

Neoclassicism -- Ideas / Concepts:

Roots of Neoclassicism

1: A reaction against Rococo art:

- Primary function of painting and architecture of this period (Watteau, Boucher, Boffrand)
- to please - primarily *decorative* (ornamental - "over-done")
 - escapist - romanticization of reality, bucolic, pastoral
 - fantasy - objectification of women, idealization of nature

2: 18th Century Naturalism:

Express a new sensibility in art which reflects new thinking in France (Chardin Greuze)
Middle class people - the nobility of work and the simple life

- "back to nature" (not elaborate social rituals) Rousseau
- reason and moral integrity (not hedonism and luxury) Voltaire
- edification/content (not escape/fantasy) Diderot

3: The Enlightenment (The Age of Reason) (Rousseau, Locke, Diderot, Voltaire)

A new way of thinking about the world, independent of religion, myth or tradition
Mankind can only find truth by using rational thought and evidence to support it - *Doctrine of Empiricism* forms the philosophical basis of Neoclassicism.

4: Ancient Greece and Rome - revival of interest (Winckelmann's writings, Piranesi's prints)

- artists and architects become fascinated with Ancient Greece and Rome due to
- new discoveries of antiquity, especially Herculaneum, Pompeii and Paestum
 - Piranesi's prints of ancient Paestum, (Herculaneum excavated beginning 1738 Pompeii 1748)

5: Piranesi (1691-1765) Context: *issues ideas surrounding Piranesi's work*

the idea of the "picturesque"

the Grand Tour - first stop Paris, then the south of France, then Italy, ending in Rome

vendute: historical renderings (prints - etchings) of ruins (of Rome) for foreign (aristocratic) tourists wanting to take back souvenir from their "Grand Tour" (with attending implications of the passing of time)

carpaccio: renderings (etchings) of ruins (with a fanciful aspect to heighten nostalgic aspect) or architectural rendering of complete fantasy with a "moral" or narrative aspect (e.g. Tower with Bridges, 1760)
the writings of Winckelmann especially his "Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture" (1755)

the Academies, especially the Royal French Academy and the British version - the Royal Academy.
the Salons - yearly shows put on by the Academies, juried by senior members of the Academy

Neoclassicism:

The French Revolution adopts Neoclassicism

- adopts the Greek ideal of liberty and democracy in the light of reason and in reaction to the repressive monarchy ("*man is born free and everywhere he is in chains*")
- painting was used to promote the revolutionary ideals and highest virtues of the revolution

Napoleon adopts Neoclassicism

- painting and architecture was at the service of a political agenda - **propaganda**
- Napoleon saw himself as the new "Caesar" of a new empire, with Paris as the new Rome architectural programs promote that grandiose self-image
- glorification of Napoleon in the paintings of the time - large historical paintings commissioned to cast reality in the best possible light

The Role of "Nature" in 18th Century art and architecture:

Relationship between nature (landscape gardening) and architecture in England and France:

French Garden:

- the formal French garden (as at Versailles)
- duplicated and responded to architecture
- the ordering and controlling of nature, just as architecture orders space
- symmetry, order, geometry

English Garden:

- informal "romantic" sensibility
- intimate, picturesque, sentimental
- contrived to look natural - buildings set in nature to be vignettes
- asymmetry, apparent randomness

Neoclassicism:

"Art should have no other guide than the torch of Reason"

"The arts must . . . contribute forcefully to the education of the public"

Jacques Louis David

Context: *The Age of Reason* and *The Enlightenment* form the basis of Neoclassicism.

Writers and philosopher/thinkers which inform the Neoclassical movement:

Rousseau Winckelmann Diderot Voltaire

The painting of **Chardin** and **Greuze** express a new sensibility in art which reflects the thinkers and writers in France at the time, which are

- "back to nature" (not elaborate social rituals)
- reason and moral integrity (not hedonism and luxury)
- edification/content (not escape/fantasy)
- depiction of middle class people - the nobility of work and the simple life

- 1: Politicians and social activists of the time look to the ancient models of Rome and Greece for inspiration for democracy and human rights. Heroism and self-sacrifice, rugged resolve and Spartan simplicity became the hallmarks of the revolutionary spirit.
- 2: Greek art epitomized the new standard of aesthetics: *"noble simplicity and quiet grandeur"*

Function: Propaganda to make *"virtue adorable and vice repugnant"* Diderot

The French Revolution:

- adopts the Greek ideal of liberty and democracy in the light of reason and in reaction to the repressive monarchy (*"man is born free and everywhere he is in chains"*)
- idea of perfection coming out of order and harmony and a noble simplicity
- painting was used to promote revolutionary ideals and highest virtues of the revolution

Napoleon:

- painting and architecture was at the service of a political agenda - propaganda
- Napoleon saw himself as the new "Caesar" of a new empire, with Paris as the new Rome - architectural programs promote that grandiose self-image
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Architecture: **Vignon, Percier and Fontain**

Neo-Classicism is a renewed interest in the art and culture of ancient Greece and later, Rome and artists and architects of the time became fascinated with these periods because:

- new discoveries of antiquity, especially Herculaneum and later at Paestum
- Piranesi's prints of ancient Rome and Paestum

Paris was to be the new Rome under **Napoleon**.

Copying of classical monuments (triumphal arch, column, temple)

<u>Painting:</u>	David, Ingres	academic	severity of style	moralistic
	Kaufmann	austere	orderly	elegant
		clarity	polished paint surfaces	
		technical virtuosity	skill of drawing and painting	
		precise contours	seamless modeling	

Sculpture: **Conova**
perfection, idealization, unemotional

Romanticism – Ideas / Concept

"...to set fire to yourself, remember certain passages from Byron" Delacroix

"...emotion over intellect, mystery of reason, passion over restraint, freedom over rules and the supremacy of the individual over that of the crowd." Fleming

Roots of Romanticism

- 1: 18th Century "**sensibility**" "our existence is nothing but a succession of moments perceived through the senses" Rousseau
- 2: Rousseau's writings: "**back to nature**" - the soul in union with the natural world
 - the concept that nature was a mystical experience
 - that when a person became completely "at one" with nature, they lost everything except the sense of being
- 3: Goethe's writings ("**Feeling is all!**") - **Sturm and Drang**
- 4: **Gothick novels and writings of Poe, Hugo, and Scott**
 - for the Romantics, the *gothick* sensibility was something mystical, weird, and fantastic.
 - this imagery merged well with Romantic ideology, which stressed passion and emotion.
- 5: English Romantic poets: **Byron, Shelley, Keats and Shakespeare's** plays
- 6: **Revolutions and social unrest of the 19th Century (in France in 1830 and 1848)**

Historical Context of Romanticism

Greek Independence	<i>cause celebre</i> for Europeans, particularly the English poet Byron <u>Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi</u> Delacroix
July Revolution of 1830	overthrowing the Bourbon monarchy. Louis Philippe - constitutional monarch <u>Liberty Leading her People</u> Delacroix
1848 September Revolution	overthrow of Louis Philippe's government - Louis Napoleon reigns as Napoleon III

Manifestations of Romanticism:

- 1: Historical paintings of disasters, Revolutions, Greek liberation - romantic realism
Raft of the Medusa - Gericault
Executions of the Third of May, 1815 Goya
- 2: Pluralism and exoticism - interest in other cultures and time periods
medieval (Gothic)revival (architecture)
Chinoiserie (architecture)
- 3: **Fantasy and the imagination**
- Goya's late work
- 4: **English landscape painting:**
 - the divinity of nature - "a religion of Nature"
 - for artists and writers during the 19th Century, nature replaced Christianity as a structuring concept and source of inspiration
 - *melancholy* was often the emotional response to nature
 - Constable "Clouds are the chief organs of the *sentiment*" Constable
 - Turner - the concept of the *sublime* in art (as in the writings of Burke)
- the belief that contact with nature can heal and restore ones soul
 - Friedrich "The artist should paint not only what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him." Friedrich

Romanticism - Landscape Painting

"The artist was no longer a mere beholder of the landscape but a participant in its spirit, no longer a painter of mere things but the translator of nature's transcendent meanings, arrived at through feelings inspired by the landscape" Gardner

As short history of landscape in western European painting:

Roman wall painting: illusionism / decorative interiors Garden scene in Villa of Livia at Prima Porta
Early Renaissance (Italy): experiments in illusionary space Massaccio's Tribute Money
Northern Renaissance: Garden of Eden, metaphor for innocence Bosch's Garden of Earthly...
Late Renaissance: first real landscape for landscape's sake possibly Gorgione's Tempest
Mannerism: helps capture the religious experience of the artist El Greco's View of Toledo
Northern Baroque: landscape emerges as a subject matter of painting in Rusidael Dutch landscape school.
Baroque "Classicism": escapist to another time (Arcadian), academic exercises Poussin
Rococo - escapist to an idea, escapes to a segment of society in denial Watteau's Return from Cythera

Landscape for the Romantic artist:

- landscape becomes a metaphor for the internal emotional life of the artist
- nature replaced Christianity as a structuring concept and source of inspiration
"The experience of the supernatural has . . . been transposed from traditional religious imagery to nature" Rosenblum
- the writers Rousseau and Goethe were seen as "fathers" of the Romantic movement
- the concept of the "noble savage" as a Romantic concept

Constable the picturesque in art: *"Clouds are the chief organs of the sentiment"* Constable
Turner the concept of the sublime in art: uncontrolled forces of nature - weather
 the belief that contact with nature can heal and restore ones soul
Friedrich nature a metaphor for the artist's interior emotional and spiritual life
"The artist should paint not only what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him."

Nature: (nature = truth innocence beauty virtue)

- the divinity of nature - "a religion of Nature" - the worship of nature equated to morality
- nature was not created by man and was something received through the senses
- melancholy was often the emotional response to nature
- Rousseau** - believed that when a person became completely "at one" with nature, they lost everything except the sense of being - the concept that nature was a mystical experience
"our existence is nothing but a succession of moments perceived through the senses"
- Goethe**: *"nature was the living garment of God"* - the soul in union with the natural world
 - belief in the beauty and innocence of nature, *natural* man was at his most virtuous

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American Landscape Painting

Hudson River School - landscape as the new Eden, escape from European "civilization" Cole