

MOST FAMOUS ARTWORKS STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW

The Birth of Venus

Sandro Botticelli

c. 1485

Renaissance



What makes this artwork significant?

- Idealized beauty/nature
- Sinuous curves
- Lush fullness of figure
- Blonde
- Land, air, water plentiful
- Goddess Venus/Virgin Mary
- When you look at it you should think “ideal love”



Mona Lisa

Leonardo Da Vinci

c. 1507

Renaissance

*Michelangelo and Raphael
are contemporaries of Leonardo*

What makes this artwork significant?

- Portrait of a wealthy woman
- Lisa Gherardini (confirmed in 2005)
- Famous because of her expression is hard to define. Enigmatic.
- She doesn't have eyebrows or eye lashes
- Smooth soft transitions of light to dark to create illusion of form.

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

Pieter Bruegel the Elder c. 1560 *Flemish Renaissance*



What makes this artwork significant?

- Inspired by a poem of the same title by William Carlos Williams
- Genre scene-scenes from every day life may be realistic or imagined
- Represents man's indifference to the suffering of others
- Icarus- Greek legend-created wings of feathers and wax but flew too close to the sun

The Creation of Adam

(from the Sistine Chapel)

Michelangelo Renaissance 1508-1512



Ceiling of Sistine Chapel



What makes this artwork significant?

- Sistine Chapel is part of the pope's official residence
- Michelangelo painted 12,000 square foot ceiling with various characters from the Bible.
- The image of God is based on the Roman god Jupiter.
- It took Michelangelo 4 years to complete the ceiling fresco. (pigment mixed with wet plaster)

The School of Athens

Renaissance



- Raphael
- C. 1511

What makes this artwork significant?

- This is a fresco painted on a wall in the Vatican.
- It contains many philosophers, Plato and Aristotle are the figures in the center.
- Raphael included himself and Michelangelo in the fresco.
- Raphael painted Leonardo Da Vinci's face on the figure of Plato.

Las Meninas

Diego Velazquez

1656

Baroque



What makes this artwork significant?

- Dramatic lighting changes are used to distinguish the depth of space and add a sense of drama to the Baroque painting.
- The central figure is the young princess, Margarita Teresa of Spain.
- The king's and queen's images, blurry and indistinct, are reflected in the mirror.
- The figure in the door way is the King's trusted advisor in more focus and detail. The artist is communicating who has the more persuasive power in this kingdom.
- Velazquez has included himself in the painting

“David”

Donatello Renaissance c. 1440

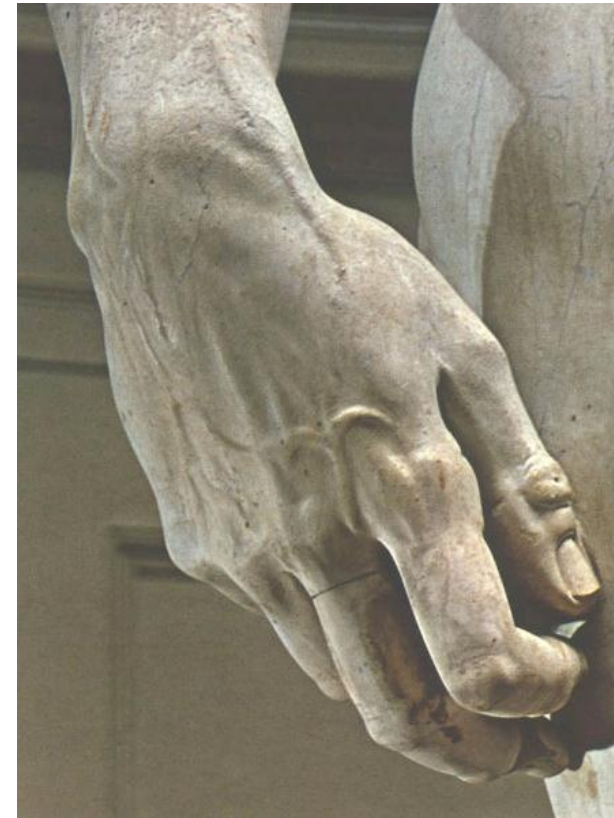


What makes this significant?

- First unsupported standing work in Bronze.
- First free standing nude male sculpture made since ancient Greek time, in a Contrapposto stance.
- David has an enigmatic smile posed with his foot on Goliath's head, yet appears effeminate.
- He represents the civil liberties of Florence and strength against other Italian provinces, he is a political symbol.
- It was scandalous that this sculpture would be privately owned by a powerful family so Donatello created David with a helmet and laurel wreath and winged boots like the Greek god Hermes.

“David”

Michelangelo Renaissance 1501-1504

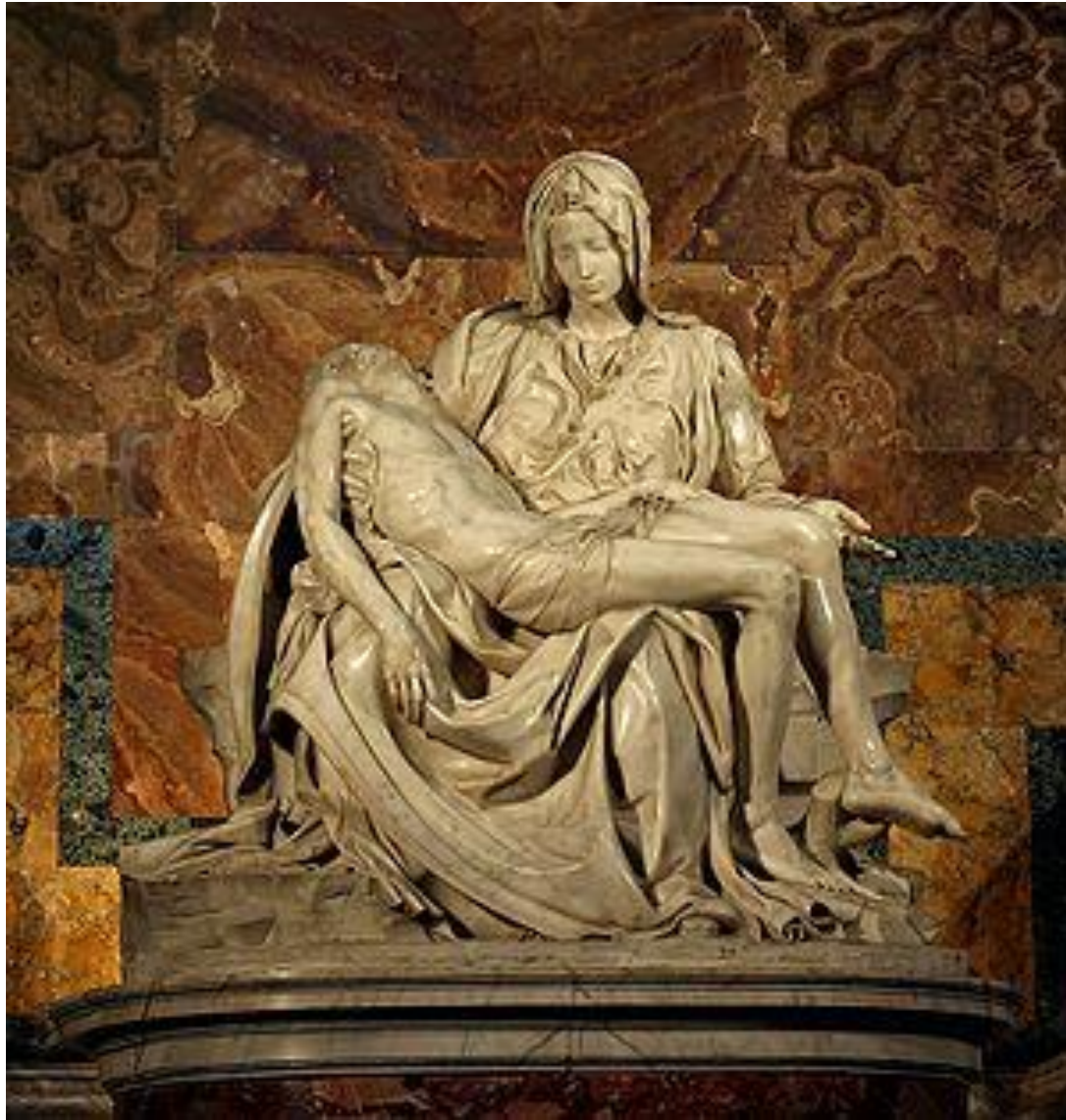


What makes this artwork significant?

- Carved from Carrara marble. From Carrara Italy
- He is 17 feet tall. Standing in a contrapposto stance.
- This is supposed to be the Biblical David from the story of “*David and Goliath*”.
- David is supposed to represent a young male who has just made the decision to bring down a giant with a slingshot.

Pieta

Michelangelo Renaissance 1498-1499



What makes this artwork significant?

- This sculpture is made from Carrara marble and located in St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.
- This sculpture balances the Renaissance idea of classical beauty with naturalism.
- It represents the moment Jesus was lowered from the cross and placed in Mary, his mother's arms.
- This is the most highly finished sculpture by Michelangelo and the only one he signed.

The Laughing Cavalier

Frans Hals Baroque 1624



What makes this artwork significant?

- Hals was the first great artist of the 17th-century Dutch school and is regarded as one of the most brilliant of all portraitists.
- Commissioned portraits rarely showed adults smiling until the late 18th century.
- The effect of the eyes appearing to follow the viewer from every angle is a result of the subject being depicted as looking directly forward, toward the artist's point of view.
- The title is an invention of the Victorian public and press.

The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulip

Rembrandt van Rijn Baroque 1632



What makes this artwork significant?

- This is a group portrait of seven surgeons and the physician Nicolas Tulip
- The painting was made to hang in the board room of the Guild of Surgeons
- How much of a surgeon's body that is visible is equal to how much they paid to be in the painting.

Girl with the Pearl Earring

Johannes Vermeer Baroque c.1665



What makes this artwork significant?

- A tronie (Seventeenth century Dutch for a "face") is a common type, or group of types, of works of Dutch Golden Age painting and Flemish Baroque painting that shows an exaggerated facial expression or a stock character in costume.
- It is sometimes referred to as "the Mona Lisa of the North" or "the Dutch Mona Lisa".
- The subtle color scheme and the intimacy of the girl's gaze toward the viewer is greatly enhanced by the solid dark background.

The Third of May

Francisco Goya Romanticism 1814



What makes this artwork significant?

- Goya presents us with a dark vision of innocent Spaniards executed by a Napoleonic firing squad.
- He finds ways to support the story by artistic choices.
- For example: his use of a large canvas is an example of the Romanticism trait *that the present should reclaim its standing over an idealized past.*
- Shift of view directly facing the victims while the faces of the Napoleonic guard are obscured *creates more sympathy for the victims.*
- Use of lighting helps identify the symbolism used to show how Goya felt about May 3rd. The sole source of light, is controlled by the French, It symbolizes the *Enlightenment that Goya had hoped the French would bring to Spain.* The light also focuses on the man with the white shirt. Where *Goya has the figure positioned like Christ upon the cross.*

Olympia

Edouard Manet Realism c.1832-1883



What makes this artwork significant?

- When Edouard Manet's painting Olympia is hung in the Salon of Paris in 1865, it is met with jeers, laughter, criticism, and disdain. It is attacked by the public, the critics, the newspapers.
- Instead of following the accepted practice in French art, which dictates that paintings of the figure are to be modeled on historical, mythical, or biblical themes, Manet chooses to paint a woman of his time -- not a feminine ideal, but a real woman.

"The Lady of Shalott"

John William Waterhouse 1888 Pre-Raphaelite



What makes this artwork significant?

The Lady of Shalott is an iconic painting, Waterhouse typically focuses on the plight of a beautiful and tragic woman.

He uses symbolism and realism to convey the story based on the poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson. (i.e. snuffed out candles, tapestry, chain. Mouth open, crucifix)

Whistler's Mother

James McNeil Whistler Impressionism 1871



What makes this artwork significant?

- Also known as *“Arrangement in Black and Grey No. 1”*.
- *The artist was focusing on the harmony of shapes and didn’t want color to interfere.*

Jan Van Eyck
The Arnolfini
Marriage Gothic
1390-1441



What makes this artwork significant?

- He used walnut oil and other oils to make the paints and let each thin coat of paint dry before applying another coat of paint over it, giving the painting a three-dimensional appearance.
- This is a record of the marriage of the two people in the picture. In addition to being a portrait, it is also a legal record showing that the marriage took place. The artist signs it as a legal document.

Edgar Degas

"Dance Class II" Impressionism 1874



What makes this artwork significant?

- Degas is considered to be the father of Impressionism but he preferred to be called a Realist.
- He sought to capture fleeting moments in the flow of modern life, favoring scenes in theaters and cafés illuminated by artificial light, which he used to clarify the contours of his figures.

“Little Dancer of Fourteen Years”

Edgar Degas Impressionism 1881

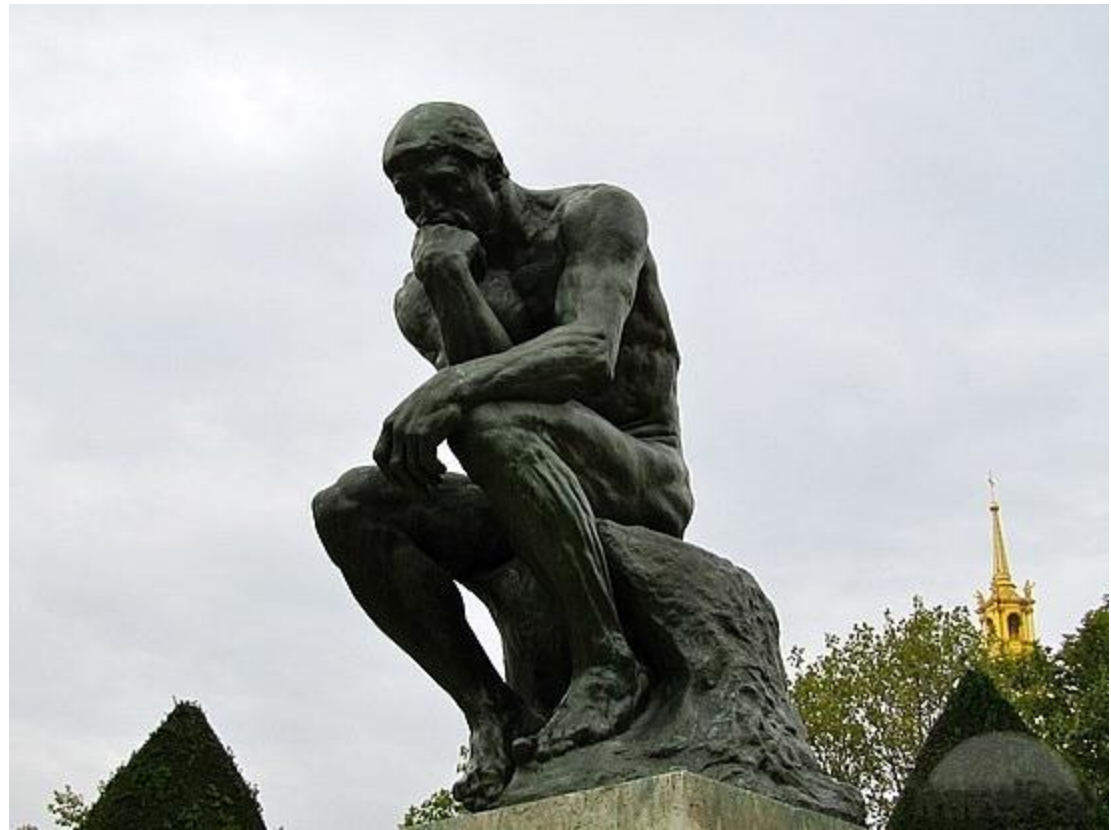


What makes this artwork significant?

- The sculpture is two-thirds life size and was originally sculpted in wax
- It is dressed in a real bodice, tutu and ballet slippers and has a wig of real hair. All but a hair ribbon and the tutu are covered in wax.
- The model for this sculpture is Marie Van Goethem. She was a student at the École de Danse in Paris, and by 1880 she had been engaged as a dancer at the Opéra.

“The Thinker”

August Rodin Post-Impressionism 1902



What makes this artwork significant?

- It Rodin wanted a heroic figure in the tradition of Michelangelo, to represent intellect as well as poetry.
- there are 28 original castings, and other versions, studies, and castings made after the death of Rodin.
- Rodin made the first small plaster version around 1880. The first large-scale bronze Casting was finished in 1902.

“The Gates of Paradise, Florence Baptistery”
Lorenzo Ghiberti Early Renaissance 1452



What makes this artwork significant?

- The doors are gilded bronze, 15 ft. tall relief sculptures
- The Baptistery is one of the oldest buildings in Florence, built between 1059 and 1128. The architecture is in Florentine Romanesque style.
- Depict scenes from the Old Testament
- There was a contest to see who would design and make the doors.
- The doors were dubbed by Michelangelo "the Gates of Paradise".

The Basket of Apples

Paul Cezanne Impressionism 1893-94



What makes this artwork significant?

- Cézanne ignores the laws of classical perspective, allowing each object to be independent within the space of a picture while the relationship of one object to another takes precedence over traditional single-point perspective.
- The objects in this painting, such as the fruit and tablecloth, are rendered without use of light or shadow, but through extremely subtle gradations of color.

Water Lilies

Claude Monet Impressionism 1899



What makes this artwork significant?

- Monet's view of forms emphasized their two-dimensional surfaces by eliminating linear perspective and abandoning three-dimensional modeling.
- He brought a vibrant brightness to his works by his use of colors, adding a range of tones to his shadows. (he depicted colorful shadows)
- Prepared canvases with light-colored primers instead of the dark grounds used in traditional landscape paintings

Le Moulin de la Galette

Pierre-August Renoir Impressionism 1876



What makes this artwork significant?

- Renoir painted 'the people's Paris', the Moulin de la Galette near the top of Montmartre was a characteristic place of entertainment.
- This picture of the Sunday afternoon dance in its acacia-shaded courtyard is one of his happiest compositions.
- The dapple of light is an Impressionist feature.

A Sunday on La Grande Jatte

Georges Seurat Pointillism 1884-1886



What makes this artwork significant?

- The artist worked on the painting in several stages, beginning with a layer of small horizontal brushstrokes of complementary colors. He later added small dots, also in complementary colors, that appear as solid and luminous forms when seen from a distance.

The Starry Night

Vincent Van Gogh Post-Impressionism 1889

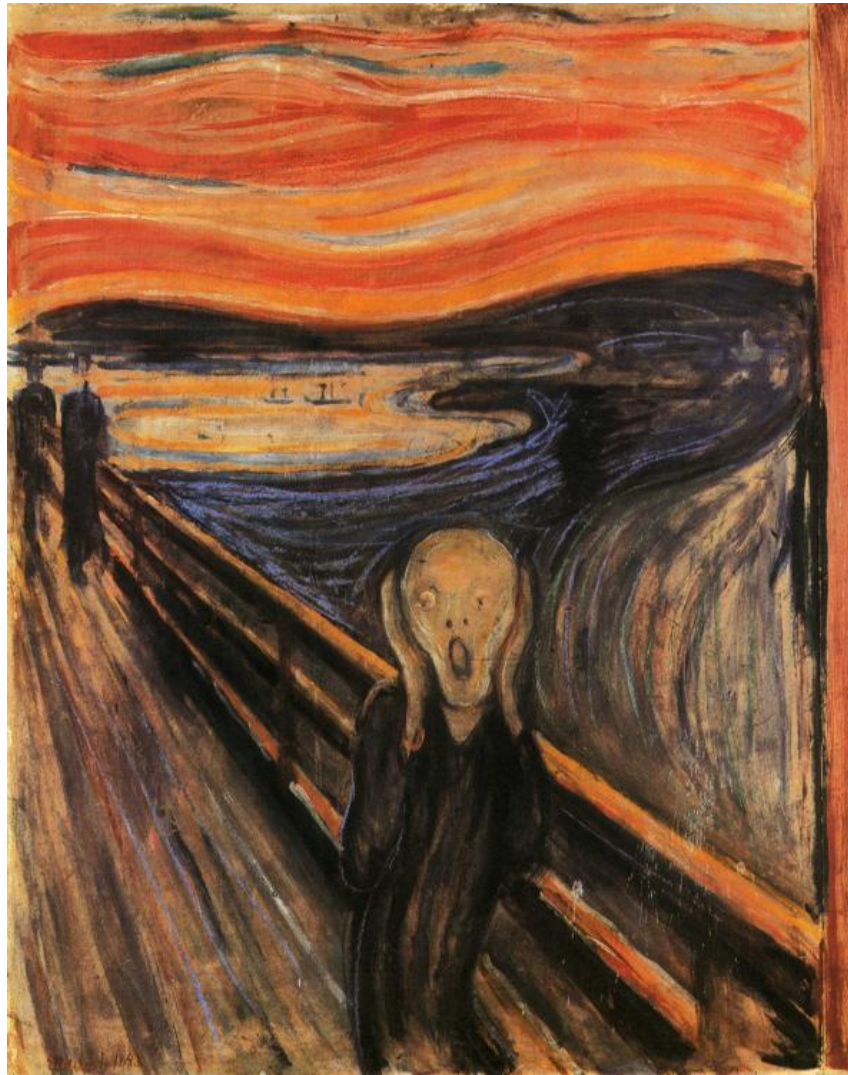


What makes this artwork significant?

- Van Gogh was active as an artist for only ten years, during which time he produced some 1000 watercolors, drawings and sketches and about 1250 paintings ranging from a dark, Realist style to an intense, expressionistic one.

The Scream

Edvard Munch Expressionism 1893

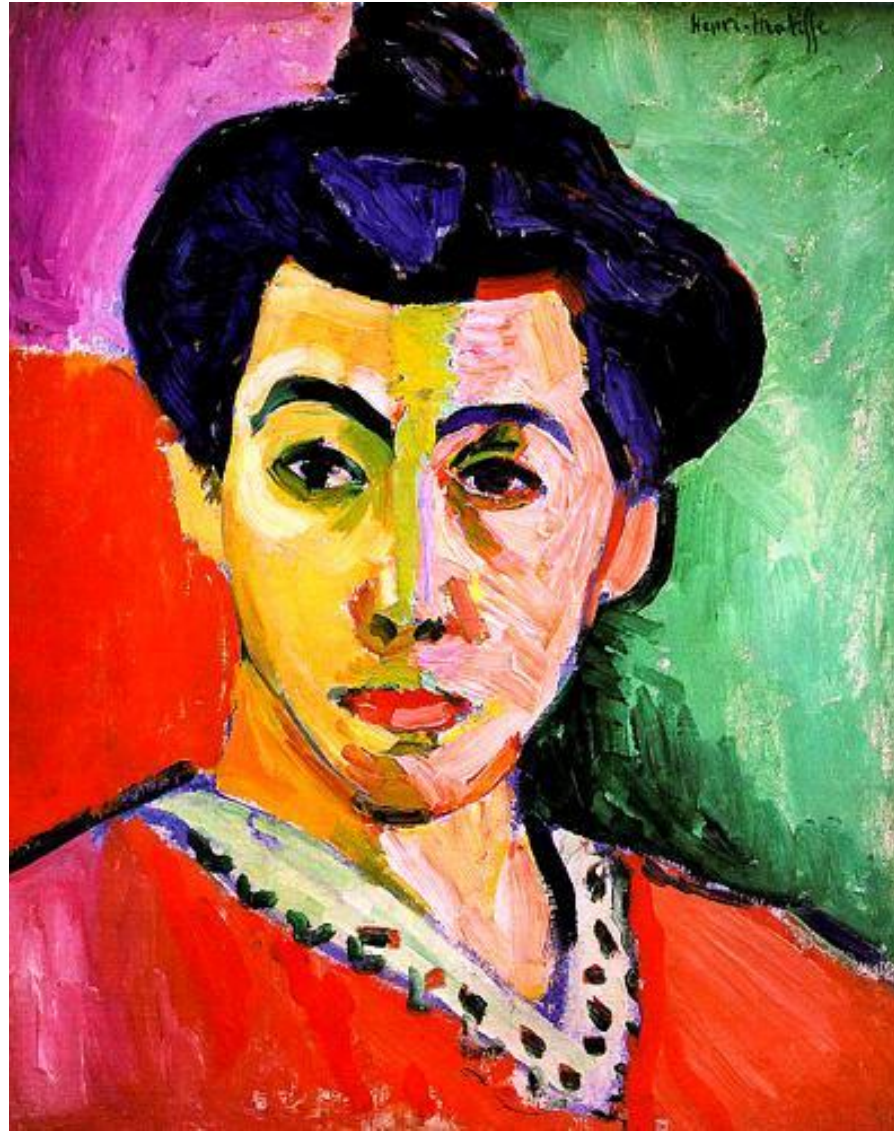


What makes this artwork significant?

- "Ich fühlte das grosse Geschrei durch die Natur" (I felt the great scream in nature).
- The imagery of The Scream has been compared to that which an individual suffering from depersonalization disorder experiences, a feeling of distortion of the environment and one's self.

The Green Stripe

Henri Matisse Fauvism 1905

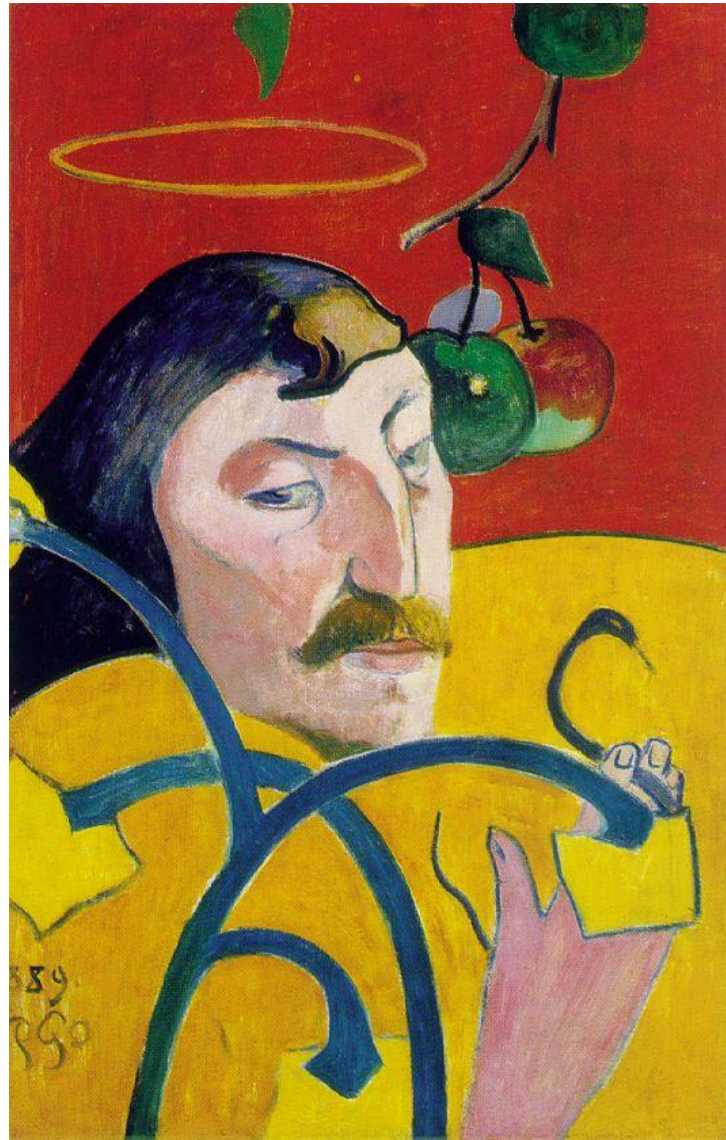


What makes this artwork significant?

- One of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, whose stylistic innovations (along with those of Pablo Picasso) fundamentally altered the course of modern art and affected the art of several generations of younger painters, spanned almost six and a half decades.
- Fauvism from the French word *fauves* or "wild beasts" by a contemporary art critic, referring to its use of arbitrary combinations of bright colors and energetic brushwork to structure the composition.

Self Portrait

Paul Gauguin Fauvism 1889



What makes this artwork significant?

- Some see the artist casting himself in the role of Satan, others as Christ. The apples that precipitate man's fall from grace; the halo over Gauguin's disembodied head; the snake that is both tempter of Eve and the embodiment of knowledge; the bold division into vivid yellow and red, evocative of both hellfire and the heat of creation?
- It is most likely that Gauguin is revealing his conception of the artist as hero, a master who knows that he possesses the power of magic by virtue of talent and genius.

“The Old Guitarist”

Pablo Picasso Expressionism 1903



What makes this artwork significant?

- Picasso was depressed and desolate over the suicide of a good friend.
- In addition, Picasso was very poor. His absolute poverty made him identify and relate to beggars, prostitutes, and other downtrodden outcasts in society.
- The Old Guitarist is said to be modeled after a blind artist in Madrid.

The Kiss

Gustav Klimt Art Nouveau 1907-08



What makes this artwork significant?

- Klimt's 'Golden Phase' was marked by positive critical reaction and financial success. Many of his paintings from this period include gold leaf.
- Klimt's fame usually brought patrons to his door and he could afford to be highly selective. His painting method was very deliberate and painstaking at times and he required lengthy sittings by his subjects.

The Large Blue Horses

Franz Marc Expressionism 1911



What makes this artwork significant?

- His work is characterized by bright primary color, an almost cubist portrayal of animals, stark simplicity and a profound sense of emotion.
- Marc gave an emotional meaning or purpose to the colors he used in his work: blue was used to portray masculinity and spirituality, yellow represented feminine joy, and red encased the sound of violence.

Garden of Love Improvisation 27

Vasily Kandinsky Expressionism 1912



What makes this artwork significant?

- He was one of the founding members of Der Blaue Reiter ("The Blue Rider) to promote a new art, one that would reject the materialist world in favor of the world of emotion and the spirit.
- Kandinsky's art was abstract, meant to express our preconscious selves, before the intervention of reason. By dematerializing the external appearance of his subject, without eliminating all visual reference to it, he could reveal the subject's essence.
- Kandinsky often used musical terminology to describe his work, and in the subtitle of this painting, the word improvisation suggests "a largely unconscious, spontaneous expression of inner character, the nonmaterial nature."

La Toilette

Mary Cassatt American Impressionism 1891



What makes this artwork significant?

- She often created images of the social and private lives of women, with particular emphasis on the intimate bonds between mothers and children.
- She was influenced by Degas and others with a sense of immediate observation, with an emphasis on gestural significance.

Three Musicians

Pablo Picasso Cubism 1921



What makes this artwork significant?

- In Cubism, the subject of the artwork is transformed into a sequence of planes, lines, and arcs. It has been described as an intellectual style, artists analyzed the shapes of their subjects and reinvented them on the canvas. The viewer must reconstruct the subject and space of the work by comparing the different shapes and forms to determine what each one represents. Through this process, the viewer participates with the artist in making the artwork make sense.
- This painting looks like a still life made of cut paper.

Cliff Dwellers

George Bellows Ashcan School 1913



What makes this artwork significant?

- stands out among Ash Can school paintings as a statement of strong social criticism.
- He considered himself to be a realist artist, producing vignettes of urban life
- The painting's palette is indicated as: Three chords. Orange -- Red-purple -- Green -blue.
Blue-purple -- Green -- Red-orange.
- Yellow-green -- Red – Blue.

“Bicycle Wheel”

Marcel Duchamp Dada 1913

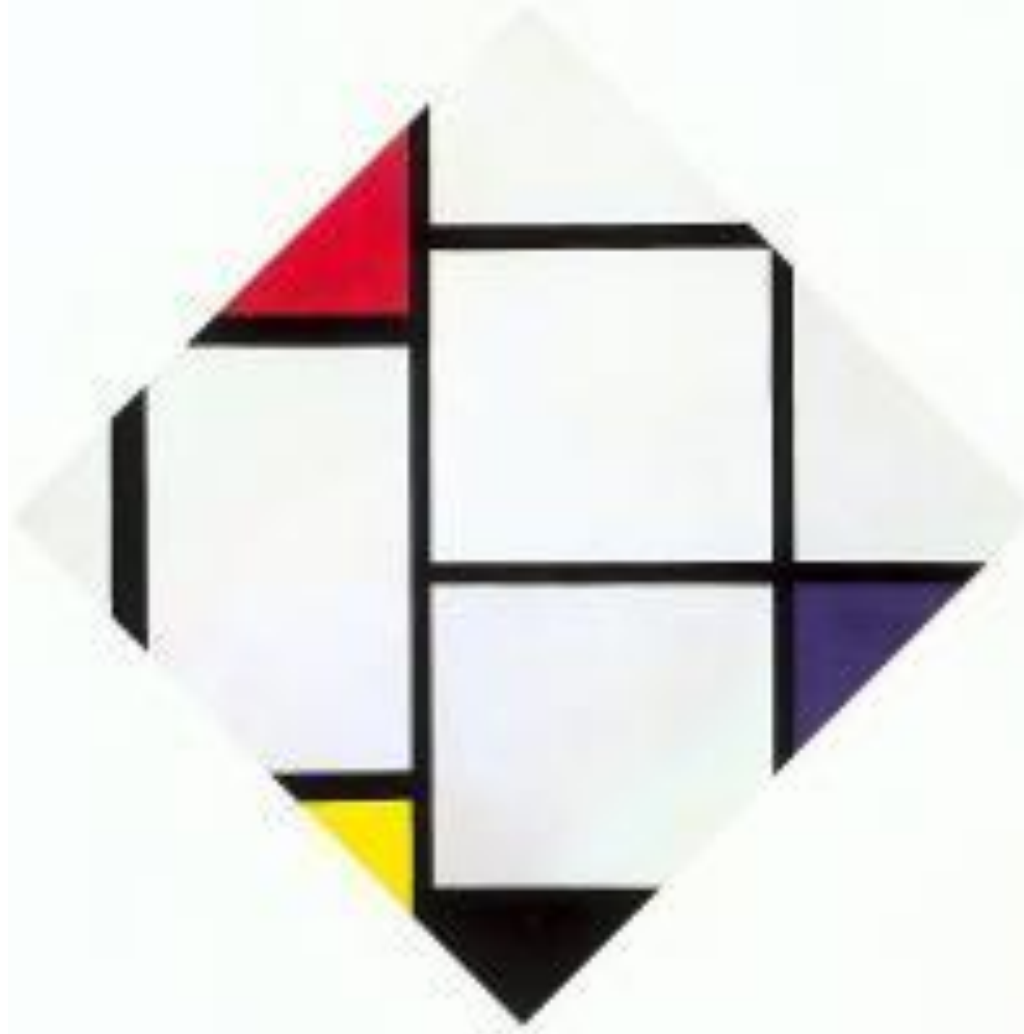


What makes this artwork significant?

- This is Duchamp's first readymade, a class of objects he invented to challenge assumptions about what constitutes a work of art.
- Duchamp combined two mass-produced parts—a bicycle wheel and fork and a kitchen stool—to create a type of nonfunctional machine.

“Composition with Grid VII”

Piet Mondrian Bauhaus 1919



What makes this artwork significant?

- Mondrian developed his theories of a new art form he called neoplasticism. He maintained that art should not concern itself with reproducing images of real objects, but should express only the universal absolutes that underlie reality. He rejected all sensuous qualities of texture, surface, and color, reducing his palette to flat primary colors.
- His theories of abstraction and simplification not only altered the course of painting but also exerted a profound influence on architecture, industrial design, and the graphic arts.

Parade

Jacob Lawrence Harlem Renaissance 1960



What makes this artwork significant?

- Renowned African-American artist, he broke ground with his expressive paintings depicting African-American life and history.
- Strongly influenced by his surroundings in Depression-era Harlem, he was also inspired by the community's rising African-American writers, artists and musicians.
- The artist created images brimming with flat, fragmented shapes and brilliant colors and dubbed his style “dynamic cubism.”

Persistence of Memory

Salvador Dali Surrealism 1931



What makes this artwork significant?

- Dali sometimes referred to his paintings as "hand-painted dream photographs"
- The contents of this painting are enigmatic and open to interpretation, Dali was also a philosopher, beside being an artist
- The painting is nothing more than a collection of ideas, that are to do with the interpretation of dreams, perception of reality, time, birth, death and sexual desire.

The Birthday

Marc Chagall Surrealism 1915

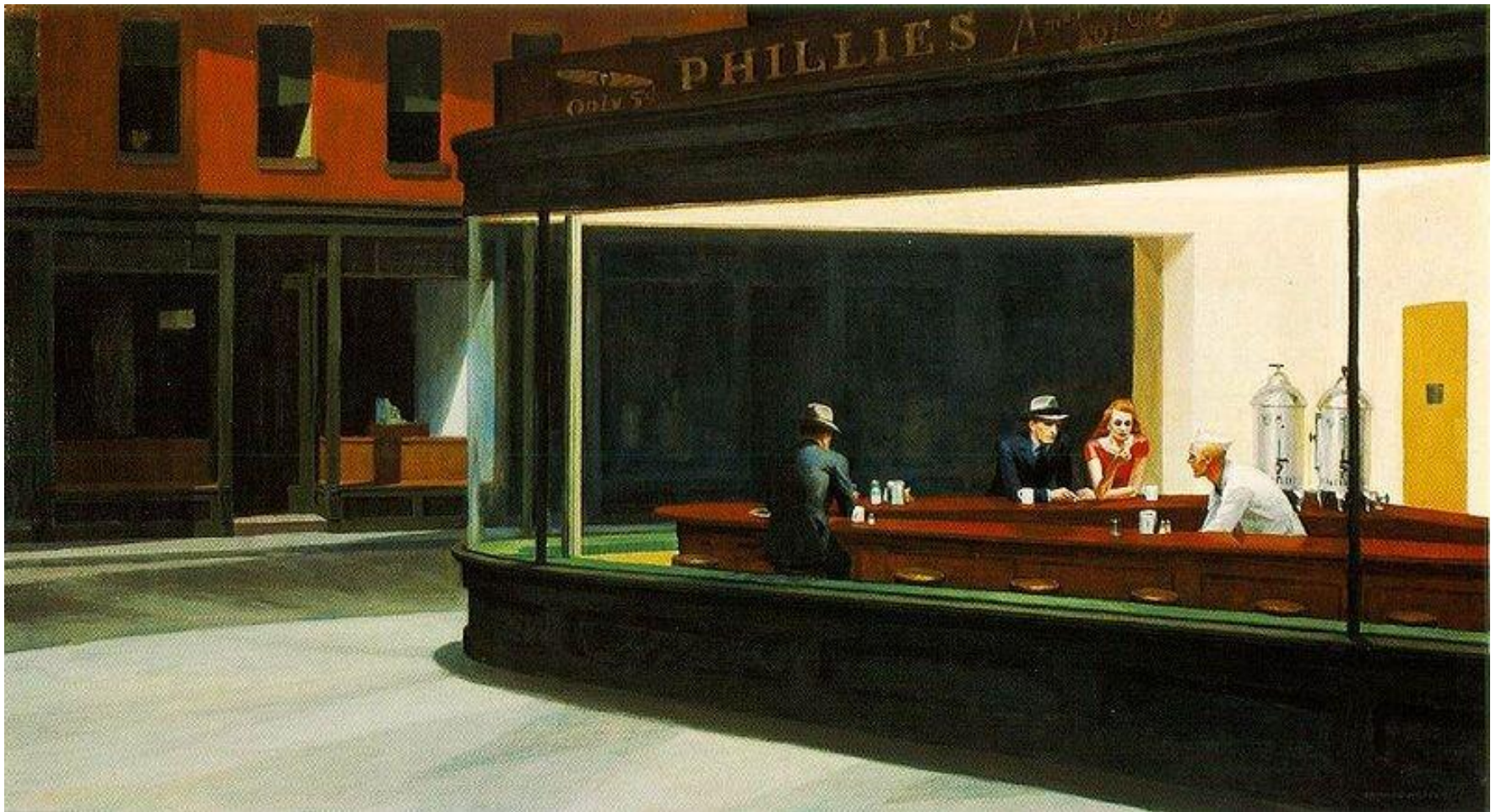


What makes this artwork significant?

- One could argue that the young man appears to be bending over out of his way to please his mate, as many of us strive to do for our loved ones on their birthdays.
- Inspired by events in the artist's life, perhaps it is a childhood memory of his parents, or a self-portrait of Chagall and a friend. One thing is for sure, this setting had a profound impact on the artist's subconscious, which is evident in the painstaking detail of the surroundings.

Nighthawks

Edward Hopper American Realism
1942



What makes this artwork significant?

- the artist was an avid moviegoer, and the cinematic techniques of early film noir, including the prominent use of angles, shadows, patterns of light, and scenes shot through and framed by windows and doorways, made their way into his pictures.
- Reworked and parodied countless times, Nighthawks has become an icon of American culture.