



Poussin, Neoclassicism and Realism

Art History Revision

Pre Impressionism

- To fully understand *Impressionism* and its impact as an art movement, we must begin in the 17th century with an artist called *Nicolas Poussin*,
- *Poussin* was a Baroque painter who changed the style of art in France from an ornate lavish style to more paired back and controlled one.
- This was the very beginnings of the rigid, formula style of art that went on to become the style of art the Impressionists reacted against.

What do we need to know about Nicolas Poussin ?



- Poussin was a French Baroque 17th century painter.
- *Poussin* spent most of his life in Rome where he was heavily influenced by the *classical ideals* inspired by Greek and Roman art and Renaissance art.
- His own paintings reflected all these influences.
- Up until now art in France was produced to suit the interests and personal style of the king.

Greek and Roman influences



Classical Ideals were

- The appreciation of the perfection of the human form.
- Heroic figures.
- Associations to mythological themes.
- Accuracy of drawing of the human figure.

Poussin was heavily influenced by the classical ideals of **Italian Renaissance** art. Here we see Raphael's *School of Athens* (1510-1511). It inspired him with its wonderful carefully composed composition and classical poses.



Plato points up because in his philosophy the changing world that we see around us is just a shadow of a higher, truer reality that is eternal and unchanging (and include things like goodness and beauty). For Plato, this otherworldly reality is the ultimate reality, and the seat of all truth, beauty, justice, and wisdom. Plato holds his book called the *Timaeus*.

The Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture

- The Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, Paris, France, was established in 1648 based on **POUSSIN'S** concepts.
- Poussin's style of painting became the "OFFICIAL STYLE" of painting at the French Academy in Paris for the rest of the 17th century.
- This set the tone for what was and was not acceptable in the world of French painting.
- Accurate measuring/drawing.
- Figures to look like Greek-Roman statues.
- Harmonious composition
- Theatrical like space.
- Idealized/ Heroic/ Noble themes.

The Triumph of Pan

Nicolas Poussin

Louvre, Paris



This style of art was to become the “Official Style” of art that was to remain for 50 years.

Describe this painting under the following headings

- Subject matter/Theme
- Composition
- Palette
- Technique
- Style
- Treatment of the human form.

Analysis



This is a well composed painting with a theatrical like arrangement. There is a strong use of background, middle ground and foreground.

This painting is based on a Roman mythological story. It's set in an environment that makes it noble and heroic.

Were you right?



The style is Baroque

The painting technique is very detailed, It's based on very well drawn figures, who are painted using small brushes.

The palette is very tonal and earthy with the exception of the colour blue, which was used by Renaissance artists like Raphael to highlight important figures.

The main scene represents the 'triumph' or worship of the armless bust of a horned deity mounted on a pillar, his face smeared red with the juice of boiled ivy stems. This is the 'term' of Pan, Arcadian god of shepherds and herdsmen,



Poussin obsessively planned every element of his style, from contour lines to colours, often using ancient art and philosophy as his inspiration; the amount of thinking and theory that informs Poussin's paintings is truly impressive.

Poussin's style is characterised by an emphasis on linearity and contours; colour schemes specifically designed to suit the theme of the picture (warm, earthy tones dominate in the earlier pictures, while blues, greens and reds dominate in the mature period); strong classicizing (figures often look like ancient Greco-Roman statues), and well-developed, theatre-like space



Poussin's style and theories on painting would come to be artistic dogma in the second half of the century, when Charles le Brun took Poussin's rules for art as gospel as the director of the French Academy.

The Lamentation Over the Dead Christ Poussin

oil on canvas, 1657, National Gallery of Ireland.





The Rape of the Sabine Women

- The Romans invited the neighboring Sabines with the intention of forcibly retaining their young women as wives. Romulus raised his cloak as the pre-arranged signal for the warriors to seize the women. The yellow armor worn by the man at the right is modeled after a Roman *lorica*, which was made of leather and reproduced the anatomy of the male torso. The painting belonged to the maréchal de Créquy, who was the French ambassador to Rome from June 1633 to July 1634.



- Who was Nicolas Poussin?
- Why was he an important figure in art history? Explain your answer
- What influenced Poussin's style?

Describe and discuss the Triumph of Pan by Poussin. In your answer refer to **subject matter, composition, palette and style.**

Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825)

- Neoclassical Painter
- He moved art away from the Rococo style.
- He was heavily influenced by Ancient Greek and Roman art and architecture, the work of Raphael and Poussin.
- This new imitation of Classicism and Roman art became popular during his time as a painter.
- He was court painter to King Louis XIV before the Revolution, Louis commissioned him to paint a morally uplifting painting.
- His monumental painting “The Oath of Horatii” was a great success at the Paris Salon in 1785. (*The salon was an annual exhibition, the only significant public exhibition for the work of living artists organised by the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture (later renamed École des Beaux-Arts), which appointed the jury who judged the work*).
- Success at the Salon could establish a painter’s career. Up to 500,000 people attended the Salon exhibition every year.
- This Salon success established David’s reputation as a



Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825)

- David trained in the studio of Boucher.
- Won the Prix de Rome and studied in Italy for 5 years
- After the French revolution became a politician with control of much government patronage in art.
- He had to leave France for exile in Brussels at the restoration of the monarchy in France.

The Oath of Horatii

by Jacques Louis David,

is an excellent example of a **Neoclassical** painting,
It came to symbolize the end of aristocratic corruption and a return in France to the
patriotic morals of republican Rome.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mawq5PKRB6k>,

Oath of Horatii Analyses

Theme

This painting is based on a story of self sacrifice in ancient Rome. In front of their fathers, the three Horatii brothers swear an oath on their swords that they will die for Rome. (David decided on this theme to reflect the political situation of the time), this painting about selfless patriotism was in contrast to the open corruption of the French aristocracy and the extreme wealth of the Roman Catholic Church at the time. The figures are dressed in Roman period costumes to support the story.

Composition

The composition is planned with geometric precision. The figures form three separate triangles. All the figures are united in a larger triangle, the tip of which is formed by the sword handles. Three simple arches in the background are used to evenly distribute the figures in the composition. The rigid vertical forms of the determined men contrast with the curved forms of the distressed women.

The floor is a grid leading you into the painting using single point perspective.



Features of the painting



- Influence of geometry.
- Linear perspective.
- Three arches frame the three sets of figures.
- The triple screen of Doric columns and arches.
- Muted colours
- Symmetry

Oath of Horatii

Analyses continued

Scale

This is a History painting, illustrating a moral message. These paintings were regarded as the highest and most difficult form of art. They were generally very large in size, this painting is no exception.

Technique

The technique is very smooth, with a polished finish that adds to the sculptural quality of the figures whose forms and poses were borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman art.. Line is more important than colour. There are very clear contour lines used.

Palette

Tonal palette, using dramatic shading reflecting the use of theatrical lighting which is directed from one side creating shadows and emphasising the men's muscles and the folds in their clothing. David also uses clear colour to capture attention.



Subject matter



- The surviving brother kills his sister because she puts herself and her family before the good of her country.
- The idea here is that one must be willing to sacrifice—even sacrifice one's life and family members—for the state.
- This idea was very influential on the French revolutionaries of 1789.

Ingres

Ingres spent many years developing his skills and achieving success in Italy. He returned to France after the fall of Napoleon, where he found that his traditional and classical approach to painting was well received. He was appointed as director of the French Academy. He held the position for over 40 years. He became a very influential member of the Salon jury that upheld the 'noble and ideal' standard of the classical style.

- historical paintings
- drawing was the basis for all painting

Portraits:

Though Ingres preferred history painting, he was also a well-known portraitist. In the sketches he'd drawn for tourists in his early years in Italy he portrayed an uncanny control of a delicate yet firm line and an inventiveness in posing sitters to reveal their personalities. He captured his figure with an impressive photographic likeness.

Years later, as the most sought-after portraitist in France, Ingres painted the grace and splendor of his female elite sitters, again with photographic realism.

Color Palette:

As a student of David, Ingres was under the firm belief that more attention should be paid to the drawing of lines rather than color. Though insistent on this belief, no attention to detail, especially concerning fabrics, was lost when Ingres' colors brought his subjects to life.

Lighting:

Ingres' earlier works were attacked for a flatness resulting from a lack of conventional modeling. The artist continued to paint in such a fashion up until his later years. His attention to lighting can be seen in the fabrics of his most elite sitters.



Ingres



"Everything has been done before" Ingres once wrote. "Our task is not to invent but to continue what has already been achieved." Hardly any wonder then, being so suspicious of innovation, that his work is often set against the more radical painting styles of his age.

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This work featuring a bathing woman is generally known by the name of one of its nineteenth-century owners. It was one of the works Ingres sent to Paris in 1808 when he was studying at the French Academy in Rome. This early work is a masterpiece of harmonious lines and delicate light. The woman's superb nude back left a deep impression on the artist; he returned to it in several later works, most notably the Turkish Bath.



The woman—who wears nothing other than jewelry and a turban—lies on a divan, her back to the viewer. She seemingly peeks over her shoulder, as if to look at someone who has just entered her room, a space that is luxuriously appointed with fine damask and satin fabrics. She wears what appears to be a ruby and pearl encrusted brooch in her hair and a gold bracelet on her right wrist. In her right hand she holds a peacock fan, another symbol of affluence, and another piece of metalwork—a facedown bejeweled mirror, perhaps?—can be seen along the lower left edge of the painting.

Use of Space:

The body of the nude takes up the entire frame of the canvas. Her head, elbow, and buttocks are inches away from the edge of the canvas. Her toes actually extended beyond the bounds of the edge.

Techniques:

A technique unique to Ingres was his anatomical distortions, seen most particularly in his female nudes. In *La Grande Odalisque* the artist drew long sinuous lines to extend her back and pelvis area. Critics have said her body looks boneless.

Use of Color:

Under the classical training of David, Ingres was taught to focus more on drawing than on color. Though he paid meticulous attention to the details of the line, his use of colors is also carefully planned. He contrasts the warm tones of the nude's skin against the cool colored silk she lies on.



ingres

With advancing age, Ingres' own polished style hardened into the dogma he imposed on others. He believed that the 'inner form' could be expressed through line alone. He often chose to portray his figures in profile reminiscent of the Greek style. He used sinuous and unbroken line. He firmly believed that line was far superior to colour in painting. His personal view became a set academic rule. This rule led to the most memorable controversies in a 'battle of styles' among artists

Two distinct trends emerge in French painting, one—represented by the artist Delacroix—was rebellious, and emphasized emotion, color and loose brushwork. The other—which can be seen in the art of Ingres—upheld tradition, and emphasized line and a highly finished surface. Of course, things were more complicated—but those were battle lines!

battle

Romantic Period: Overview



Painters were concerned with:

- The Power of Nature
- The Nostalgic and Emotion of Man
- Looking Inward
- Looking at Nature as it Really is

Romanticism

Romantic painting features loose, fluid brushwork, strong colors, complex compositions, dramatic contrasts of dark and light, and expressive gestures and poses -suggesting a revival of the Baroque.

The Romantic style became identified with a type of social commentary in which the dramatic presentation was intended to stir public emotions.

This was especially true in the work of the two leaders of the Romantic movement: Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix.

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863)



- French Painter
- Influenced by Raphael, Rubens, Géricault and Constable
- Painted Historic Events
- Bold Brush Strokes with Vivid Colours
- Avoided Black and Studied Colour Theory

Eugène Delacroix

Title: Liberty Leading the people (1830)



The figure of Liberty dominated the composition; as she leads the charging people trampling over the corpses beneath them, she commands attention. The brightly colored flag she handles forces the eye directly to the center of the canvas. The red - a direct diagonal to a half-naked corpse - floats just over the revolutionists.

The action is congested, mainly taking up the lower portion of the canvas with a concentration spilling over to the center. The background and righter-most portion of the canvas remain mostly desolate, engulfed in the clouds and smoke of the cannons.

Delacroix has created a pyramid structure with Liberty as the peak and the dead soldiers on the ground as the base. This seemingly unimportant, and maybe unnoticed, configuration provides balance to the dramatic and busy scene.

This pyramid technique achieves balance in this busy composition.





Delacroix's use of color in this painting is certainly notable. The bright red, white and blue of the flag at the center of the canvas lead the eye on a journey.

Delacroix echoes this same color scheme just below the flag on the clothing of the man reaching for Liberty. His sash is red and a white shirt peaks out from a blue jacket. The colors of the flag are not used just for aesthetic pleasure; they represent France and the Revolution.

The fighters are united with Liberty. The yellow of her dress is the same yellow of the knotted scarf of the wounded man raising himself at the site of the heroine. The red belt and peasant smock represent the contemporary workers of Paris.

Advent of Realism

The 19th century was a complex period. Until about 1850 the main struggle was between the conflicting aims of Classicism and Romanticism; afterward these were replaced, almost brutally, by various forms of Realism. Classical artists used the past as their model, Romantic artists tried to escape through the imagination.

The Realist artists who followed aimed to express the 'real' as it existed, to present the 'here and now' without any reference to the past. This meant a complete break with the ancient classical tradition, and also a rejection of the Romantic's escape into personal dreamworlds. The Realist artist grappled with the problems of creating a new order based on the direct observation of what was around him.

He believed that if he could not see something, he should not paint it. He also decided that his art should have a social consciousness that would awaken the self-involved Parisian to contemporary concerns: the good, the bad and the ugly.



Gustave Courbet, *A Burial at Ornans*, 1849-50, oil on canvas, 314 x 663 cm
(Musée d'Orsay, Paris)