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1 E-Course Writing Assignments

1.1 What is significant about Benjamin West's painting The death of general Wolfe?

This picture is very dramatic in its depiction of the death of general Wolfe. The lighting, arrangement of the people and their poses contribute to this.

According to Wikipedia, the painting shows Wolfe dying after winning the battle of Quebec. Because it shows him basically giving his life for victory, the suggestion of martyrdom is very clear. It is also significant that this shows people that were not present at the scene, breaking with standards of historical painting.

1.2 What aspect of American life does Benjamin West's painting Treaty of Penn with Indians present? How is this aspect presented?

The painting shows a group of settlers and natives meeting under a tree. In the background we can see colonial houses and ongoing construction, probably a settlement. The group is split, with the settlers on the left and the natives on the right side of the painting. In the middle men from both groups talk, while onlookers watch from the left and right sides of the painting. The group in the middle and thus their activity is the focus of the painting.

The painting depicts the two groups entering into a peace treaty (Wikipedia). This shows that the two groups could interact with each other in a peaceful manner (even though they were at war before).

The painting depicts this in a balanced manner, both sides are given a similar amount of space and neither is portrayed with an obvious bias (at least to me).

1.3 Compare the two paintings by John Trumbull The death of general Montgomery and The sortie made by the British garrison of Gibraltar. What paradox does the comparison reveal?

Both paintings are very similar in their composition. The background or sky is very dark and lacks detail. The light in the pictures comes from the left side and is focused on the object of the painting. These details combined make the object of the painting stand out from everything else (Montgomery and the British garrison/the dying soldier).

The paradox here is that, as an American artist, Trumbull painted a heroic American general (as one might expect), but also a victory of the British troops in the Independence War. This is not something that I would have expected because the British were enemies of the Americans. One explanation might be that the focus of the painting is on the Spanish officer and not the British (Wikipedia), thus depicting heroism and maybe martyrdom. This would be consistent with the first painting, which shows a general dying in the fight against British troops.

1.4 Compare the portraits of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull, Charles Peale. Which is the most popular in the US? Why?

In all three pictures Washington stands in a similar pose, mostly upright and looking to the left. In Trumbull and Stuart's pictures he also has his right arm stretched out, holding a telescope. In Peale and Trumbull's pictures he is wearing a military uniform because those pictures show him at the sight of a battle, while Stuart paints him dressed formally and in a richly decorated room.

I would say that the portrait by Stuart is the most popular portrait of Washington because it shows the kind of statesman America wanted to see at the time of its creation. Maybe they did not want a general anymore, but a statesman that would lead the new country successfully. Because Stuart's painting shows that, it became the most popular one of the three.

1.5 What is the story behind John Vanderlyn's painting The death of Jane MacCrea? How can his painting be interpreted?

The painting shows two native Americans killing a non-native woman with tomahawks. The woman is kneeling on the ground being held down by the two attackers. Just looking at the painting one would assume that the woman is being killed for no good reason because the picture does not show any and that the natives are unquestionably to blame.

According to Wikipedia though, this might not have been the case. While one version of the story fits the impression this picture gives, another version of the events describes McCrea being killed by bullets fired at the three of them by pursuing American soldiers. There is also uncertainty about why she was with the native warriors in the first place, either because they kidnapped her, or because her fiance asked them to escort her. This painting only depicts one specific version of these events and sends a pretty clear message by doing so.

1.6 How can you interpret J. Vanderlyne's painting Landing of Columbus?

This painting focuses on Columbus and his men, shortly after they arrive on land. He is standing in a very noble pose, with his sword by his side and a flag raised towards the sky. He is also looking towards the sky. The clothes or armor of the men is shiny and clean, making them look noble and imposing. In the background the artist shows natives cowering and fleeing from Columbus and his men.

This painting glorifies the journey and arrival of Columbus and his men. The focus of the painting is completely on them and not the natives or the actual land they discovered. They are depicted as noble in shining armor and standing upright, while the natives (in the background) are naked, cowering and fleeing.

1.7 What are the story, art style, and reception of John Vanderlyn's painting Ariadne on the Island of Naxos?

The painting shows a naked Ariadne sleeping under a tree. The whole scene is pretty dark, maybe because it takes place at dusk or dawn. Ariadne is the daughter of King Minos of Crete from Greek mythology. She fell in love with Theseus from Athens and ran with him to the island of Naxos. There, he abandoned her while she slept. (<https://www.nyhistory.org/exhibit/ariadne-asleep-island-naxos>)

The painting has a classical reference and theme. This conformed to the taste of Napoleonic France and he hoped to make money with this painting. There was an exhibition of female nudes where he was successful in getting attention. While there was an outcry of disapproval, people would pay to see it anyways.

1.8 What are the differences between the Federal and the Colonial period?

The colonial period mostly had portraits of rich merchants as there was little else to do and there were no American subjects. Most of the artists were British and all foreign because there was no art schooling in America.

As that began to change, American born artists began to emerge, but they were still trained in Europe. Now they had more American subjects to paint, so they started doing that. The War of Independence created new subjects and a needs for art and I'd assume it made some artists want to distance themselves from the old colonial masters. Now we see portraits of politicians and battles that were American in artist and subject. As we said, art needs stimulus - the war was one for sure.

1.9 Why was the landscape genre popular in the United States around the middle of the 19th century?

The landscape genre of painting was popular in the US at that time because of multiple factors. Firstly, the landscape of the US was something that set it apart from Europe through its untouched beauty. The potential of this untouched land that settlers saw and its beauty may have made people want to paint it or own paintings of it. Especially for people that would probably never see it for themselves this seems desirable.

Another factor is that people in the eastern US started to reminisce about how the land there used to look before humans started changing it. Thus pictures that showed untouched land and provided contrast to the present were popular.

1.10 How can you interpret Thomas Cole's allegoric series of paintings by Cole Course of Empire and The Voyage of Life. Which of the two was more understandable to broad American public and why? What is the meaning and the tone of these two series?

The Course of Empire, a series of 5 paintings, shows the stages that an empire progresses through in Cole's opinion. This series was inspired by ruins of empires Cole saw when traveling Europe in 1829. The five stages are Savage, Pastoral, Consummation of the Empire, Destruction of the Empire, and Desolation. All 5 pictures show the same distinct mountain that allows the viewer to easily see that all pictures show the same place at different times.

The series describes the path an empire might take, starting at Savage. The progress starts at undeveloped, unwelcoming lands and continues to welcoming, peaceful settlements. The next step shows a sprawling empire with Greek or Roman architecture celebrating in abundance. Destruction shows the same city being burned and plundered resulting in Desolation, where nature starts to reclaim the land. These paintings could be seen as Cole's impression of the ruins of Europe that he saw during his travels and possibly a warning to the US not to go down the same path. It represents the life cycle as Cole perceived it.

The Voyage of Life, a series of 4 paintings, Childhood, Youth, Manhood, and Old Age, illustrate 4 stages of life. It starts out with Childhood, where an angel is seen steering a boat with a small child in it down a river. The landscape is green, the sun is rising and the whole scene looks almost like a dream. Progressing to Youth, the boy has now taken over the boat and left the angel at the side of the river, it is now day (maybe late morning) and he is gesturing towards a literal castle in the sky far off in the distance. Manhood shows the man approaching rapids, praying for help while his angel watches from up high. the scene is very gloomy and it's now dusk. Old Age shows the now old man arriving at a calm ocean while the angel is pointing towards the lit-up sky, as if to show him the way. Here we have another description of a life cycle, but this time it's the human life that is being described.

Both series of paintings are metaphors and contain many visual metaphors too. The

symbolism of The Voyage of Life is a lot clearer and easier to understand because one human lifetime is something that a lot of people will experience themselves and they can see all stages of it around them. The life cycle of an empire takes hundreds of years and is not something that the average person can really emphasize with. This means that The Voyage of Life was more understandable for the average person because they could easily understand what it was describing and thus it became more popular.

1.11 What is similar to Cole, Church, and Bierstadt in painting nature? And what makes them different in terms what landscape they painted?

They all depict epic or memorable landscapes using dramatic lighting. Cole sometimes had some kind of moral message in his paintings, for example in his two big series. He showed people and stories to make the paintings more like history paintings, which he saw as superior art. Furthermore, he painted fictional landscapes.

Bierstadt was more focused on the landscape itself and making it as magnificent and large as he could, he placed animals and people in the pictures to give the viewer a sense of their scale. He painted real landscapes and often ones he saw himself.

Church (judging from the pictures on e-course) painted landscapes that had no visible living things in them and in the two pictures we have on e-course the lighting is even more dramatic than other paintings.

1.12 Kensett, Bingham and Gifford used the luminist approach in the paintings uploaded in this section. What is characteristic of this approach?

Luminism focuses on the effects that light has on a landscape. It was an American painting style from the 1850s to 1870s. Their paintings show calm landscapes and water with soft skies and the interactions of light with them. Their style is relatively realistic and doesn't really show who painted it (to me it seems like it would be hard to recognize specific artists).

1.13 What kind of America emerges in this painting by Bingham?

In this relatively gloomy painting Bingham shows two fur traders going down the river Missouri in a small canoe. They also have their cat on a leash with them. An old man is sitting at the back steering the boat while a young man, possibly a native tracker, lays on a stack of fur.

In this picture two normal, probably relatively poor people are painted going about their daily lives and nothing about it is magnificent. The focus is also not on the relatively uneventful landscape. This is new because earlier pictures focused on rich people, significant people and their deeds, and scenic landscapes. This picture doesn't

have any of that, making it different. I would say that the kind of America emerging in this picture is that of the normal people that didn't do anything heroic or historically significant in order to be painted.

1.14 Comment on an American landscape painting by an American artist from the 19th century

New England Scenery is a 1851 painting by Frederic E. Church. I chose this painting because of the high level of detail, idyllic, mostly untouched landscape, and the depiction of human influence on this landscape. I would like to elaborate on this in class.

1.14.1 Sources

[Picture Source](#)

[Pastoral Stage](#)

[Photo Source](#)

[Info Source 1](#)

[Info Source 2](#)

[Info Source 3](#)

1.14.2 Life

- Frederic Edwin Church
- May 4, 1826 - April 7, 1900
- American landscape painter
- generally painted mountains, waterfalls, sunsets
- realistic detail, dramatic light, panoramic views
- rich family allowed him to pursue art
- at 18 became pupil of Thomas Cole
- finest eye in the world according to Cole
- highly successful painter, most famous in his time
- even made a lot of money with his paintings

1.14.3 Style

- Hudson River school, like Thomas Cole
- idealized nature, richness and beauty
- highly detailed
- wanted to capture the wild, unsettled America
- pastoral settings were very prominent
- he made sketches in nature and later developed paintings in his studio

1.14.4 Painting

- 1851
- his first true composite landscape
- has mountains, nice lighting, panoramic views
- close resemblance to Cole's Pastoral Stage
 - woman in the foreground
 - mountain in the background
 - lots of sky
 - trees to the right
 - very green
- bridge with woman, dog, and wagon in the foreground
- water mill to the left
- old gnarled trees to the right
- water with a lot of reflection in the center
- hill in the middle back
- middle right back has a small town with a church – Church was religious
- shows old, untouched nature
- but human influence on it is starting to show
- looks like living in harmony
- the build roads, houses, and towns, signalling a new era
- feels idyllic, as far as the lighting and weather goes
- connected to the manifest destiny spirit of the time – the wagon is *the* symbol of that – hope and progress

1.15 What Is The Content Of Mount's Art?/What Kind Of America Emerges In His Art? What Does He Want To Convey To The Viewer? What Does The Popularity Of His Art Tell Us About Americans?

Mount is generally known for his genre paintings, which mean that he painted scenes from the everyday life of Americans living in rural areas. This includes markets, parties, and street scenes. This means that Mount is showing the America that most people are experiencing, an America that people can empathize with because they have experienced similar things. The fact that his art was popular means that Americans wanted to see themselves or people like themselves represented in art. If artists only paint rich, important people in glamorous settings this cannot happen. But when people see a market with normal people going about their daily business they could imagine themselves doing these same things.

1.16 Horatio Greenough's sculpture of George Washington. What was the attitude and the fate of this piece of art?

This sculpture was commissioned by the US government to be shown in the rotunda of the Capitol in Washington DC. The marble statue should show the father of the country

in the appropriate manner. Greenough, in his classical style, took inspiration from the famous ancient Greek Zeus statue and used a bust of Washington's head as a model for his sculptures head.

The finished marble statue showed Washington in a neoclassical style, wearing ancient Greek clothing, holding a Greek sword, and basically having Zeus's torso, which was bare. This was not the Washington people expected and most of them had absolutely no connection to the Greek elements in the picture. Some also thought that Washington didn't need anyone to represent himself. The statue, even though the craftsmanship was superb, was ridiculed and ultimately removed from the rotunda and placed outside where the weather got to it.

1.17 Why was *Washington Crossing the Delaware* so popular? What are the inaccuracies in it that the critics point out? Are they really important?

This painting showed an undeniable American hero, George Washington, committing a heroic deed. The military tactic was successful and the enemy forces were routed. Washington, as the father of the nation and accomplished general, was portrayed here as a brave general leading his troops into battle and outsmarting the enemy. I can imagine this portrayal of the national hero being well received because it makes him look heroic.

Some of the inaccuracies include a cross section of the American population being represented on the boats, the usage of an American flag that did not exist at the time of the crossing, and that his stance is possibly not the best one to have in that kind of row boat.

These inaccuracies are not that important in my opinion. The painting does show a historic event and thus it would be ideal if it also accurately represented the whole scene and wouldn't take liberties with the details. Nonetheless, I think that Leutze was not aiming for complete historical accuracy with this painting. I think he wanted to represent the idea of heroism and pride that were associated with this event and that is certainly the case.

Furthermore, considering that this painting was created 76 years after the actual event, that the painter was not present, and that he painted this in Germany and not in the US I could also imagine that these were accidents that Leutze did not intend. Especially the flag being changed is very understandable because the historically accurate Grand Union Flag still had the Union Jack on it, which would not have been popular at all.

1.18 Read the stories *The Outcast of the Poker Flat* by Bret Harte and *Love of Life* by Jack London. Which of these two stories can be described as an example of romanticism and which of realism/naturalism?

Love of Life by Jack London can be called an example of romanticism because it focuses on individualism, emotion, and nature. This is a contrast to the focus on the realistic

speech and life in the American West in *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*. I don't think these text fit perfectly into these categories because people like the protagonist in *Love of Life* would probably call starvation and misfortune part of the life of gold seekers, while being expelled from a town under the threat of death might not have been extremely common for most people.

All in all, *The Outcasts of Poker flat* does fit the label of realism because it tell the tale of a gambler, a drunk (and suspected thief), and two possible prostitutes that are expelled from their town after some money went missing and a couple people got hanged. The use of slang in this story and the fact that the outcasts meet two young people running away to get married after the brides father does not give them his blessing makes if feel realistic.

In *Love of Life*, the gold seeker is stranded in the wilderness after he sprains his ankle and his companion Bill deserts him. Through sheer force of will he survives and soldiers on. The only thing that keeps him going is life itself, he is no longer in control of his body. The difficulty of his journey forces him to let go of the gold that he found because it is too heavy and at the end he can only crawl towards a ship he spies on the horizon, trailed by a wolf as close to death as he is. In the end he cannot think anymore and relies on his instincts to survive, killing the wolf with his teeth and crawling towards the ship whose crew find him and nurse him back to health. These elements of the story fit the individualism, emotion, and focus on nature that romanticism had.

2 Lecture 14.01.2020

- art and we are stimulated by things
- we have to be stimulated – so does art
- art also needs stability because people need to appreciate it
- when there is instability, nobody cares about art
- e-course enrolment key: Hopper
- American Art is different from European Art
- the book is very good **find pdf**
- we will not be looking at all of American art, but the book is still a good book to read

2.1 Intro

- map of the colonial US shows that most of the land was claimed by France and Spain and not the US initially (1776)
- there was no/almost not art in the original 13 Colonies

2.2 Art in Colonial America

- merchants had the leading role, educated themselves and the like
- colonists were well read in general, also read popular literature

- in the spirit of enlightenment public libraries were created and many universities founded
- the driving force of those original 13 Colonies were the merchants
- there was nothing in the colonies themselves, so someone had to bring the products into the country – this gave them their power
- at the beginning the merchants were the only ones buying art – they only wanted portraits of themselves to represent themselves
- America did not have any artists, so they imported ones from the old world – they did not get the best artists
- *John Smibert - The Bermuda Group* is a good painting, but it lacks character and identity, all the characters looks the same
- Smibert was the one to open the first museum in America, in Boston
- he introduced that art and also sold art supplies etc.
- *Gustavus Hesselius - Lapowinska* is a painting of a Native American Chief (Delaware Tribe) which is unusual for the time
- they were also portrayed with emotions and real faces, showing how tired they were
- this particular chief is the one that sold Pennsylvania, he looks tired

3 Lecture 16.01.2020

3.1 Homework

3.1.1 John Copley

3.1.2 Charles Wilson Peale

3.1.3 Benjamin West (p. 136-138)

3.2 Notes

- the beginnings were very humble
- people only wanted to have portraits as they were merchants
- Copley and Peale were genuine American painters
- *we chose Renaissance portraits that we liked and posted them on e-course, explaining what we like about them [here](#)*
- these portraits show very different things – seeking, self-assuredness, energy, determination, authority, power
- G. Hesselius portraits show that he had sympathy for the Natives
- in his letter though, he didn't think much of them, he found Colonial America appalling
- *“it is a savage and terrifying folk. They are naked . . .”* writes Hesselius in a letter sent from Colonial America
- it took him 20 years of living in America between writing this letter and painting the Native chiefs
- he became an anthropologist and then painted the Natives from that kind of perspective

- Hesselius describes the environment that he was presented with when he came to America, a mess of competing religions, ethnicities, just a total mess
- John Copley – generally self taught artist, mostly learned from looking at copies and reproductions of other paintings
- he mostly painted rich Americans, he showed class, wealth, and dignity, not necessarily beauty
- he had great skills when it comes to the technical aspects, like painting reflections on an expensive hardwood table
- his self portrait might show a certain insecurity, as if he is searching for something, he was not completely happy – portraits did not feel fulfilling for him
- America was not a place for him to show his full potential, but in America there was no demand for anything that was not a portrait
- when the Independence War started, he got involved because his father-in-law was the loyalist merchant whose tea was thrown into the harbor during the Boston Tea Party
- in Great Britain he could paint pictures that would never find buyers in America because the interest in art is very different there
- his talent is recognized in GB and starts to paint historical paintings, which were not marketable in America
- as an American living in London he paints British history for the local audience, not American history, of which there was not a lot at that point

4 Lecture 21.01.2020

4.1 Homework – Early Federal Period

4.1.1 Grand Manner

- [Wikipedia - Grand manner](#)
- idealized aesthetic style derived from classicism and High Renaissance
- in 18th century used by British artists to describe paintings with visual metaphors that suggest noble qualities
- Sir Joshua Reynolds made it popular through lecture at the Royal Academy from 1769 to 1790 – painters should perceive their subjects through generalization and idealization and not careful copy of nature
- originally regarding history painting, later also portrait painting
- portraits showed subjects life size and full-length, surroundings conveyed the nobility and elite status of the subjects
- common background elements: classical architecture (sophistication, cultivation), pastoral backgrounds (virtuous character, unpretentious, sincere, undefiled by wealth and estates)

4.1.2 John Trumbull

- [Wikipedia - John Trumbull](#)



Figure 1: The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple - Raphael, 1512



Figure 2: Jane, Countess of Harrington - Joshua Reynolds, 1778

- 06.06.1756 - 10.11.1843
- Revolutionary War veteran, artist of the early independence period
- *The Painter of the Revolution*
- born in Connecticut, father was Governor of Connecticut
- descendant of early Puritan settlers
- lost an eye in an accident, went to Harvard College
- soldier in the war, sketched battle lines at Boston
- poor, in 1780 he turned to art
- went to London and learned from Benjamin West – paints small pictures of the war
- returned to the US in 1782, back to London in 1784 to continue studies
- got a picture accepted for display at the Royal Academy
- went to Paris in 1786, starts working on *Declaration of Independence*
- he travelled and painted all the signers to add to the larger painting



Figure 3: Declaration of Independence - John Trumbull, 1818

- he fell on hard times before selling 88 works to Yale University
- continued to paint American personalities including George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton
- 1791 was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences
- 1816-1836 served as the president of the AAAS, where he did not get along with the students
- they left and founded the National Academy of Design, AAAS closed in 1839
- interred at Yale, his birthplace is a National Historic Landmark, his painting of Alexander Hamilton's face is on the \$10 bill

4.1.3 Gilbert Stuart

4.1.4 John Neagle

4.1.5 John Vandelyn

4.1.6 Thomas Sully

4.2 Notes – Early Federal Period

- colonial artists: Smibert, Blackburn, Hesselis – mostly British artists
- federal artists: *John Copley*, Charles Peale, Benjamin West – American-born artists
- Copley was very talented, while he started out as an American artist, when the war broke out he went to England because his family had loyalist connections
- his family was in danger, a mob came to his house
- in Britain he painted British history in order to get by and fit in
- The Death of Major Pierson – big painting of British history shows the British winning against the French
- very colorful painting

The Death of Major Pearson - John Copley

- he was a hard working artist, until his death in London
- he started out as a colonial artist, became a federal artist
- Peale was also an important artist, painted his own museum etc.

The Artist in His Museum - Charles Peale

- he painted George Washington, but the first painting was not accepted because it was not what the new country wanted in a hero – even though it was probably accurate
- the portrait was not accepted even though it was a good portrait, it was not statesman-like enough
- Benjamin West was a colonial artist, found a donor and went to Europe to study art there
- he becomes famous for his art in Britain and becomes the President of the Royal Academy as an American-born artist
- he never forgot where he came from though, he helped out many other American artists like Trumbull etc.
- looking at a picture by West of a peace treaty, we commented on it [here](#)
- a nice amount of plagiarism in the answers here, people just copy shit
- as it turns out, there is no text of the treaty, there are no real records of the meeting – we only know that the painting was commissioned by the son of the founder of Pennsylvania, who had certain motives when he commissioned the painting
- it might have been an example of peaceful resolution, but that is not certain
- maybe the dress of the settlers is more conservative and maybe a symbol of more sophistication – the clothing might not be appropriate for the time, so that may show bias against the natives when the Europeans are portrayed as civilized and the natives are not
- the acquisition of land was not violent, but it was by deception and not fair

- **Assignments:** the 4 writing assignments from e-course

5 Lecture 23.01.2020

- **Benjamin West** was an American artist who went to Great Britain and became a British artist and then, out of necessity, started painting British historical paintings
- his patriotism: his allegiance is with art, and he will work in any country that allows them to do what he want, he is not a political painter
- then we looked at the answers to “What is significant about Benjamin West’s painting The death of general Wolfe?”
- the painting glorifies the death of the general, it was not exactly accurate
- in these kinds of paintings people would generally wear Greek or Roman clothes to show class and history, he refused to do that and just paints normal clothes that would be appropriate for the time
- stuff like diagonals are used to show movement, typical baroque stuff
- the native in the picture looks on with a certain admiration or sorrow and that would probably not have been the case – but you have to appease the public
- **John Trumbull** learned from Benjamin West, but he had more movement and went further than West, was an aid to Washington and had the rank of major
- the fate of an artist and his allegiances is seen when comparing his paintings of Montgomery and the Gibraltar sortie – first he was an officer and then he resigned because of a dispute about rank and payment
- classical painting style in colors and dynamics, also classical
- Vanderlyn is an American artist and that copied classical artists and he painted in a classical style
- we don’t want to be people without ties to history :p

6 Lecture 28.01.2020

6.1 Federal Period

- Stuart’s painting of Washington fits what the Americans expected of their politicians at the time and thus is became the most popular one of the many that were made
- reading stuff from e-course from the writings from the last week
- Thomas Jefferson as a great politician and statesman, but also an architect
- he designed a building at the university of Virginia and his own house among other things
- now we have a short film on Lewis and Clark that gives us a rough idea of what is was like
- Louisiana Purchase more than doubled the area of the US
- he made the purchase even though it was 2x the annual budget of the US at that time
- Lewis and Clark were the first that really explored the whole breadth of the continent

7 Lecture 30.01.2020

7.1 Homework

7.1.1 Romanticism

- American landscape was something new and somethings that set them apart from Europe
- the US had a ton of land and gave it away cheaply
- there were many trails established that connected the new lands to the east
- manifest destiny was coined and people generally accepted it as right
- together with reminiscence about how the land in the east used to look people began romanticizing nature
- after 1825 Americans wanted pictures of the land itself because of that
- rich folks often wanted to have pictures that posed a contrast to the cities and business that they were involved in and armchair travellers could enjoy themselves

7.1.2 Thomas Cole

- 1801-1848
- called the founder of American landscape painting even though he was not the first
- some of his predecessors were painting too idyllic pictures that people did not like as they did not represent the America they knew anymore
- Cole was the first artist whose representations really struck a chord
- he grew up in England amidst the Industrial Revolution – many aspects of his art and life seem to be influenced by that
- 1818: he came to the US with his parents, was amazed by the scenery, 1825 visited Catskill Mountains
- Cole was selftaught, created his own version of landscape painting
- the pristine wilderness appealed to Americans, provided a sanctuary
- *Associationism*: getting to know God by appreciating his natural works
- a Romantic spirit would also find joy in Cole's pictures of forests, cliffs and storms
- American antiques were gnarled old treetrunks, while the European trunks were man-made – a sawed-off treetrunk was a symbol for this wilderness coming to an end
- he believed that history painting was the highest form of art, while landscape painting was low – it had to be ennobled
- he used legends, historical events or literary pieces for that, for example *Last of the Mohicans*
- 1829: he went to Europe to improve his art – he was moved by ruins that showed him human ambition, pride, and folly

7.1.2.1 The Course of Empire

- return to NYC in 1832, began a 5 picture series called *The Course of Empire*
- stages:
 - *Savage*: too wild and chaotic

- *Pastoral*: men, women, children living in harmony with nature
- *Consummation of the Empire*: hedonism, destruction of the works of God (nature), religious ceremonies
- *Destruction of the Empire*: destruction of the architecture, slaughter, burning, pillage
- *Desolation*: ruins of the city in the moonlight, nature reclaims the scene (God triumphs)
- Cole believed that America was on a similar course
- these paintings were not so popular, patrons preferred the “real” America

7.1.2.2 The Voyage of Life

- next series of 4 paintings – hero travels on the river of life, pictures show elements of fate and time
- stages:
 - *Infancy*: guardian angel watches over the boy from the barge
 - *Youth*: angel now watches from riverbank, because the young boy wants to be in charge and pursue the castles in the sky
 - *Manhood*
 - *Old Age*
- this symbolism was easier to understand and Americans loved it
- prints of *Youth* in particular became very popular, was often interpreted as discovering the American future and Manifest Destiny

7.1.2.3 The Architect’s Dream

- visual fantasy and love for different historical architectural styles
- commissioned by Ithiel Town, who is in it and has some of his books strewn around him
- it shows all the great building styles of the past before the architect’s eyes

7.1.3 Alfred Bierstadt

- 1830-1902
- brought to America as an infant, returned to Duesseldorf to study at the Rhineland art center
- spent a year in Italy, established a studio in NYC
- 1859: trip to the American West (Rocky Mountains) with army expedition
- on horseback, in perilous circumstances – Bierstadt made countless oil sketches of natives, animals, and the scenery
- this mostly – to white people – unknown scenery became the basis of his art and reputation
- 1863: paints his most famous picture *The Rocky Mountains, Lander’s Peak*
- it was a huge canvas 3 meters across and showed a majestic mountain landscape
- he was also praised for his anthropological description of natives
- 1863: next trip to the west, to California and the Pacific Northwest
- many canvases, notably *Yosemite Valley* and the *Sierra Nevada Mountains*

- particular picture: *Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, California* shows the massive scale by placing small natives, bears, deer in the picture
- *Emigrants Crossing the Plains* shows wagon trains going by native encampments – inhospitable, pristine, hope, ultimate success

7.2 Lecture Notes

- 1804: Lewis and Clark went to explore the Louisiana Purchase
- they gathered a wealth of information on the land, wildlife, people and more

8 Lecture 04.02.2020

8.1 Presentations

My presentation

- I gave my short talk about *New England Scenery* by Frederic E. Church
- it was not realistic because forests were cut down and stuff changed more than Church showed → Romanticism because it showed an ideal
- not that panoramic (not a lot of detail in the background) and detail is mostly in the foreground

Anastasiia's presentation

- *Niagara*, 1857
 - highly detailed view from the Canadian side of the Niagara Falls
- *Our Banner in the Sky*, 1861
 - the flag of the north in the Civil War shown in strips of clouds, blue/white sky, stars in the sky, tree as mast
 - painting shows sunset, red sky, dark clouds around the edges, dead tree as mast → shows concern and is not happy, maybe even disturbing
 - shows that he is concerned
- *Cotopaxi*, 1862
 - very red color scheme, shows an erupting volcano
 - this is kind of calm for the thing it shows
 - captured distant places such that Americans could travel
 - religious undertones – contemplate beautiful nature, God's creations
 - going away – capture it before it's gone
- *Winter Twilight from Olana*, 1871
 - work seems not in his style
 - lighting not as epic
 - brushstrokes are visible
 - not really romantic, it sticks out from his usual works

Someone's presentation

- *Thunder Storm on Narragansett Bay*, Martin Johnson Heade, 1868
- there may be some similarities to Cole's *Voyage of Life* because of the darkness

- shows a coastal area with the workers, fishermen, boats
- a couple are taking their boat ashore
- period of depression that does not last long
- play of light and darkness from front to back and left to right
- nobody is running, it is not that fearsome, they are used to it
- great reflections on the water
- many colored painting, experiment in color according to Hardin

8.2 Notes

- Church changed his style from Luminism through Romanticism to something that clearly shows brush strokes
- *Vision of the Cross* was created as a reaction to his travels to the Holy Land, where he also paints Jerusalem from afar
- another *Cotopaxi* because he was interested in natural phenomena
- *The Shore of the Turquoise Sea*, Albert Bierstadt, 1878 is different from his other paintings
- it does not show plains or mountains or valleys
- like Cole, he showed human influence through a broken mast, oars, etc
- *Autumn - On the Hudson River*, Jasper Francis Cropsey, 1860 is super luminist in his depiction of the nature
- Bierstadt is was not afraid of including native americans in his paintings, but in some cases just to give some context to the size of the things he painted
- Bierstadt mostly painted the American West, Church travelled far and wide and painted South America, Cole mostly painted Hudson river stuff
- they all wanted to show a panoramic view of significant landscapes
- *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, George Caleb Bingham, 1845, is a luminist painting in style with a big sky and a lot of light and generally calm subjects
- the young man is half native, his father is French, they have a small black bear on the boat, a shot duck on the boat and the young native is stretched out on a rifle
- the US produced fur for the European market
- the America of wilderness, which is gone forever now, is shown in this picture

9 Lecture 06.02.2020

- America was changing really quickly
- kinda like America today
- 13 colonies became independent and started to expand really quickly
- frontier life vanished quickly – romanticism was a reaction to that
- Bierstadt, once popular, fell out of style really quickly
- now watching *Dances with Wolves*

10 Lecture 11.02.2020

10.1 Homework

10.1.1 William Sidney Mount – Historic and Political Art (p. 221-224)

- common things in life were seen as American and worthy, even though foreign visitors would decry them
- the new chapter America opened allowed people to think free from old traditions and frameworks, opening new opportunities for thought
- museums were founded and new ways of thinking became prominent
- poetry and literature also experienced new developments, with many new works being created, e.g. *Moby Dick*
- women's suffrage became a thing
- simple, homey scenes from rural areas provided the material for genre painting
- most people were rural, but the patrons of genre painting were urban, maybe because they wanted to escape urban life and industrialization
- things were smaller and compared to Europe less pompous, fitting into the idea of genre painting
- attended academy of design
- he tried biblical history painting, but it did not appeal to him
- rural subjects and music were important aspects of Mount's art
- Mount himself was a good fiddler and his brother was a composer → the liking of music is pretty clearly founded in something
- the recurring theme of a barn could be explained by the existence of a barn in the town Mount lived in
- pictures were popular because they showed rural, good America vs the bad citydwellers
- he put moral messages in his paintings, like the gambler one, and he also covered them in a layer of humor from time to time

10.1.2 Bingham – The Western Frontier (p. 228-230)

- Bingham described what was going on around the Mississippi and Missouri rivers as the frontier expanded to those lands
- see *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*
- this is a new type of folk hero that was born from the land itself – there was no European counterpart – this was uniquely American
- he also painted political pictures at the frontier
- there is greatness in the commonplace

10.1.3 Leutze – The Heroic Narrative (p. 231)

- heroic narratives were not popular because there was no one that would buy the paintings and there was no pre-established cult of great persons
- Emanuel Leutze made a name for himself with his heroic paintings

- best remembered for *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, depicting heroic Washington and his great military maneuver
- he was then commissioned by the Capitol, but that was not common at the time

10.1.4 Horatio Greenough – American Sculpture (p. 248-260)

- from a prominent Boston family, attended Harvard, got interested in sculpture and then went to Italy to study it some
- went back to Florence and spent a long time there
- first big commission was for the Chanting Cherubs, which was not well received in America because of the nudity that it showed
- he should have learned from this experience, but he did not
- then he was commissioned by the government to make a statue of George Washington intended for the US Capitol rotunda
- he made a mix of a bust of Washington and the famous Zeus statue
- he made him look greek and foreign to Americans
- the sculpture is noble and impressive (artistry and looks) but was ridiculed because Americans did not feel like Washington needed anyone to represent him but himself
- only few people actually appreciated his style of sculpture, he laid the groundwork, but others would need to create works that resonated with more people

10.2 Notes

10.2.1 Romanticism

- *Dances With Wolves* embodies romanticism, landscapes, and Manifest Destiny
- it was very powerful in Europe, in America it was a hero that went to untouched lands (in the movie)
- European examples: Goethe, Haydn, Tchaikovsky...
- Dunbar is happy with an outpost without people in the middle of nowhere, he likes living away from civilization – romantic
- Manifest Destiny meant that land was taken away from the natives and never given back
- *Wounded Knee* (see [source](#)) was a massacre that killed over 150 natives in a conflict with U.S. Army soldiers, *Dances With Wolves* hints at something like that at the end of the movie
- *George Catlin*: painted native Americans after he retired from being a lawyer while most people viewed them as a nuisance
- all his paintings have the same kind of expression on their faces
- he took an ethnographic approach to painting them
- *Wee-Sheet Sturgeon's Head, a Fox warrior* shows colors, hairstyle, earrings, bracelets, red and white hands
- *Keokuk (The Watchful Fox), chief of the tribe* shows more clothing and style, weapons, armor, metallurgy etc
- reservations still exist, some natives leave the reservations and join mainstream society, many of them don't though

- native reservations have a ton of problems with poverty and drugs and stuff

10.2.2 Genre Painting

- shows scenes from everyday life, generally country life
- **the paintings contained messages that the viewer should learn**
- it was popular because the country was still one of farmers and most Americans were living in rural areas
- European life was seen as mostly decadent and American cities were heaped in with that
- this more relatable topic was more popular with farmers and stuff
- *Dancing on the Barn Floor* – William Mount, 1831
- barns were of course common and thus painting stuff in it is liked
- *The Banjo Player* showed Black Americans and a banjo in his paintings
- *The Truant Gamblers* shows boys skipping school, drinking something out of a flask (possibly cider), gambling, and a man carrying a stick is rounding the corner to teach them a lesson
- people could see themselves in these pictures which made them more popular
- *The Power of Music* showed a black farm worker listening to white men playing fiddle in a kind of barn
- *The Sportsman's Last Visit* shows two men courting the same woman and the gentleman seems to win the battle, attempting to teach that what women prefer brains?
- *Loss and Gain* shows an old drunk stumbling through a forest and dropping his drink (the loss), but gains a chance at sobriety (gain)

10.2.3 Luminist-Romantic-Genre Painting

- *The Jolly Flatboatmen in Port* – George Caleb Bingham
- shows common people dancing and frolicking on a boat, luminist style
- *Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers* shows determined people moving towards a new life, they are armed and the nature is pretty wild – a determined party of Americans that want to claim the land and make it prosper
- he also painted elections, e.g. *The Verdict of the People* or *The County Election*, common people vote in that picture, but there is also a drunk in the front plus a bunch of other people drinking
- there are no women or people of color in the picture because they were not allowed to vote
- people of color make appearances now, he also copied things from European paintings which were now widely available
- *Order No. 11* shows the Union soldiers committing kind of war crimes, Bingham hated Gen. Ewing who is shown in the painting and drafted Order No. 11

11 Lecture 13.02.2020

- *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (Leutze) is being described, his stance and what the picture shows
- it was a surprise attack on the British army by American continental forces
- inaccuracies: attack happened in the dark, there was no ice, the river was not as wide, stances are not that useful in boats, horses were not on boats
- Leutze wanted to convey an idea or a sentiment and not a completely accurate representation of history – thus the changes he made were maybe understandable and justifiable – depending of your value-based judgement
- around that time (~1848) there was a revolution in Germany and Leutze may have wanted to convey this idea of revolution to Germans
- Congress wanted a copy of that painting so Leutze made a copy of it
- the original was destroyed by a British bombing campaign in Bremen in WWII
- *Washington's Crossing* (Mort Kuenstler) is a more accurate version of events
- it does show Washington standing up in an impressive way and there is a torch but it is a lot better than Leutze
- Leutze's *Empire Makes it's Way Westwards* was commissioned by the state to glorify this thing – it is a pure propaganda thing
- it has parallels to a journey to the holy land
- Greek slave statue was popular when it first came to America – even religious groups went to see it
- to make the sculpture attractive he wrote a story about how the slave is a true believer that is being exploited by Turk slavers (nonbelievers) – this made people want to go and see it
- if you explain or spin art in a certain way people can be made to like it
- American sculptors all lived in Europe and were trained there
- Aphrodite's sculpture by Rinehard(t?) is of great artistic beauty
- sculpture of Medea, who killed her own children to get back at her cheating husband is also amazingly detailed
- John Rogers made sculptures of American scenes – the fugitive's story is about a black woman who fled from the south telling three men her story
- another sculpture is of a family playing checkers in a relaxed setting
- Palmer is another American sculptor that also made nude sculptures – a white woman captured by natives that has a different style than normal classical sculptures

12 Lecture 18.02.2020

12.1 Presentation by Anastasiia on *Thomas Eakins*

- 1844 – 1916
- born in Philadelphia
- studied drawing and fine arts at an academy, also anatomy and dissection
- studied art in Europe as well
- *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, 1876-1877
 - interestingly the focus is on the chair that has the nude model's clothes on it

- the clothes thrown over the chair make the nudity more pronounced because it focuses on the undressing?
- *Swimming*, 1884-1885
 - 5 nude men that go swimming
 - his own dog is also in the picture
- he was accused of voyeurism because he liked nude bodies so much
- *The Cross Clinic*, 1875
 - studying at a medical school where he later taught too
 - he painted himself with the students
 - painting a doctor with blood on their hands was not cool – was not accepted for exhibition
- his style was naturalistic and realistic as seen in the blood etc.
- *The Agnew Clinic*, 1889
 - was a portrait for the doctor to show him in his element I guess
 - he did not charge the doctor extra either
 - this painting does not have any blood
 - some people say that this painting is much more mature and less focused on being spectacular
- he also took photos of nude men and women in one picture etc
- he was ultimately sacked from his position at the academy because he showed a nude male model to a mixed audience

12.2 Notes

- not necessarily beautiful, but realistic and shows what is happening
- the art trends we are talking about now are generally also found in literature
- *The Gift Outright*, Robert Frost – generally a realist poet – wrote this nationalist and patriotic poem about how the Americans owned the land before they were even Americans
- romanticism always emphasized feeling over reason
- *Snap the Whip* by Winslow Homer shows village boys playing like they did, that is how it was
- realism was criticized because it was not art meant to decorate, it wasn't exactly pretty
- Winslow Homer also irritated people who wanted something beautiful from art
- art should open your eyes to things that are hidden and not just be beautiful