**LESSON 7 and 8**

**ART APPRECIATION**

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**As art was constantly being redefined throughout the 20th century, today, people often seem to get lost in the multitude of modern and contemporary art movements. As a result, in this article, we will provide a chronological and comprehensive overview of all the key art movements of the past 150 years. We’ll expand on why art history has been so complicated over the past 50 years by providing the necessary perspective and context, and we’ll answer the pressing question of which movements are most relevant today.**

**First and foremost, if you also get lost in art history, especially from the mid-20th century and onwards, you are not alone. Art historiography has its flaws. It aims to present large tendencies throughout history understandable by placing them in a box, with a specific time period, characteristics, and a set of key artists as the main representatives of the art movement. The main benefit of this approach is that we can easily understand the broad tendencies, hence opting for the same approach throughout this article. The downside is that it can often be too arbitrary and lacks nuance. Therefore, remember that these definitions, time periods, and characteristics are never absolute. In reality, they are fluid. Art movements are not boxes with a clear beginning, content, and end. They are a large web of rivers with many meanders in which water runs from one stream into another, feeding each other, co-existing, continuing downstream all the way, or sometimes washing ashore and remaining still.**

**Art history can also be too focused on the West and Europe in particular—as it was invented in Europe and later predominantly practiced in Europe and the States. So please note that some meanders and streams are often forgotten or not mentioned, as art history can never be absolute from a global perspective—which is why the North-American Ashcan School and American Regionalism are often not mentioned, as is the case with Latin American Muralism, or Japanese Mono-Ha in Asia, and many more. A flaw this article is complicit of as we will be focusing on the most pertinent, key art movements only and thus excluding smaller European movements such as Les Nabis in Paris or the Aesthetic Movement in Britain.**

**Another drawback of art historiography is that the movements can originate based on different criteria: style, form, subject matter, or specific groups and schools. For instance, in the first half of the 20th century, art historiography focused predominantly on stylistic innovation—which was crucial in the zeitgeist of Modernism (cf. infra): new, modern art for a modern world. However, with the arrival of postmodernism (cf. infra), that dogmatic belief in progress and innovation was being questioned, redefining what art is or could be and resulting in new art forms. So, in addition to categorizing art based on style, new artistic disciplines were declared as new art movements; think of Conceptual Art, Performance Art, Land Art, Video Art, Digital Art, and so on. However, a problematic aspect is that the artistic disciplines never left, resulting in, for instance, Conceptual Art as a historical art movement of the 1960s and 70s but also an artistic discipline today. Confusing, to say the least.**

**Art history is also full of container concepts of larger eras. For instance, Modern Art is not an art movement such as Impressionism but a historical period of various art movements, including Impressionism. And this era is exactly where our journey begins.**

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**1. Modern Art (1863-ca. 1950)**

**Modern Art refers to art created during the era of Modernism, roughly spanning from 1850 to 1950, though its boundaries are fluid and not universally agreed upon. Some trace its beginnings as early as 1830, with movements like Romanticism, Symbolism, and Realism introducing innovative subject matter. However, a symbolic starting point is often the 1863 *Salon des Refusés* in Paris, where works like Manet’s controversial *Déjeuner sur L’herbe* (1862-1863) made a clear and symbolic statement moving away from the traditional genres of the art academy and sparking public debate. Modern Art is marked by its break from tradition, exploring new styles, subjects, and forms of expression.**

**A group of people sitting at a table

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Dance at Le moulin de la Galette, 1876. Oil on canvas — 131,5 x 176,5 cm. Collection Musée d’Orsay, Paris.**

**Impressionism (ca. 1860-1890)**

**Impressionism emerged in France during the late 19th century with artists such as Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, and Pierre-August Renoir. It marked a significant departure from academic painting traditions, as it sought to capture the immediacy of life, focusing on the transient effects of light and atmosphere rather than the rigid formalism of traditional art. Impressionist artists frequently painted en plein air (outdoors) to portray contemporary scenes, landscapes, and moments of modern urban life. Their loose, visible brushwork and vibrant color palettes created a sense of movement and spontaneity, breaking away from the highly detailed and polished style favored by academic institutions. This approach emphasized the subjective perception of the artist, giving them more artistic freedom as they no longer feel forced to play by the rules of the academies.**

**A group of people on a park

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Georges Seurat, Un dimanche après-midi à l’Île de la Grande Jatte, 1884-1886. Oil on canvas — 207.6 cm × 308 cm. Collection Art Institute of Chicago.**

**Post-Impressionism (ca. 1880-1910)**

**Post-Impressionism extended Impressionism’s focus on color and light but moved towards more symbolic, structural, and expressive approaches, with artists such as Georges Seurat, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent Van Gogh. This movement sought to convey deeper emotional and spiritual meanings through art. Unlike Impressionism, Post-Impressionist artists often utilized bold, contrasting colors, dynamic compositions, and a heightened sense of individuality in their work. Although the line was still representational, freedom of color was achieved in combination with extensive studies of color theory. This period also saw the development of techniques such as pointillism and the exploration of primitivism. Their innovations not only enriched the visual vocabulary of art but also paved the way for modern art’s embrace of abstraction and symbolism.**

**A painting of a group of naked people dancing

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Henri Matisse, The Dance, 1910. Oil on canvas — 260 cm × 391 cm. Collection The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.**

**Fauvism (ca. 1905-1910)**

**Fauvism, meaning “wild beasts,” was a revolutionary movement with artists such as Henri Matisse, André Derain, and Maurice de Vlaminck, characterized by its daring, non-naturalistic use of color and dynamic, stylized compositions that broke away from traditional representational art. Emerging in the early 20th century, Fauvist artists rejected subdued tones and realistic depictions in favor of pure, unmodulated colors applied in bold, expressive strokes. They focused on evoking emotional responses through their work, using color to convey feelings rather than to describe form or space. Although the movement was short-lived, lasting only a few years, it had a profound and lasting influence on modern art by liberating color and line from its traditional descriptive role and inspiring subsequent movements and the ongoing tendency towards abstraction.**

**A painting of women in pink

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Pablo Picasso, Les Demoiselles d’Avignon, 1907. Oil on canvas – 243.9 x 233.7 cm. Collection MoMA, New York.**

**Cubism (ca. 1905-1920)**

**Cubism, pioneered in Paris by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in the early 20th century, fundamentally transformed how artists represented reality. It deconstructed subjects into geometric shapes and depicted them from multiple perspectives simultaneously, creating fragmented and abstracted compositions. This analytical approach contested the traditional approach towards perspective and spatial depth, reflecting the complexities of modern life and the influence of advancements in science and technology. Cubism evolved through two primary phases: Analytical Cubism, which focused on dissecting objects into basic forms, and Synthetic Cubism, which introduced collage elements and a more playful use of color and texture. The movement not only revolutionized painting but also had a significant impact on sculpture, architecture, and graphic design.**

**A painting of a person playing a guitar

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Umberto Boccioni, Dinamismo di un Ciclista, 1913. Oil on canvas — 70 cm × 95 cm. Collection Gianni Mattioli.**

**Futurism (ca. 1910-1915)**

**Futurism originated in Italy, with artists such as Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, and Carlo Carrà celebrating the ideals of technology, speed, modernity, and industrial progress. The movement sought to break away from the constraints of the past and embrace a dynamic, forward-looking vision of art and life. Futurist works often depicted movement and energy through dynamic compositions, fragmented forms, and bold use of color, visualizing the vibrancy of urban life. Influenced by advancements in machinery and transportation, Futurists glorified industrialization and mechanization, believing these elements symbolized human ingenuity and progress. The movement also extended beyond visual art to literature, music, and more, shaping the cultural landscape of its time.**

**A group of people in coats

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Street, Berlin, 1913. Oil on canvas — 120,6 x 91,1 cm. Collection MoMA, New York.**

**Expressionism (ca. 1910-1930)**

**Expressionism emphasized raw emotion, personal experience, and subjective interpretation over realistic representation, as exemplified in the works of Edvard Munch, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Egon Schiele. It was a reaction against the detachment of Impressionism and the formalism of academic art, focusing instead on the emotional and psychological states of both the artist and the viewer. Using distorted forms, exaggerated lines, and intense, often non-naturalistic colors, Expressionists aimed to convey the inner turmoil, anxieties, and existential concerns of the modern world. This movement was deeply influenced by the rapid industrialization and societal changes of the time, as well as by new psychological theories, particularly those of Sigmund Freud. Expressionism spanned various art forms, including painting, sculpture, theater, and film, and left a lasting impact on the development of modern art.**

**A white urinal with holes

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Marcel Duchamp, Fountain, 1917.**

**Dadaism (ca. 1915-1920)**

**Dadaism of Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, and Tristan Tzara was an anti-art movement born out of the devastation and disillusionment following World War I, emerging as a radical response to the perceived failures of society and culture. It embraced absurdity, chance, and irrationality as a means to challenge traditional values, aesthetic norms, and the very definition of art. Dadaists sought to dismantle established conventions through experimental techniques, such as readymades, collages, and acts, often incorporating satire and nonsensical elements to provoke and confuse. This movement was deeply rooted in political and social critique, reflecting a rejection of nationalism, materialism, and the structures that contributed to the war.**

**A white square on a white surface

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Kazimir Malevich, Suprematist Composition: White on White, 1918. Oil on canvas – 79.4 x 79.4 cm. Collection the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York.**

**Suprematism (ca. 1915-1925)**

**Suprematism, founded in Russia by Kazimir Malevich alongside artists like El Lissitzky and Lyubov Popova, was the first major art movement focusing on pure abstraction and basic geometric forms, such as squares, circles, and rectangles. This movement marked a radical departure from representational art, emphasizing the “supremacy of pure feeling” over realistic representation. Suprematism sought to convey universal, spiritual truths through minimalist compositions, often reducing visual language to its most fundamental elements. Its profound influence extended beyond painting, impacting architecture, design, and other modernist movements.**

**A painting of geometric shapes and lines

AI-generated content may be incorrect.El Lissitzky. *Proun 19D*. 1920/1921. Gesso, oil, varnish, crayon, colored papers, sandpaper, graph paper, cardboard, metallic paint, and metal foil on plywood — 97,5 x 97,2 cm. Collection MoMA, New York.**

**Constructivism (ca. 1915-1930)**

**Constructivism with Vladimir Tatlin, Alexander Rodchenko, and Varvara Stepanova sought to merge art and life, emphasizing functional design, industrial materials, and a utilitarian approach to creativity. Emerging in Russia amidst revolutionary societal changes, Constructivist artists sought to redefine the role of art as a tool for social and political transformation. Rejecting traditional aesthetic concerns, they focused on practicality and integrating art into everyday life, producing works such as propaganda posters, architectural models, and industrial designs. Constructivism aimed to align art with the needs of a modern, industrialized society, promoting collective values and the ethos of progress.**

**A red square with black lines and a blue square

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Piet Mondrian, Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow, 1930. Oil on canvas — 46 x 46 cm. Collection Kunsthaus Zürich.**

**De Stijl (ca. 1915-1930)**

**De Stijl, with Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, and Gerrit Rietveld, was a Dutch movement that sought to achieve universal harmony through the use of geometric abstraction, primary colors, and a strict reliance on horizontal and vertical lines. The movement was grounded in the belief that art and design could promote social and spiritual order by embodying a sense of balance and clarity. The simplicity and purity of De Stijl’s aesthetic significantly influenced modern architecture, design, and even typography, with its principles evident in structures, furniture, and graphic works that emphasize functional minimalism and coherence.**

**A clock on a fireplace

AI-generated content may be incorrect.René Magritte, Time Transfixed, 1938. Oil on canvas — 147 cm × 98.7 cm. Collection Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.**

**Surrealism (ca. 1925-1940)**

**Pioneered by Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Joan Miró, Surrealism aimed to unlock the unconscious mind and explore dreams, fantasies, and irrational imagery, challenging reality and logic. Heavily influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, the movement sought to reveal hidden desires and emotions through techniques like automatic drawing, dream analysis, and juxtapositions of unexpected elements. Surrealist works often combine realistic detail with bizarre and fantastical elements, creating a dreamlike quality that blurs the line between imagination and reality, as is the case with Salvador Dalí and René Magritte, or more expressive and abstract as with Joan Miró or Max Ernst.**

**A red square with a black border

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Mark Rothko, Orange, Red and Red, 1962. Oil on canvas – 236.5 × 203.5 cm. Collection Dallas Museum of Art.**

**Abstract Expressionism (ca. 1945-1960)**

**Abstract Expressionism, with Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Franz Kline, was the first major American art movement to gain international recognition. Characterized by spontaneous, gestural painting, it emphasized individual expression and the exploration of the subconscious, often drawing on psychological theories such as those of Carl Jung. Abstract Expressionism encompasses two primary approaches: Gestural and Action Painting of Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline, which highlights dynamic, physical gestures, and Color Field Painting by Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, which emphasizes large, flat areas of color to evoke emotional responses. The movement reflected a break from European art traditions, positioning the United States as a new center of avant-garde, followed by their artistic dominance in the second half of the 20th century.**

**2. Contemporary Art Movements (ca. 1950-Today)**

**The conclusion of modern art is generally placed between 1945 and 1960 and coincides with the ideological and cultural shifts following the Second World War, the atomic bomb, the Cold War, and globalization. The dogmatic belief in progress, innovation, and reason of Modernism makes way for doubt, questioning, and eclecticism of Postmodernism, characterized by its rejection of rigid definitions and its embrace of diverse approaches, blurring the boundaries between high art and popular culture. Here, we transition from Modern Art to Contemporary Art, Post-War Art, and Postmodern Art—three terms referring to roughly the same era with a slightly different perspective.**

**Contemporary Art typically refers to art by artists born after 1945, Post-War Art refers to all art created after 1945, and Postmodern Art refers to all art of the postmodern art movements—for instance, the Mark Rothko chapel paintings from 1965 are not Contemporary Art, because Rothko was born in in 1903, it is Post-War art as it was created after 1945, and it is Modern Art because it is part of the Modern Art movement of Abstract Expressionism. On the other hand, Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs*(1965)from the same year is Contemporary Art as Kosuth was born in 1945; it is Post-War Art because it was created after 1945, and it is Postmodern Art as it is part of Conceptual Art—one of the many Postmodern and Contemporary Art movements we are about to discuss. As a result, the following art movements are considered postmodern and contemporary.**

**A red and brown box

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Donald Judd, Untitled, 1972.**

**Minimal Art (ca. 1955-1970)**

[**Minimal Art**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/minimal-art-the-25-most-important-minimal-artists/)**emphasized simplicity, geometric forms, and the materiality of the artwork itself, stripping art to its most essential elements—think of the works of Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, and Donald Judd. This movement rejected emotional expression, narrative content, and representational imagery, focusing on abstraction, geometric shapes, exploring abstraction, new materials, and radical simplicity. Artists often employed industrial materials, repetition, and precise execution to highlight the inherent qualities of form and space. Minimal Art also explored the interplay between the artwork, the environment, and the observer. Its influence extended beyond visual art, impacting architecture, design, and contemporary aesthetics.**

**A chair next to a poster

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Joseph Kosuth, One and Three Chairs, 1965. Wood folding chair, mounted photograph of a chair, and mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of “chair” — Chair 82 x 37.8 x 53 cm, photographic panel 91.5 x 61.1 cm, text panel 61 x 76.2 c m. Collection MoMA, New York.**

**Conceptual Art (ca. 1955-1975)**

[**Conceptual Art**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/conceptual-art-the-25-most-important-conceptual-artists/)**emerged as a movement prioritizing ideas and concepts over traditional aesthetic or material concerns as a response to art institutions and the commercialization of art as decoration for the wealthy. This revolutionary approach pioneered by Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, and Lawrence Weiner, among others, shifted the focus of art from its visual form to its intellectual underpinnings, ingeniously redefining what art is or can be. Conceptual artworks often included texts, diagrams, instructions, or ephemeral performances, emphasizing the artist’s intent rather than the final product. The movement questioned notions of authorship, commodification, and the art object in general.**

**A wall of many cans of soup

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Andy Warhol, Campbell’s Soup Cans, 1962. Synthetic polymer paint on thirty-two canvases, Each canvas 20 x 16″ (50.8 x 40.6 cm). Overall installation with 3″ between each panel is 97″ high x 163″ wide. Collection MoMA.**

**Pop Art (ca. 1955-1970)**

**Pop Art emerged in the mid-20th century with artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claes Oldenburg. The movement both celebrated and critiqued consumer culture, mass media, and popular imagery. By incorporating elements from advertising, comic strips, and everyday objects, Pop Art blurred the boundaries between high art and popular culture. It often used bright colors, bold graphics, and recognizable imagery to explore themes of commercialization, mass production, and cultural identity. While some artists embraced modern life with an air of irony, others used their work to offer pointed critiques of materialism and mass consumption, making the movement a complex reflection of its time.**

**A person with glasses and a cigarette in his mouth

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Example of Photorealism (ca. 1960–1980): Chuck Close, Big Self Portrait, 1967-68.**

**Photorealism (ca. 1960-1970)**

**Photorealism emerged in the late 20th century as a genre that sought to replicate photographs with meticulous precision as photography became more accessible and was being used more frequently by artists. This movement, with artists like Chuck Close, Richard Estes, and Audrey Flack, prioritized technical mastery, attention to detail, and hyper-realistic effects. Photorealists frequently depicted everyday scenes, objects, and urban landscapes, emphasizing textures, reflections, and subtle nuances of light and shadow. The movement celebrated skill and the aesthetic qualities of the mundane.**

**A person cutting a person's dress

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Yoko Ono, Cut Piece (performance, 1964. Dilmed by the Maysles Brothers, at Carnegie Recital Hall, March 21, 1965. Image © Yoko Ono. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong.**

**Fluxus (ca. 1960-1975)**

**Fluxus was an avant-garde movement that emerged in the 1960s, pushing the boundaries of art through performances, activities, and interventions. Pioneered by artists such as George Maciunas, Joseph Beuys, and Yoko Ono, it emphasized the process of creation over the finished product, embracing spontaneity, humor, and chance as integral elements of artistic expression. Fluxus artists often created works that were participatory, interactive, and irreverent, breaking down the distinction between artist and audience. The movement was highly interdisciplinary, incorporating elements of music, poetry, theater, and visual arts, and sought to democratize art by making it accessible and rooted in everyday experiences. Its anti-commercial stance and focus on collective creativity left a lasting impact on contemporary art practices.**

**A person and person sitting on chairs

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Marina Abramovic, Performance during ‘Marina Abramovic: The Artistis Present’ (9 March 2010, New York City). Museum of Modern Art. / Photo by Andrew H. Walker/Getty Images (c)**

**Performance Art (ca. 1960-Today)**

**In a similar vein but focusing more on the performance being the artwork,**[**Performance Art**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/top-30-most-important-performance-artists/)**uses the artist’s body as the central medium, emphasizing live, ephemeral, and often shocking actions. Artists such as Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, and Carolee Schneemann gained prominence in the 1960s, using performance as a direct way to address social, political, and cultural issues. Performance Art can range from intimate, private gestures to large-scale public events. Due to its temporal nature, video and photography are essential allies of Performance Art to document and collect art that has no object, nor lasts.**

**A person's face with red and white text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Barbara Kruger, Untitled (Your body is a battleground), 1989. Photographic silkscreen on vinyl – 284.5 × 284.5 cm. Courtesy The Broad.**

**Feminist Art (ca. 1965-1975)**

**Feminist Art emerged in the 1960s as a response to gender inequalities in the art world and broader societal structures, aiming to challenge the male-dominated canon of art history pioneered by artists such as Judy Chicago, Barbara Kruger, and Cindy Sherman. It often incorporates personal narratives, social critique, and collaborative practices, drawing attention to women’s lived experiences and struggles. Feminist artists explore themes such as identity, body politics, and empowerment, frequently utilizing a diverse range of mediums, including performance, video, installation, and textile art.**

**A group of horses in a room

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Jannis Kounellis, Untitled (Cavalli), 1967. 12 horses, – variable dimensions. Installation view at Galleria L’attico, Rome, 1969. Courtesy Galleria L’attico and the artist.**

**Arte Povera (ca. 1965-1975)**

**Arte Povera, meaning “poor art,” originated in Italy during the late 1960s as a radical movement that sought to critique industrialization and consumerism through the use of humble, everyday materials—think of the iconic works by Michelangelo Pistoletto, Jannis Kounellis, and Mario Merz. By incorporating organic and industrial elements such as soil, wood, rags, and metal, Arte Povera sought to disrupt notions of artistic value, permanence, and technique. This movement reflected themes of nature, time, and humanity’s relationship with the material world.**

**A grey rectangular object on a white background

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Kenneth Noland, Outlying, 1979-1980. Acrylic on canvas – 165.7 × 477.5 cm. Courtesy Wright.**

**Post-Painterly Abstraction (ca. 1965-1980)**

**Post-Painterly Abstraction was a term coined to describe a movement that emerged in the 1960s, characterized by its focus on flatness, color, and clarity of form. Rejecting the emotional and gestural expression of Abstract Expressionism, artists like Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella emphasized precise technique and sharp delineation of forms. This approach sought to remove the artist’s personal narrative or emotional input from the work, instead highlighting the inherent qualities of the materials and the composition itself. The movement is often associated with clean, expansive fields of color, sharp contrasts, and meticulous attention to detail, which collectively create a sense of visual serenity and intellectual engagement.**

**A black and white pattern with triangles

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Bridget Riley, Straight Curve, 1963. Acrylic on board – 71.1 × 61 cm. El Museo del Barrio, New York.**

**Op Art (ca. 1965-1980)**

**Op Art, or Optical Art, with Bridget Riley, Victor Vasarely, and François Morellet, is characterized by its use of geometric patterns and precise color contrasts to create optical illusions of movement, depth, and spatial ambiguity. This movement was deeply rooted in the study of visual perception and the science of optics, often challenging the viewer’s ability to interpret spatial relationships and motion within a static image.**

**A spiral shaped rock formation in water

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty, 1970. Variable dimensions. Courtesy the artist.**

**Land Art (1965-1980)**

**Land Art, or Earth Art, emerged in the late 1960s as a movement that redefined the relationship between art and the environment. Artists such as Robert Smithson, Richard Long, and Walter De Maria used natural landscapes as both medium and subject, creating large-scale interventions. These works frequently emphasized ecological and temporal themes, highlighting the interplay between human creativity and the natural world. Land Art sought to move art out of the confines of galleries and into open, often remote, spaces, engaging with the environment on a monumental scale. The movement also encouraged reflections on environmental stewardship and the transient nature of human existence within a broader ecological framework.**

**A graffiti on a wall

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Banksy, *The Little Girl with the Balloon*, 2002. Stencil — variable dimensions. Location: London, UK.**

**Street Art (ca. 1965-Today)**

**Street Art encompasses murals, graffiti, and urban interventions that transform public spaces into canvases for creative expression with works by Bansky, Keith Haring, or JR. Emerging from underground movements in the mid-20th century, it often serves as a powerful voice for social and political commentary, challenging traditional art venues and hierarchies. Street Art combines diverse techniques, including stenciling, spray painting, wheat-pasting, and large-scale murals. It engages directly with urban environments, shaping how communities perceive their surroundings and encouraging dialogue on cultural, environmental, and political issues.**

**A group of people standing in a circle surrounded by water

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Bill Viola, Tempest (study for the Raft), 2005. Color high-definition video on LCD flat panel mounted on wall. Courtesy Galerie Natalie Seroussi.**

**Video Art (ca. 1965-Today)**

[**Video Art**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/what-is-video-art-top-20-artists-examples/)**, pioneered by artists such as Nam June Paik, Bill Viola, and Pipilotti Rist, employs moving images as its central medium, offering a platform for artists to explore a wide range of themes such as time, identity, technology, and social change. Unlike traditional film or cinema, Video Art often focuses on non-linear narratives and experimental techniques, prioritizing visual and conceptual innovation over storytelling. The movement encompasses single-channel works, video installations, and large-scale projections, often combining sound, performance, and interactive elements.**

**A room full of lights

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Yayoi Kusama, Infinity Mirrored Room – The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away, 2013. Wood, metal, glass mirrors, plastic, acrylic panel, rubber, LED lighting system, acrylic balls, and water – 287.7 × 415.3 × 415.3 cm. Courtesy The Broad.**

**Immersive Art (ca. 1965-Today)**

**Immersive Art consists of interactive experiences as the viewer is able to enter the artwork—think of the immersive environments by Yayoi Kusama, Olafur Eliasson, and James Turrell. By combining elements such as light, sound, digital technologies, and sometimes even scent and tactile components, immersive installations transform spaces into environments exploring themes of perception, environment, and the relationship between reality and illusion.**

**A group of people standing in a room with a large painting

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Installation view of “Refik Anadol — Machine Hallucinations: Nature Dreams” (2021) at KÖNIG GALERIE in Berlin, Germany. Photo: Roman März (c)**

**Digital Art (ca. 1965-Today)**

[**Digital Art**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/top-20-most-famous-digital-artists-today/)**uses digital technology as both a creative tool and a medium; think of Refik Anadol, John Gerrard, and Louisa Clement. This movement encompasses a wide array of practices, including computer-generated imagery, digital installations, virtual reality, augmented reality, and interactive media. It often explores themes related to technology, identity, and the relationship between the physical and virtual worlds.**

**A white paint on a black background

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Georg Baselitz, Über das Sofa (Above the Sofa), 2021. Oil on canvas – 56 7/10 × 88 1/5 × 2 1/5 in / 144 × 224 × 5.5 cm. Courtesy White Cube.**

**Neo-Expressionism (1975-1995/Today)**

**Neo-Expressionism revived painting’s emotional and gestural qualities, offering a dynamic and vivid reaction against the Conceptual and Minimal Art that dominated the mid-20th century. Artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Anselm Kiefer, and Georg Baselitz emphasized subjective experience over ideas and reason, often drawing upon deeply personal, historical, and cultural themes. The movement saw a return to figurative work, characterized by bold colors, energetic brushstrokes, and dramatic imagery that conveyed raw emotion. It played a significant role in reinvigorating the medium of painting during the late 20th century, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity.**

**A drawing of a room with a door

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Luc Tuymans, Gaskamer (Gas Chamber), 1986. Oil on canvas – 50 x 70 cm. Courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp.**

**New European Painting (1980-Today)**

[**New European Painting**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/new-european-painting/)**is a container concept for various generations of contemporary artists, encompassing Gerhard Richter, Luc Tuymans, and Neo Rauch, reflecting a convergence of diverse artistic influences and techniques that emerged in the late 20th century. The movement is characterized by a renewed interest in**[**figuration**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/contemporary-figurative-painting-a-complete-overview-and-list/)**to the previously dominant American**[**abstraction**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/abstract-art-explained-the-ultimate-faq-on-abstraction/)**, marked by a critical take on collective history, memory, and post-war trauma.**

**3. Local Schools & Groups**

**Alongside these international art movements, more local trends, schools, and groups are also part of recent art history. Some groups worked and exhibited together very closely, while others are based on stylistic similarities or simply because they worked and emerged onto the art scene simultaneously and in the same area.**

**A group of people with different colored faces

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Karel Appel, Hip, Hip, Hoorah!, 1949. Oil on canvas — 81,7 × 127 cm. Collection Tate (c) Karel Appel Foundation.**

**CoBrA (ca. 1948-1951)**

**The CoBrA movement, named after the initials of the cities Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam of Karel Appel, Asger Jorn, and Pierre Alechinsky, was founded in the aftermath of World War II as a collective of avant-garde artists. CoBrA artists emphasized spontaneity, intuition, and the use of vivid, expressive colors. Drawing inspiration from folk art, children’s drawings, and the untamed creativity of the subconscious, their works often featured abstract forms and symbolic imagery. CoBrA represented a rejection of academic constraints, embracing a raw, primal aesthetic that reflected the chaotic and fragmented post-war world.**

**A white circle on a black background

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Jiro Yoshihara, Untitled, 1971. Oil on canvas — 45.5 x 52.8 cm / 17.9 x 20.8 in.**

**Gutai Art Association (ca. 1954-1972)**

**The Gutai Art Association was a Japanese avant-garde collective founded in 1954, whose name translates to “concreteness.” Gutai artists such as Jiro Yoshihara, Kazuo Shiraga, and Atsuko Tanaka explored the intersection of material, performance, and action. Known for their innovative use of non-traditional materials and emphasis on the physical creation process, the group staged experimental performances, interactive installations, and dynamic paintings. Gutai was one of the first post-war Japanese movements to gain international recognition, influencing the global discourse of contemporary art.**

**A close-up of a silver surface

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Heinz Mack, Lichtrelief (Light Relief), 1961. Aluminium relief on board — 91.5 x 73 cm.**

**Zero Group (ca. 1957-1966)**

**The Zero Group, founded in the late 1950s in Düsseldorf, was an avant-garde movement that sought to redefine art by focusing on light, space, and materials. It emphasized purity, simplicity, and innovative techniques to explore immateriality and the void. Key representatives of the movement include Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, and Günther Uecker, who are known for their groundbreaking works with light, kinetic elements, and textured surfaces.**

**A person sitting in a chair

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Francis Bacon, Three Studies of Lucian Freud, 1969. Oil on canvas – 3x 198 cm × 147.5 cm.**

**School of London (ca. 1955/1975-1990)**

**The School of London refers to a loosely affiliated group of figurative painters in post-war London who focused on the human figure as a central theme. Reacting against the dominance of abstraction, these artists, including Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, and Frank Auerbach, explored themes of mortality, alienation, and intimacy with intense emotional depth. Their works are characterized by raw, expressive brushwork and a commitment to personal, often unsettling, subject matter.**

**A painting of a person reading a book

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Richard Diebenkorn, Man Drawing, 1956. Oil on canvas — 65 3/4 x 58 1/4 in / 167 x 148 cm.**

**Bay Area Figuration (ca. 1955-1970)**

**Bay Area Figuration emerged in California during the mid-20th century, led by Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, and Joan Brown, as a reaction against the dominance of Abstract Expressionism. This movement reintroduced the human figure into painting, blending abstraction with figurative elements. Bay Area artists employed dynamic brushwork, vibrant colors, and a tactile approach to composition, often portraying everyday scenes and personal narratives.**

**A drawing of a rabbit

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Sigmar Polke, Dürer Rabbit, 1968. Oil on canvas – 80 x 64,5. Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden © The Estate of Sigmar Polke VG Bild-Kunst Bonn.**

**Capitalist Realism (ca. 1960-1975)**

**Capitalist Realism was a German art movement that emerged during the Cold War, critiquing consumer culture and the ideological divide between capitalism and communism. Influenced by Pop Art, artists such as Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, and Konrad Lueg appropriated commercial imagery and mass media aesthetics to expose the commodification of art and society. Their works often employed irony and satire to question the values and contradictions of consumer culture.**

**A group of people around a statue

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Hermann Nitsch, Action 122, 2005. Performance at the Burgtheater in Vienna, Austria.**

**Viennese Actionism (ca. 1960-1975)**

**Viennese Actionism with Hermann Nitsch, Günter Brus, and VALIE EXPORT was a radical and controversial performance art movement in Austria that sought to confront societal taboos. Known for its provocative and often violent performances, the movement addressed themes such as sexuality, religion, and political oppression. Viennese Actionists used their bodies as primary mediums, engaging in ritualistic acts that shocked audiences. Their works were both a critique of post-war Austrian conservatism and an exploration of existential and psychological themes.**

**A bed with a nice bed

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Tracey Emin, My Bed, 1998. Variable dimensions.**

**Young British Artists (ca. 1985-2000)**

**The Young British Artists emerged in the late 1980s and gained prominence in the 1990s, becoming synonymous with bold, provocative, and often controversial works with artists like Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, and Chris Ofili. Many of the YBAs were associated with Goldsmiths College and the influential Freeze exhibition curated by Damien Hirst. Their works, spanning installation, sculpture, painting, and video, explored themes of identity, mortality, and consumer culture. The YBAs were known for their entrepreneurial approach, self-promotion, and ability to capture the zeitgeist of late 20th-century Britain.**

**A person painting a window

AI-generated content may be incorrect.Neo Rauch, Gold, 2003. Oil on canvas – 250 × 210 cm. Collection SOLO, Madrid.**

**Neue Leipziger Schule (ca. 1985-Today)**

**The *Neue Leipziger Schule*, or New Leipzig School, is centered around figurative painting and the Leipzig Academy of Visual Arts. Characterized by its blend of traditional techniques and surreal elements—think of the works of Neo Rauch, Tilo Baumgärtel, and Matthias Weischer—this movement often explores themes of memory, identity, and history, creating highly detailed, layered compositions, reflecting a commitment to the craft of painting while engaging with contemporary issues.**

**Serban Savu, The Thorn, 2020. Acrylic on board – 62 × 84.5 cm. Courtesy Galeria Plan B.**

**The Cluj School (ca. 2005-Today)**

**The Cluj School is a group of trending artists from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, renowned for emphasizing figurative painting and conceptual depth—think of artists like Adrian Ghenie, Victor Man, or Serban Savu. Emerging in the early 2000s, the movement reflects the region’s complex socio-political history and the uneasy transition from a dictatorial communist Romania to an early capitalist one.**

**4. Art Movements Today?**

**To conclude, there are several neo- and post-movements today, such as Neo-Conceptualism, Post-Abstraction, or Neo-Dada. In essence, these movements indicate that artists are building upon the principles of a historical art movement but are not part of that historical era. For instance, in the ’80s and ’90s, a group of artists used the principles of Conceptual Art to focus on the commodification of art and its relation to identity, think of gender, race, and class. However, these artists are not part of the historical era of Conceptual Art of the ’60s and ’70s. Maurizio Cattelan can be considered a Neo-Dadaist, as his works build upon the foundations of Dada, but it is historical, not part of the anti-establishment art movement at the start of the previous decade.**

**However, one could also argue we live in a post-art movement era. The model of art historiography of the 20th century, which focuses on who was the first to innovate stylistically or materially, has become irrelevant and not applicable to the developments and trends in the past fifty years. Modern Art thoroughly explored the stylistic and conceptual potential of painting, sculpture, drawing, and printmaking. With the arrival of Postmodern art movements, the definition of art has been opened, and the traditional disciplines of high art were joined by performance, installation, video, land art, interventions, text, sound, and the digital, up to this very day. Figurative painting is alive and well. Old master techniques are still being implemented. Abstract painting remains relevant, both in its expressive and more minimal outings. Sculpture stands strong, from hyperrealism to conceptual found objects. The more recent artistic disciplines did not disappear in the folds of art history either. Performance, (immersive) installation, and video are indispensable. These movements are not temporary or mutually exclusive, they co-exist, form a continuum, and are used fluidly by artists today.**

**However, this does not mean art history is at its end. And those who think there is an end in the first place, are still stuck in the obsolete and obstinate modernist thinking of the first half of the 20th century. Artists are continuously drawn to new things. Think of the recent renaissances of**[**textile art**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/what-is-textile-art/)**and ceramics, the shifting aesthetic trends in figurative art—from the expressive to the naturalistic to the illustrative—or in abstraction with current trends such as**[**mark-making**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/mark-making-5-abstract-painters-you-need-to-know/)**, organic shapes, and**[**gradients**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/11-artists-revisiting-the-gradient-in-contemporary-art/)**. These events are not just random trends. They emerge from hundreds of artists studios across the world, driven by current events, new discourses, technological developments, and the ever-changing Zeitgeist. In many ways, art is the blueprint of the world—a mirror of society and life. Life changes; we change. As Heraclitus said:*“No person steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river, and they are not the same person.”* The same goes for art and art history.**

**Last Updated on April 15, 2025**

* [**Published on January 19, 2025**](https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/2025/01/19/)

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