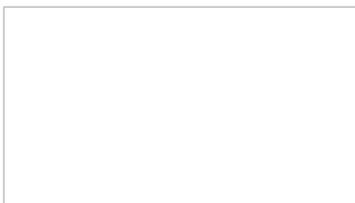
[Roman art](#) is sometimes viewed as derived from Greek precedents, but also has its own distinguishing features. Roman sculpture is often less idealized than the Greek precedents, being very realistic. Roman architecture often used [concrete](#), and features such as the round [arch](#) and [dome](#) were invented.

Roman artwork was influenced by the nation-state's interaction with other people's, such as ancient [Judea](#). A major monument is the Arch of Titus, which was erected by the Emperor Titus. Scenes of Romans looting the Jewish temple in Jerusalem are depicted in low-relief sculptures around the arch's perimeter.

[Ancient Roman pottery](#) was not a luxury product, but a vast production of "fine wares" in [terra sigillata](#) were decorated with reliefs that reflected the latest taste, and provided a large group in society with stylish objects at what was evidently an affordable price. [Roman coins](#) were an important means of propaganda, and have survived in enormous numbers.

European

Medieval



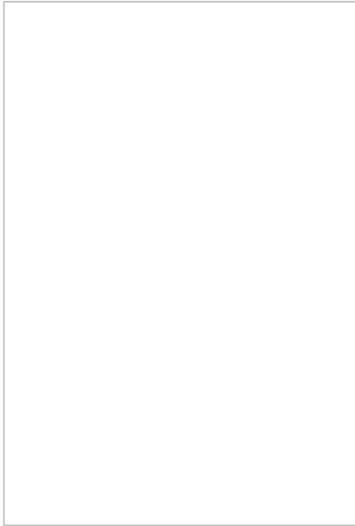
Empress Theodora and

attendants, an example of Byzantine mosaic from [Basilica of San Vitale \(Ravenna, Italy\)](#)

With the decline of the [Roman Empire](#), the [Medieval era](#) began, lasting for a millennium. [Early Christian art](#) begins the period, followed by [Byzantine art](#), [Anglo-Saxon art](#), [Viking art](#), [Ottonian art](#), [Romanesque art](#) and [Gothic art](#), with [Islamic art](#) dominating the eastern Mediterranean.

In Byzantine and [Gothic](#) art of the [Middle Ages](#), the dominance of the church resulted in a large amount of religious art. There was extensive use of gold in paintings, which presented figures in simplified forms.

Renaissance and Baroque



[Leonardo da Vinci](#), [Mona Lisa](#),
c. 1503–06, perhaps continuing
until c. 1517, oil on poplar
panel, Louvre

Main articles: [Renaissance art](#) and [Baroque art](#)

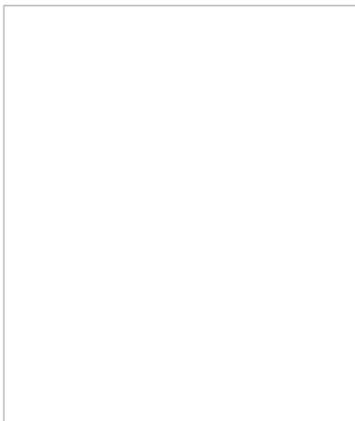
The [Renaissance](#) is the return to a valuation of the material world, and this paradigm shift is reflected in art forms, which show the corporeality of the human body, and the three-dimensional reality of [landscapes](#). Art historians often [periodize](#) Renaissance art by century, especially with [Italian art](#). [Italian Renaissance](#) and [Baroque art](#) is traditionally referred to by centuries: [trecento](#) for the fourteenth century, [quattrocento](#) for the fifteenth, [cinquecento](#) for the sixteenth, and [seicento](#) for the seventeenth.

Neoclassicalism to Realism

The 18th and 19th centuries included [Neoclassicism](#), [Romanticism](#), and [Realism](#) in art.

Middle Eastern

Pre-Islamic Arabia



Decorated capital of a pillar
from the royal palace of
[Shabwa](#); stratigraphic context:
first half of the 3rd century BC.

Main article: [Pre-Islamic Arabia § Art](#)

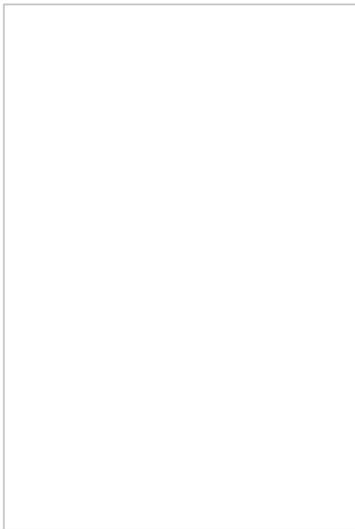
The art of [Pre-Islamic Arabia](#) is related to that of neighbouring cultures. Pre-Islamic [Yemen](#) produced stylized [alabaster](#) heads of great aesthetic and historic charm. Most of the pre-Islamic sculptures are made of [alabaster](#).

[Archaeology](#) has revealed some early settled civilizations in [Saudi Arabia](#): the [Dilmun](#) civilization on the east of the Arabian Peninsula, [Thamud](#) north of the [Hejaz](#), and [Kindah](#) kingdom and [Al-Magar](#) civilization in the central of Arabian Peninsula. The earliest known events in Arabian history are migrations from the peninsula into neighbouring areas.^[21] In antiquity, the role of [South Arabian](#) societies such as Saba ([Sheba](#)) in the production and trade of aromatics not only brought such kingdoms wealth but also tied the [Arabian peninsula](#) into trade networks, resulting in far-ranging artistic influences.

It seems probable that before around 4000 BCE the Arabian climate was somewhat wetter than today, benefitting from a monsoon system that has since moved south. During the late fourth millennium BCE permanent settlements began to appear, and inhabitants adjusted to the emerging dryer conditions. In south-west Arabia (modern [Yemen](#)) a moister climate supported several kingdoms during the second and first millennia BCE. The most famous of these is [Sheba](#), the kingdom of the biblical [Queen of Sheba](#). These societies used a combination of trade in spices and the natural resources of the region, including aromatics such as frankincense and myrrh, to build wealthy kingdoms. [Mārib](#), the [Sabaeen](#) capital, was well positioned to tap into Mediterranean as well as Near Eastern trade, and in kingdoms to the east, in what is today [Oman](#), trading links with [Mesopotamia](#), [Persia](#) and even [India](#) were possible. The area was never a part of the [Assyrian](#) or [Persian empires](#), and even [Babylonian](#) control of north-west Arabia seems to have been relatively short-lived. Later Roman attempts to control the region's lucrative trade foundered. This impenetrability to foreign armies doubtless augmented ancient rulers' bargaining power in the spice and incense trade.

Although subject to external influences, south Arabia retained characteristics particular to itself. The human figure is typically based on strong, square shapes, the fine modeling of detail contrasting with a stylized simplicity of form.

Islamic



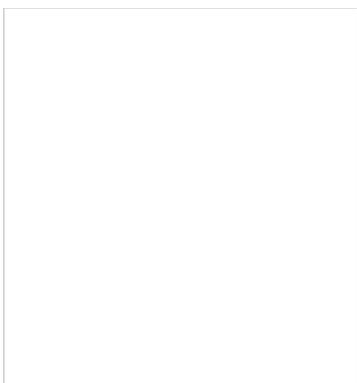
An entrance in the [Great Mosque of Herat](#) ([Herat](#), Afghanistan)

See also: [Arabesque](#), [Islamic geometric patterns](#), [Islamic world contributions to Medieval Europe](#), and [Chinese influences on Islamic pottery](#)

Some branches of Islam [forbid depictions of people](#) and other sentient beings, as they may be misused as idols. Religious ideas are thus often represented through geometric designs and [calligraphy](#). However, there are many Islamic paintings which display religious themes and scenes of stories common among the three Abrahamic [monotheistic](#) faiths of [Islam](#), [Christianity](#), and [Judaism](#).

The influence of [Chinese ceramics](#) has to be viewed in the broader context of the considerable importance of Chinese culture on [Islamic arts](#) in general.^[22] The [İznik pottery](#) (named after [İznik](#), a city from [Turkey](#)) is one of the best well-known types of Islamic pottery. Its famous combination between blue and white is a result of that [Ottoman](#) court in [Istanbul](#) who greatly valued [Chinese blue-and-white porcelain](#).

Siberian-Eskimo



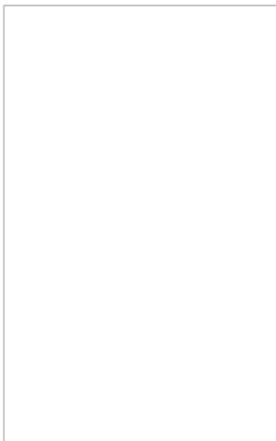
[Siberian Yupik](#) mask from [Musée du Quai Branly](#)

See also: [Siberian Yupik](#); [Indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East](#); [Russian Far East](#); and [Indigenous peoples of Siberia](#)

The art of the Eskimo people from [Siberia](#) is in the same style as the [Inuit art](#) from [Alaska](#) and north [Canada](#). This is because the Native Americans traveled through [Siberia](#) to [Alaska](#), and later to the rest of the Americas .

Including the [Russian Far East](#), the population of [Siberia](#) numbers just above 40 million people. As a result of the 17th-to-19th-century [Russian conquest of Siberia](#) and the subsequent [population movements during the Soviet era](#), the [demographics of Siberia](#) today is dominated by native speakers of [Russian](#). There remain a considerable number of [indigenous](#) groups, between them accounting for below 10% of total Siberian population, which are also genetically related to [Indigenous Peoples of the Americas](#).

Americas



[Olmec](#), jade *Kunz Axe*, first described by [George Kunz](#) in 1890.

Although shaped like an axe head, with an edge along the bottom, it was likely used in ritual settings. At a height of 28 cm (11 in), it is one of the largest jade objects ever found in Mesoamerica, [American Museum of Natural History](#)

Main articles: [Painting in the Americas before Colonization](#), [Pre-Columbian art](#), and [Native American art](#)

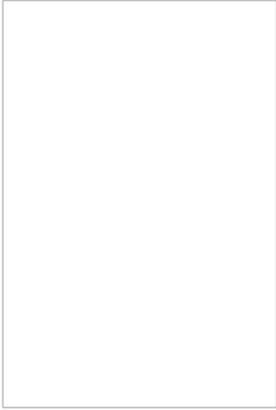
The history of art in the Americas begins in [pre-Columbian](#) times with [Indigenous cultures](#). Art historians have focused particularly closely on [Mesoamerica](#) during this early era, because a series of stratified cultures arose there that erected grand architecture and produced [objects of fine workmanship](#) that are comparable to the arts of Western Europe.

Preclassic

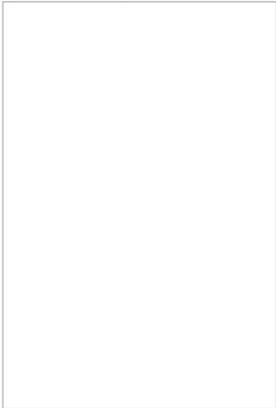
The art-making tradition of Mesoamerican people begins with the [Olmec](#) around 1400 BCE, during the [Preclassic era](#). These people are best known for making [colossal heads](#) but also carved [jade](#), erected monumental architecture, made small-scale sculpture, and designed mosaic floors. Two of the most well-studied sites artistically are [San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán](#) and [La Venta](#). After the Olmec culture declined, the [Maya civilization](#) became prominent in the region. Sometimes a transitional [Epi-](#)

[Olmec](#) period is described, which is a hybrid of Olmec and Maya. A particularly well-studied Epi-Olmec site is [La Mojarra](#), which includes hieroglyphic carvings that have been partially deciphered.

Classic



Golden knife for ceremonies, the Valley of the [Cauca river](#), [Colombia](#), 2nd century, [Gold Museum, Bogotá](#) (Colombia)



[Zapotec](#) mosaic mask that represents a Bat god, made of 25 pieces of jade, with yellow eyes made of shell. It was found in a tomb at [Monte Alban](#)

By the late pre-Classic era, beginning around 400 BCE, the Olmec culture had declined but both Central Mexican and Maya peoples were thriving. Throughout much of the Classic period in Central Mexico, the city of [Teotihuacan](#) was thriving, as were [Xochicalco](#) and [El Tajin](#). These sites boasted grand sculpture and architecture. Other Central Mexican peoples included the [Mixtecs](#), the [Zapotecs](#), and people in the [Valley of Oaxaca](#). [Maya art](#) was at its height during the “Classic” period—a name that mirrors that of [Classical European antiquity](#)—and which began around 200 CE. Major Maya sites from this era include [Copan](#), where numerous stelae were carved, and [Quirigua](#) where the largest stelae of Mesoamerica are located along with [zoomorphic](#) altars. A complex [writing system](#) was developed, and [Maya illuminated manuscripts](#) were produced in large numbers on paper made from [tree bark](#). Many sites “[collapsed](#)” around 1000 CE.

Postclassic

At the time of the [Spanish conquest of Yucatán](#) during the 16th and 17th centuries, the Maya were still powerful, but many communities were paying tribute to [Aztec society](#). The latter culture was thriving, and it included [arts](#) such as sculpture, painting, and feather mosaics. Perhaps the most well-known work of Aztec art is the [calendar stone](#), which became a national symbol of the state of [Mexico](#). During the [Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire](#), many of these artistic objects were sent to Europe, where they were placed in [cabinets of curiosities](#), and later redistributed to Western art museums. The Aztec empire was based in the city of [Tenochtitlan](#) which was largely destroyed during the colonial era. What remains of it was buried beneath [Mexico City](#). A few buildings, such as the foundation of the [Templo Mayor](#) have since been unearthed by archaeologists, but they are in poor condition.

Art in the Americas

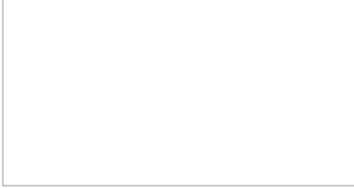
Art in the Americas since the conquest is characterized by a mixture of indigenous and foreign traditions, including those of

European, African, and Asian settlers. Numerous indigenous traditions thrived after the conquest. For example, the [Plains Indians](#) created [quillwork](#), [beadwork](#), [winter counts](#), [ledger art](#), and [tipis](#) in the pre-reservation era, and afterwards became assimilated into the world of Modern and Contemporary art through institutions such as the [Santa Fe Indian School](#) which encouraged students to develop a unique Native American style. Many paintings from that school, now called the Studio Style, were exhibited at the [Philbrook Museum of Art](#) during its Indian annual held from 1946 to 1979.

Central Mexico, Gulf Coast and Oaxaca

See also: [Tlatilco culture](#) and [Olmecs § Art](#)

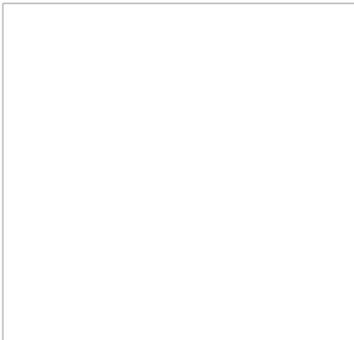
Mayan



[El Castillo](#) (pyramid of [Kukulcán](#)) in [Chichén Itzá](#)
Main article: [Ancient Maya art](#)

Ancient Maya art refers to the material arts of the [Maya civilization](#), an eastern and south-eastern [Mesoamerican](#) culture that took shape in the course of the later [Preclassic Period](#) (500 BCE to 200 CE). Its greatest artistic flowering occurred during the seven centuries of the Classic Period (c. 200 to 900 CE). Ancient Maya art then went through an extended Post-Classic phase before the upheavals of the sixteenth century destroyed courtly culture and put an end to the Mayan artistic tradition. Many regional styles existed, not always coinciding with the changing boundaries of Maya polities. [Olmecs](#), [Teotihuacan](#) and [Toltecs](#) have all influenced Maya art. Traditional art forms have mainly survived in weaving and the design of peasant houses.

Costa Rica and Panama



Pectoral from Panama, made of [gold](#), circa 400-900, [Cleveland Museum of Art](#) ([Cleveland, Ohio](#), USA)

Long considered a backwater of culture and aesthetic expression, Central America's dynamic societies are now recognized as robust and innovative contributors to the arts of ancient Americas. The people of pre-Columbian [Nicaragua](#), [Costa Rica](#) and [Panama](#) developed their own distinctive styles in spite of the region being a crossroads for millennia. Its peoples were not subsumed by outside influences but instead created, adopted and adapted all manner of ideas and technologies to suit their needs and temperaments. The region's idiosyncratic cultural traditions, religious beliefs and sociopolitical systems are reflected in unique artworks. A fundamental spiritual tenet was shamanism, the central principle of which decreed that in a trance state, transformed into one's spirit companion form, a person could enter the supernatural realm and garner special power to affect worldly affairs. Central American artists devised ingenious ways to portray this transformation by merging into one figure human and animal characteristics; the [jaguar](#), [serpent](#) and avian report (falcon, eagle or vulture) were the main spirit forms.

Colombia

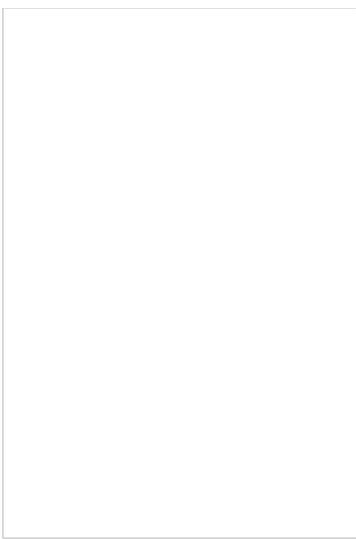


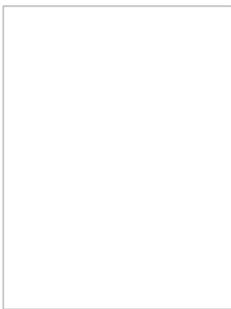
Figure of a deity from [San Agustín Archaeological Park](#)
Further information: [Muisca art](#)

[Gold](#) — the perpetually brilliant metal of status, wealth and power — inspired the Spanish to explore the globe and was an essential accoutrement of prestige, authority and religious ideology among the people of [Central America](#) and [Colombia](#).

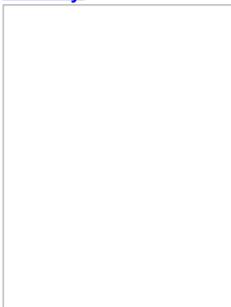
Andean regions

See also: [Chavín culture § Art](#), [Moche culture § Material culture](#), [Sican culture § Art and ideology](#), [Tiwanaku § Structures](#), and [Inca empire § Arts and technology](#)

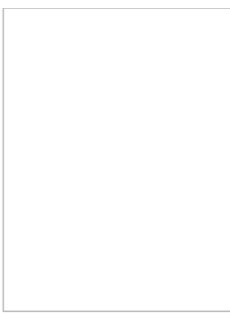
Amazonia & the Caraibbes



Burial urn, [Marajoara culture](#),
[American Museum of Natural History](#)



Large funerary vessel from
[Marajo island](#) (Brazil), made in
the Joanes style, from the
Marajoara phase



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Marajoara pottery



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Marajoara bowl

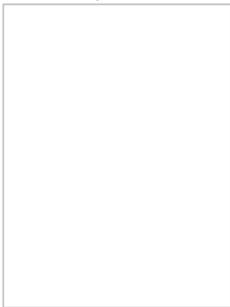
United States, Canada and Greenland

Main articles: [Ceramics of indigenous peoples of the Americas](#), [Native American jewelry](#), and [Native American pottery](#)



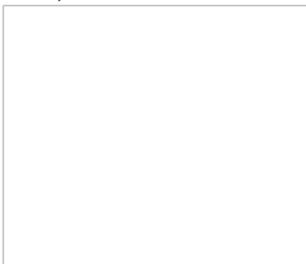
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Carved [mica](#) hand, Hopewell Mounds, 100 BCE - 400 CE



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[Haida](#) totem pole, Thunderbird Park, British Columbia



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Seed jar by [Hopi](#) artist [Nampeyo](#) c. 1905

Inuit

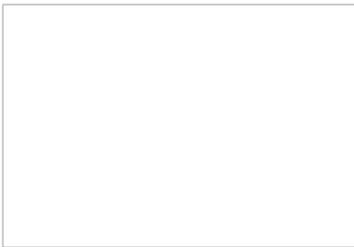


Mask with seal or sea otter spirit; made by the [Yupik Eskimo people](#), late 19th century; wood, paint, gut cord, & feathers; [Dallas Museum of Art](#) (Texas, USA)

Main article: [Inuit art](#)

Inuit art refers to [artwork](#) produced by [Inuit](#) people, that is, the people of the [Arctic](#) previously known as [Eskimos](#), a term that is now often considered offensive outside [Alaska](#). Historically, their preferred medium was [walrus ivory](#), but since the establishment of southern markets for Inuit art in 1945, [prints](#) and figurative works carved in relatively soft stone such as [soapstone](#), [serpentine](#), or [argillite](#) have also become popular.

Asian art



[The Great Wave off Kanagawa](#)

by [Hokusai](#)

Main article: [Eastern art history](#)

[Eastern civilization](#) broadly includes [Asia](#), and it also includes a complex tradition of art making. One approach to [Eastern art history](#) divides the field by nation, with foci on [Indian art](#), [Chinese art](#), and [Japanese art](#). Due to the size of the continent, the distinction between Eastern Asia and Southern Asia in the context of arts can be clearly seen. In most of Asia, pottery was a prevalent form of art. The pottery is often decorated with geometric patterns or abstract representations of animals, people or plants. Another very widespread form of art was, and is, sculpture.

Central Asia



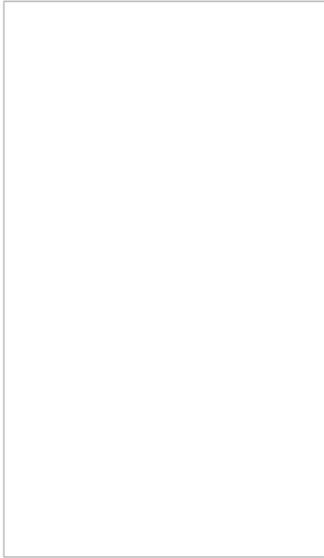
Ceremonial hanging (suzani); late 1700s; cotton; 92 x 63¹/₄ in.; [Indianapolis Museum of Art](#) (USA)

Main articles: [Central Asia § Arts](#), and [Scythian art](#)

Superb samples of [Steppes art](#) – mostly golden jewellery and trappings for horse – are found over vast expanses of land stretching from [Hungary](#) to [Mongolia](#). Dating from the period between the 7th and 3rd centuries BC, the objects are usually diminutive, as may be expected from nomadic people always on the move. Art of the steppes is primarily an [animal art](#), i.e., combat scenes involving several animals (real or imaginary) or single animal figures (such as golden stags) predominate. The best known of the various peoples involved are the [Scythians](#), at the European end of the steppe, who were especially likely to bury gold items.

Among the most famous finds was made in 1947, when the Soviet archaeologist [Sergei Rudenko](#) discovered a royal burial at [Pazyryk, Altay Mountains](#), which featured – among many other important objects – the most ancient extant [pile rug](#), probably made in Persia. Unusually for prehistoric burials, those in the northern parts of the area may preserve organic materials such as wood and textiles that normally would decay. Steppes people both gave and took influences from neighbouring cultures from Europe to China, and later Scythian pieces are heavily influenced by ancient Greek style, and probably often made by Greeks in Scythia.

Indian



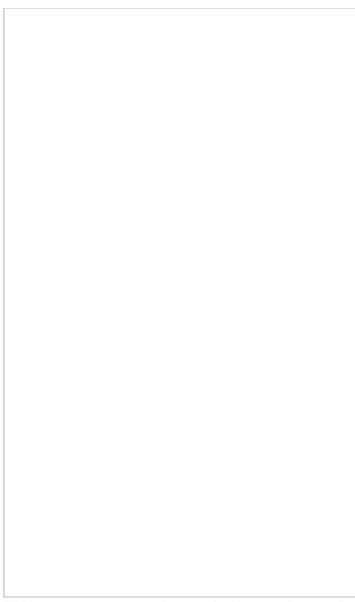
Stele; second half of the 11th century; height: 92.7 cm (36½ in.); [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) (New York City)

Main article: [Indian art](#)

The [Indus Valley Civilisation](#) made anthropomorphic figures. Most famous are the [Dancing Girl](#) and the [Priest-King](#). This civilisation made also many [clay](#) pots, most of them decorated with geometric patterns. They made seals decorated with animals, anthropomorphic figures and [their script](#). The Indus script (also known as the Harappan script) is a corpus of symbols produced by the [Indus Valley Civilization](#) during the [Kot Diji](#) and [Mature Harappan](#) periods between 3500 and 1900 BCE. Most inscriptions containing these symbols are extremely short, making it difficult to judge whether or not these symbols constituted a [script](#) used to record a language, or even symbolise a [writing system](#).^[23] In spite of many attempts,^[24] the "script" has not yet been deciphered, but efforts are ongoing. There is no known [bilingual inscription](#) to help decipher the script, nor does the script show any significant changes over time. However, some of the syntax (if that is what it may be termed) varies depending upon location.^[23]

Early [Buddhists](#) in India developed symbols related to [Buddha](#). Bhutanese painted "[thangkas](#)" that shows Buddhist iconography. The major survivals of Buddhist art begin in the period after the Mauryans, from which good quantities of sculpture survives from some key sites such as [Sanchi](#), [Bharhut](#) and [Amaravati](#), some of which remain *in situ*, with others in museums in India or around the world. Stupas were surrounded by ceremonial fences with four profusely carved [toranas](#) or ornamental gateways facing the cardinal directions. These are in stone, though clearly adopting forms developed in wood. They and the walls of the stupa itself can be heavily decorated with reliefs, mostly illustrating the lives of the Buddha. Gradually life-size figures were sculpted, initially in deep relief, but then free-standing.^[25] [Mathura](#) was the most important centre in this development, which applied to Hindu and Jain art as well as Buddhist.^[26] The facades and interiors of rock-cut [chaitya](#) prayer halls and monastic [viharas](#) have survived better than similar free-standing structures elsewhere, which were for long mostly in wood. The caves at [Ajanta](#), [Karle](#), [Bhaja](#) and elsewhere contain early sculpture, often outnumbered by later works such as iconic figures of the Buddha and [bodhisattvas](#), which are not found before 100 CE at the least.

Bhutanese

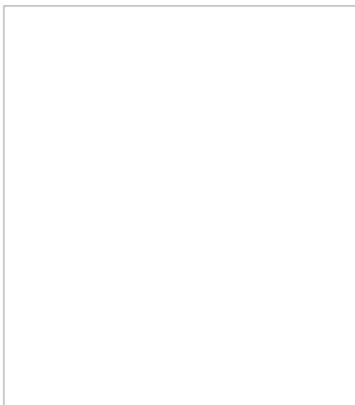


Bhutanese painted [thangka](#) of [Padmasambhava](#), late 19th century, Do Khachu Gonpa, [Chukha, Bhutan](#)

[Bhutanese art](#) is similar to the [art of Tibet](#). Both are based upon [Vajrayana Buddhism](#), with its pantheon of divine beings.

The major orders of Buddhism in Bhutan are [Drukpa Kagyu](#) and [Nyingma](#). The former is a branch of the [Kagyu School](#) and is known for paintings documenting the lineage of Buddhist masters and the 70 [Je Khenpo](#) (leaders of the Bhutanese monastic establishment). The Nyingma order is known for images of [Padmasambhava](#), who is credited with introducing Buddhism into Bhutan in the 7th century. According to legend, Padmasambhava hid sacred treasures for future Buddhist masters, especially [Pema Lingpa](#), to find. The [treasure finders](#) (*tertön*) are also frequent subjects of Nyingma art.

Tibetan & Nepalese



Travelling shrine; 17th-18th century; copper and silver, partly gilded; [Rietberg Museum \(Zürich, Switzerland\)](#)

For more than a thousand years, [Tibetan artists](#) have played a key role in the cultural life of [Tibet](#). From designs for painted furniture to elaborate murals in religious buildings, their efforts have permeated virtually every facet of life on the [Tibetan plateau](#). The vast majority of surviving artworks created before the mid-20th century are dedicated to the depiction of religious subjects, with the main forms being [thangka](#), [distemper](#) paintings on cloth, [Tibetan Buddhist wall paintings](#), and small statues in bronze, or large ones in clay, [stucco](#) or wood. They were commissioned by religious establishments or by pious individuals for use within the practice of [Tibetan Buddhism](#) and were manufactured in large workshops by monks and lay artists, who are mostly unknown.

The art of Tibet may be studied in terms of influences which have contributed to it over the centuries, from other [Chinese](#), [Nepalese](#), [Indian](#), and [sacred](#) styles.

Many bronzes in Tibet that suggest [Pala](#) influence, are thought to have been either crafted by Indian sculptors or brought from India.^[27]

Chinese

Main article: [Chinese art](#)

See also: [Chinese influences on Islamic pottery](#) and [Chinese Buddhist sculpture](#)

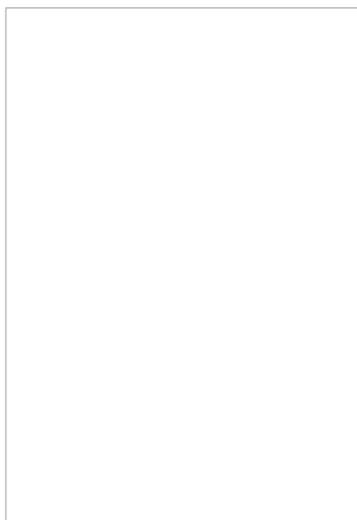


[Wang Xizhi](#) watching geese; by [Qian Xuan](#); 1235-before 1307; handscroll (ink, color and gold on paper); 9¹/₈ x 36¹/₂ in.; [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) (New York City)

In Eastern Asia, painting was derived from the practice of calligraphy, and portraits and landscapes were painted on silk cloth. Most of the paintings represent landscapes or portraits. The most spectacular sculptures are the [ritual bronzes](#) and the bronze sculptures from [Sanxingdui](#). A very well-known example of Chinese art is the [Terracotta Army](#), depicting the armies of [Qin Shi Huang](#), the first Emperor of [China](#). It is a form of [funerary art](#) buried with the emperor in 210–209 BCE whose purpose was to protect the emperor in his afterlife.

Chinese art is one of the oldest continuous traditional arts in the world, and is marked by an unusual degree of continuity within, and consciousness of, that tradition, lacking an equivalent to the Western collapse and gradual recovery of classical styles. The media that have usually been classified in the West since the [Renaissance](#) as the [decorative arts](#) are extremely important in Chinese art, and much of the finest work was produced in large workshops or factories by essentially unknown artists, especially in [Chinese ceramics](#).

Japanese



[Three Beauties of the Present Day](#) (japanese: [三才図会](#)); by [Kitagawa Utamaro](#); circa 1793; height: 3.87 cm (15.23 in), width: 2.62 cm (10.31 in); [Toledo Museum of Art](#) ([Toledo, Ohio](#), USA)

[Japanese art](#) covers a wide range of art styles and media, including [ancient pottery](#), [sculpture](#), [ink painting](#) and [calligraphy](#) on silk and paper, [ukiyo-e](#) paintings and [woodblock prints](#), ceramics, [origami](#), and more recently [manga](#)—modern Japanese [cartooning](#) and comics—along with a myriad of other types. It has a long history, ranging from the beginnings of human habitation in Japan, sometime in the 10th millennium BCE, to the present.

The first settlers of Japan, the [Jōmon](#) people (c. 11000 – c. 300 BCE). They crafted [lavishly decorated pottery storage vessels](#), clay figurines called [dogū](#). Japan has been subject to sudden invasions of new ideas followed by long periods of minimal contact with the outside world. Over time the Japanese developed the ability to absorb, imitate, and finally assimilate those elements of foreign culture that complemented their aesthetic preferences. The earliest complex art in Japan was produced in the 7th and 8th centuries in connection with [Buddhism](#). In the 9th century, as the Japanese began to turn away from China and develop indigenous forms of expression, the secular arts became increasingly important; until the late 15th century, both

religious and secular arts flourished. After the [Ōnin War](#) (1467–1477), Japan entered a period of political, social, and economic disruption that lasted for over a century. In the state that emerged under the leadership of the [Tokugawa shogunate](#), organized religion played a much less important role in people's lives, and the arts that survived were primarily secular.

Korean



[Dragon-shaped Celadon Ewer](#)

[Korean arts](#) include traditions in calligraphy, music, painting and pottery, often marked by the use of natural forms, surface decoration and bold colors or sounds.

The earliest examples of Korean art consist of [stone age](#) works dating from 3000 BCE. These mainly consist of [votive sculptures](#) and more recently, [petroglyphs](#), which were rediscovered.

This early period was followed by the art styles of various Korean kingdoms and dynasties. Korean artists sometimes modified [Chinese traditions](#) with a native preference for simple elegance, spontaneity, and an appreciation for purity of nature.

The [Goryeo](#) Dynasty (918–1392) was one of the most prolific periods for a wide range of disciplines, especially pottery.

The Korean art market is concentrated in the [Insadong](#) district of [Seoul](#) where over 50 small galleries exhibit and occasional fine arts auctions. Galleries are cooperatively run, small and often with curated and finely designed exhibits. In every town there are smaller regional galleries, with local artists showing in traditional and contemporary media. Art galleries usually have a mix of media. Attempts at bringing Western conceptual art into the foreground have usually had their best success outside of Korea in New York, San Francisco, London and Paris.

Vietnamese



[Pagoda of the Celestial Lady](#)
([Vietnamese](#): *Chùa Thiên Mụ*; also called *Linh Mụ Pagoda*) in [Huế](#), built in 1601
Main article: [Vietnamese art](#)

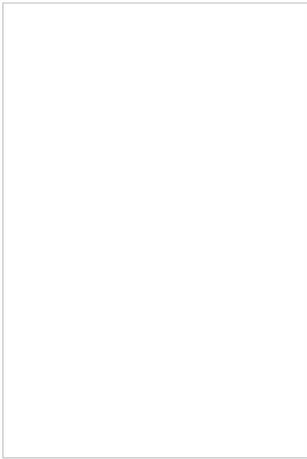
Vietnamese art has a long and rich history, the earliest examples of which date back as far as the [Stone Age](#) around 8,000 [BCE](#).

With the millennium of [Chinese domination](#) starting in the 2nd century BCE, Vietnamese art undoubtedly absorbed many Chinese influences, which would continue even following independence from China in the 10th century CE. However, Vietnamese art has always retained many distinctively Vietnamese characteristics.

By the 19th century, the influence of [French art](#) took hold in Vietnam, having a large hand in the birth of modern Vietnamese

art.

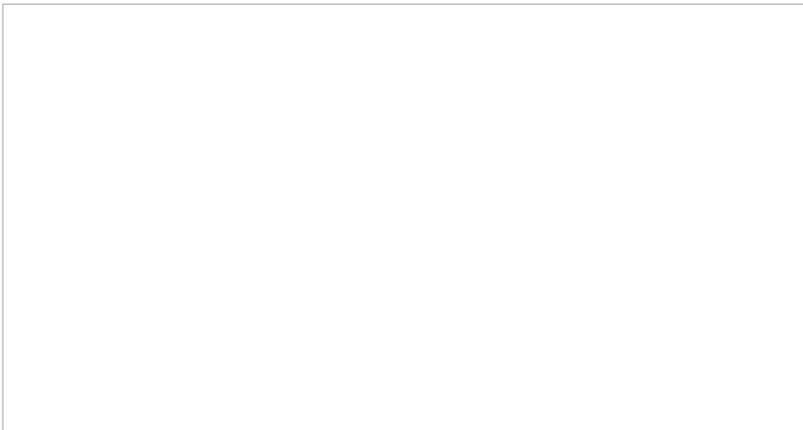
Thai



Head of [Buddha](#) from the second half of 14th century (Sukhothai); leaded bronze, traces of gilding; 43.3 cm (17 in); [Walters Art Museum \(Baltimore, United States\)](#)
Main article: [Thai art](#)

Traditional Thai art is primarily composed of [Buddhist art](#) and scenes from the Indian epics. Traditional Thai [sculpture](#) almost exclusively depicts [images of the Buddha](#), being very similar with the other styles from [Southeast Asia](#), such as [Khmer](#). Traditional Thai [paintings](#) usually consist of book illustrations, and painted ornamentation of buildings such as [palaces](#) and [temples](#). Over time, Thai art was influenced by the other Asian styles, most by [Indian](#) and [Khmer](#).

Cambodian/Khmer



Lintel from the Angkor period; circa 900 AD; [sandstone](#); [Tokyo National Museum](#) (Japan)
Main article: [Cambodian art](#)
See also: [Khmer shadow theatre](#)

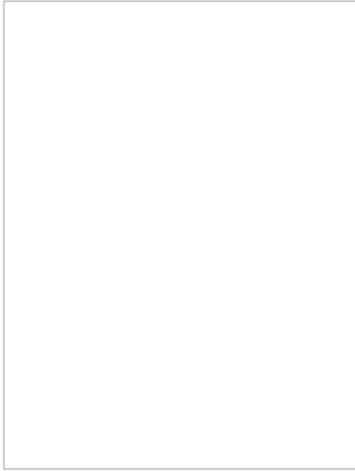
The history of Cambodian art stretches back centuries to ancient times, but the most famous period is undoubtedly the Khmer art of the [Khmer Empire](#) (802–1431), especially in the area around [Angkor](#) and the mainly 12th-century temple-complex of [Angkor Wat](#), initially [Hindu](#) and subsequently [Buddhist](#). After the collapse of the empire these and other sites were abandoned and overgrown, allowing much of the era's stone carving and architecture to survive to the present day. Traditional Cambodian arts and crafts include [textiles](#), non-textile [weaving](#), [silversmithing](#), [stone carving](#), [lacquerware](#), [ceramics](#), [wat murals](#), and [kite](#)-making.

Beginning in the mid-20th century, a tradition of modern art began in Cambodia, though in the later 20th century both traditional and modern arts declined for several reasons, including the killing of artists by the [Khmer Rouge](#). The country has experienced a recent artistic revival due to increased support from governments, NGOs, and foreign tourists.

In pre-colonial Cambodia, art and crafts were generally produced either by rural non-specialists for practical use or by skilled artists producing works for the Royal Palace. In modern Cambodia, many artistic traditions entered a period of decline or even ceased to be practiced, but the country has experienced a recent artistic revival as the tourist market has increased and governments and NGOs have contributed to the preservation of Cambodian culture.

Indonesian

Main article: [Indonesian art](#)

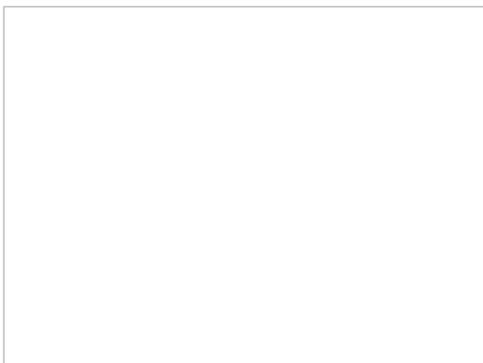


Wayang kulit shadow puppet from [Java](#)

It is quite difficult to define Indonesian art, since the country is immensely diverse. The sprawling archipelago nation consists of 13,466 islands.^[28] Around 922 of those permanently inhabited,^[29] by over 300 [ethnic groups](#),^[30] which speaking more than 700 living [languages](#).^[31]

Indonesia also has experienced a long [history](#), with each period leaves a distinctive arts. From [prehistoric](#) cave paintings and [megalithic](#) ancestral statues of Central Sulawesi, tribal wooden carving traditions of [Toraja](#) and [Asmat people](#), graceful Hindu-Buddhist art of classical Javanese civilization which produced [Borobudur](#) and [Prambanan](#), vivid [Balinese paintings](#) and [performing arts](#), [Islamic arts](#) of [Aceh](#), to contemporary arts of modern Indonesian artists. Both Indonesian diversity and history add to complexity on defining and identifying what is Indonesian art.

Africa



[BaKongo](#) masks from [Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

Main article: [African art](#)

See also: [Igbo art](#), [Kuba art](#), [Yoruba art](#), and [Benin art](#)

African art includes both [sculpture](#), typified by the brass castings of the [Benin people](#), as well as [folk art](#). Concurrent with the European Middle Ages, in the eleventh century CE a nation that made grand architecture, gold sculpture, and intricate jewelry was founded in [Great Zimbabwe](#). Impressive sculpture was concurrently being cast from brass by the [Yoruba people](#) of what is now Nigeria. Such a culture grew and was ultimately transformed to become the [Benin Kingdom](#), where elegant altar tusks, brass heads, plaques of brass, and palatial architecture was created. The Benin Kingdom was ended by the British in 1897, and little of the culture's art now remains in Nigeria. Today, the most significant arts venue in Africa is the Johannesburg Biennale.

Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by a high density of cultures. Notable are the [Nok](#), [Edo](#), [Yoruba](#) and [Igbo](#) people from [Nigeria](#); [Kuba](#) and Lupa people from [Central Africa](#); [Ashanti people](#) from [Ghana](#); [Zulu people](#) from [Southern Africa](#); and [Fang people](#) from [Equatorial Guinea](#) (85%), [Cameroon](#) and [Gabon](#); [Sao](#) people from [Chad](#); [Kwele people](#) from eastern [Gabon](#), [Republic of the Congo](#) and [Cameroon](#).

Oceania

Main article: [Art of Oceania](#)

See also: [Rongo-rongo](#)



[Moai](#) at [Rano Raraku](#), [Easter Island](#)

The Art of Oceania includes the geographic areas of [Micronesia](#), [Polynesia](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), and [Melanesia](#). One approach treats the area thematically, with foci on [ancestry](#), warfare, the body, gender, trade, religion, and [tourism](#). Unfortunately, little ancient art survives from Oceania. Scholars believe that this is likely because artists used perishable materials, such as wood and feathers, which did not survive in the tropical climate, and there are no historical records to refer to most of this material. The understanding of Oceania's artistic cultures thus begins with the documentation of it by Westerners, such as Captain [James Cook](#), in the eighteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century the French artist [Paul Gauguin](#) spent significant amounts of time in Tahiti, living with local people and making modern art—a fact that has become intertwined with Tahitian visual culture to the present day. The indigenous [art of Australia](#) often looks like abstract modern art, but it has deep roots in local culture.

The art of [Oceania](#) is the last great tradition of art to be appreciated by the world at large. Despite being one of the longest continuous traditions of art in the world, dating back at least fifty millennia, it remained relatively unknown until the second half of the 20th century.

The often ephemeral materials of Oceanic art makes it difficult to determine the antiquity of the majority of the forms of art practised today. The most durable forms are the multitudes of rock engravings and rock paintings which are found across the continent. In the Arnhem Land escarpment, evidence suggests that paintings were being made fifty thousand years ago, antedating the Palaeolithic rock paintings of [Altamira](#) & [Lascaux](#) in [Europe](#).

Modern and contemporary

Main articles: [Western painting](#), [Modern art](#), and [Contemporary art](#)

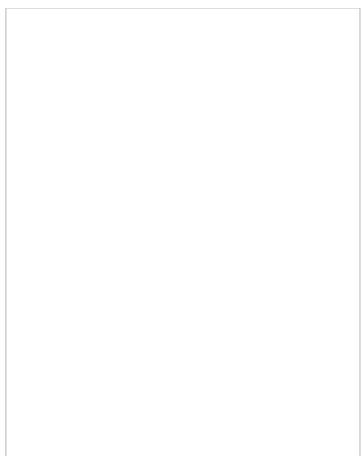


[Henri Matisse](#), 1905–06, [Le bonheur de vivre](#), oil on canvas, 175 x 241 cm, [Barnes Foundation](#)

Origins

Art historians disagree when [Modern art](#) began, some tracing it as far back as [Francisco Goya](#) in the [Napoleonic](#) period, the mid-19th century with the [industrial revolution](#) or the late 19th century with the advent of [Impressionism](#). The [French Revolution](#) of 1789 gave rise to further revolutions in thought. In the arts, these included a new self-consciousness about artistic styles and individuality.^[32] Art historian [H. Harvard Arnason](#) says "a gradual metamorphosis took place in the course of a hundred years", marked by significant events such as the completion in 1784 of [Jacques-Louis David](#)'s painting [The Oath of the Horatii](#); the exhibition of [Gustave Courbet](#)'s painting [The Artist's Studio](#) in 1855; and the exhibition of [Édouard Manet](#)'s painting [Le déjeuner sur l'herbe](#) in the [Salon des Refusés](#) in Paris in 1863.^[33]

19th century



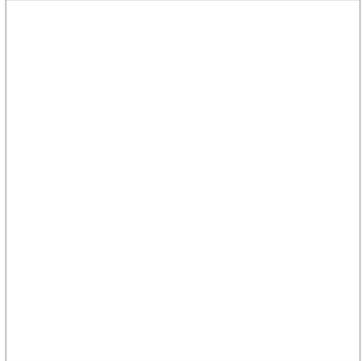
[Vincent van Gogh](#), *Country road in Provence by Night*, 1889, May 1890, [Kröller-Müller Museum](#)

During the 19th century, the [Romantic](#) tendency of early modern artists such as [Turner](#) and [Delacroix](#) was succeeded by newer art movements: [Realism](#), [Impressionism](#), [post-Impressionism](#), [Symbolism](#), and other movements. Western artists were influenced by Eastern decorative arts, especially [Japanese prints](#).

The Impressionists sought to convey movement, spontaneity, and transient effects of light in their work. Their style was adopted by artists in many countries, alongside national movements such as the [Hudson River School](#) and the [Ashcan School](#) in the US.

Early 20th century

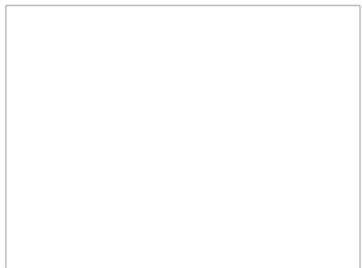
See also: [20th-century Western painting](#)



[Pablo Picasso](#), 1907, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, oil on canvas, 244 x 234 cm, [Museum of Modern Art](#), New York

The history of [20th-century art](#) is a narrative of endless possibilities and the search for new standards, each being torn down in succession by the next. The art movements of [Fauvism](#), [Expressionism](#), [Cubism](#), [abstract art](#), [Dadaism](#) and [Surrealism](#) led to further explorations of new creative styles and manners of expression. Increasing [global](#) interaction during this time saw an equivalent influence of other cultures into Western art, such as [Pablo Picasso](#) being influenced by [Iberian sculpture](#), [African sculpture](#) and [Primitivism](#). [Japonism](#), and Japanese [woodcuts](#) (which had themselves been influenced by Western Renaissance draftsmanship) had an immense influence on Impressionism and subsequent artistic developments. The influential example set by [Paul Gauguin](#)'s interest in [Oceanic art](#) and the sudden popularity among the [cognoscenti](#) in early 20th century Paris of newly discovered African fetish sculptures and other works from non-European cultures were taken up by Picasso, [Henri Matisse](#), and many of their colleagues. Later in the 20th century, [Pop Art](#) and [Abstract Expressionism](#) came to prominence.

Late 20th and early 21st centuries



The [Atomium](#) in [Heysel Plateau](#), [Brussels](#), designed by the engineer [André Waterkeyn](#)

Rapid advances in science and technology led to the late Modern and [Postmodern](#) period. In these periods, the art and cultures of the world went through many changes, and there was a great deal of intermixture between cultures, as new [communications technologies](#) facilitated the national and even global dissemination of music, art and style. The separation of regional cultures that had marked the 19th century was replaced by a global culture. Postmodernism describes a broad movement that developed in the mid- to late-20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture, and criticism which marked a departure from modernism. ^{[34][35][36]}

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- [Jamaica](#)
- [Mexico](#)
- [Nicaragua](#)
- [Panama](#)
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- [Trinidad and Tobago](#)
- [United States](#)

Dependencies and other territories

- Anguilla
- Aruba
- Bermuda
- Bonaire
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Curaçao
- Greenland
- Guadeloupe
- Martinique
- Montserrat
- [Puerto Rico](#)
- Saint Barthélemy
- Saint Martin
- Saint Pierre and Miquelon
- Saba
- Sint Eustatius
- Sint Maarten
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- United States Virgin Islands

Art of South America

[Sovereign states](#)

- [Argentina](#)
- Bolivia
- [Brazil](#)
- [Chile](#)
- [Colombia](#)
- [Ecuador](#)
- [Guyana](#)
- [Paraguay](#)
- [Peru](#)
- [Suriname](#)
- [Uruguay](#)
- [Venezuela](#)

[Dependencies and other territories](#)
Authority control

- Falkland Islands
- French Guiana
- South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
- [GND: 7503709-9](#)

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The history of art focuses on objects made by humans in visual form for aesthetic purposes. Visual art can be classified in diverse ways, such as separating fine arts from applied arts; inclusively focusing on human creativity; or focusing on different media such as architecture, sculpture, painting, film, photography, and graphic arts. In recent years, technological advances have led to video art, computer art, Performance art, animation, television, and videogames. Art history. The image that sums up our anxieties? How an Austrian artist captured our fear of what lies ahead. Art history. View image of (Credit: Getty Images). In the Frame.

You can find History of Art in this Encyclopedia section. From the earliest times, people all over the world have expressed their thoughts and feelings by making art. Over the centuries, styles in the visual arts (Sculpture, painting and drawing) have changed. Western European art stems directly from the traditions of the ancient Mediterranean world and especially the art of ancient Greece and Rome. In particular, sculpture from these civilizations is remarkably lifelike or naturalistic and concentrates on the human figure.