Art and Identity

8.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Name and categorize ways that artists explore the concept of identity
- Understand how art serves as a commentary on society
- Analyze how politics and societal concerns may influence art
- Understand how art expresses individual and group identity
- Understand how art preserves national culture and personal identity

8.2 INTRODUCTION

One of the more important themes emerging from the last century has been the individual’s search for identity. For example, genealogical websites have proliferated and special television programs are devoted to the subject. Since it first aired on PBS in 2012, Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s Finding Your Roots has been a popular program. The British version, The Guardian, has been successful since 2006.

Some anthropologists suggest that the deep-rooted interest in identity or ancestry is partly shaped by evolutionary forces dating back to early humans supporting each other in extended family groups. Anthropologist Dwight Read theorizes that the Neolithic people were the first to understand the concept of the family tree and the perception of self in a family unit and in society.¹ If connected through blood, people have the tendency to be more willing to care for each other; a common interest and support system is readily realized within a clan or a group.

Early humans created two- and three-dimensional likenesses of themselves in their environment to help understand who they were in relation to the other members of their group. Contemporary humans do the same; they make records of themselves with family members, most

commonly in photographs and Selfies, and on Instagram. It is the same fundamental concept and placement in an environment that collectively identifies who we are in society, for example, in social gatherings, organizations, and religious settings. This means, above all, that we must place ourselves within the world in order to obtain identity. Children search for their identity at a very young age by observing and recognizing their parents and family members. Their markings within a simple drawing of self and family—similar to those of early humans—help them to vindicate and confirm who they are and how they are perceived by their family group.

Like children, artists sometimes explore their identity through self-portraits and symbolically in works of art that relate to ancestry or culture. Doing so allows them to take a look inside their core and see how they fit within their contemporary culture; this investigation of self plays an important role in how artists understand their environment and the world.

Vincent van Gogh is known as a person who spent much of his time in solitude. He painted more than thirty self-portraits between the years 1886 and 1889, placing him among the most prolific self-portraitists of all time. Indeed, some of his most respected works are his self-portraits that trace his image throughout the last years of his life, the most crucial to his career. (Figures 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3) While Van Gogh used the study of his own image to help develop his skills as an artist, these self-portraits also give us insights into the artist’s life and well being, how he fit in society, and his place among the groups with whom he associated.

Like Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso painted a number of self-portraits. Throughout his career, Picasso painted various likenesses that reflected changes in himself, his style, his artistic development, as well as in his life style and beliefs—all of which may be viewed closely from the content of his
paintings. (Figures 8.4 and 8.5) The first self-portrait, painted in 1901 while he was establishing himself as an artist in Paris, France, and still spending time in Barcelona, Spain, reflects the somber mode and tones of his Blue Period (1901-1904). The second, dated to 1906, at the very end of his Rose Period (1904-1906), Picasso depicts himself as the artist who by that time was moving in artistic circles, gaining respect, and acquiring patrons. Frida Kahlo (1907-1954, Mexico) used the iconography of her Mexican heritage to paint herself and the pain that had become an integral part of her life following a bus accident at the age of 18 in which she suffered numerous injuries. She identified as a group member of her country, with Mexican culture and ancestry, and as belonging to the female gender. Kahlo’s self-portraits are dramatic, bloody, brutal, and at times overtly political. (Self-Portrait, Frida Kahlo: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/1/1e/Frida_Kahlo_%28self_portrait%29.jpg) In seeking her roots, she voiced concern for her country as it struggled for an independent cultural identity. She spoke to her country and people through her art. Kahlo’s art was inspired by her public beliefs and personal sufferings; she wanted her art to speak from her consciousness.

Although self-portraits of today may be slightly different from those of earlier decades, they still depict self-exploration and identity through society and groups that communicate who we are. Cai Guo-Qiang (b. 1958, China, lives USA) exploded small charges of gunpowder to create an image of himself. (Self-Portrait: A Subjugated Soul, Cai Guo-Qiang: http://www.caiguoqiang.com/sites/default/files/styles/medium/public/1989_SelfPortrait_0389_001ltr-web.jpg) Different from those by Van Gogh, Picasso, and Kahlo, Cai’s self-portrait does not have any likeness or resemblance to his personal features, but it too sends a message about our society and how Cai relates to it. For example, the artist associates the lack of identifying information, rendering him anonymous, with contemporary society, and the fired gunpowder with both chaos and transformation.
Despite the distance in time that separates early and modern humans, the search for their place in society and who they are remains of fascination and a mystery to all humans regardless of their time in history.

**8.3 INDIVIDUAL VS CULTURAL GROUPS**

Often when one thinks of an artist, the image is of someone doing solitary work in a studio. During the Romantic period of the late eighteenth century until around 1850, artists, writers, and composers were associated with individualism and with working alone; this trend continued to develop up until recent times. The Romantic period valued and celebrated individual originality with musical and literary geniuses such Ludwig Beethoven, Frédéric Chopin, Robert Schumann, John Keats, Edgar Allen Poe, and Mary Shelley. The visual arts boasted such geniuses as Francisco Goya, Eugène Delacroix, William Blake (1757-1827, England), and Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835, France). (Figures 8.6 and 8.7) Artists of the period exemplified the Romantic values of the expression of the artists’ feelings, personal imagination, and creative experimentation as opposed to accepting tradition or popular mass opinion. Artists in the period broke traditional rules; indeed, they considered it desirable to break the rules and overthrow tradition.

From the Medieval to the Baroque periods, however, artists worked together in workshops and guilds, and schools
were formed that stressed the importance of preserving heritage and history through rigorous and systematic artistic training. Large-scale commissions often required numerous hands to complete a work, emphasizing collaboration. Nevertheless, the artwork was expected to have a consistent style and quality of craftsmanship. To satisfy those various needs, artists often specialized in a particular type of subject matter. For example, Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640, Germany, lived Flanders) and Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625, Flanders) collaborated on more than twenty paintings over twenty-five years. (Figure 8.8) In their *Madonna in a Garland of Roses*, Rubens’s celebrated skill as a figurative painter can be seen in the serenely glowing face of the Virgin Mary and energetic cavorting of the cherubs surrounding the circular arrangement of flowers painted with accuracy and delicacy by Brueghel, who was known for his lively nature scenes.

A recent study by a Yale University researcher found the perception of high quality art today is that it is produced by a single individual. If produced by two or three people, as in a mural or public work projects, the value of the art drops. For creative works, perceptions of quality therefore appear to be based on perceptions of individual, rather than total effort. Nevertheless, a new trend across the world in general suggests that this tradition, which first arose in the West during the Renaissance, is not the norm around the globe; that is, the value of art as located in the single artist who produces art individually and alone may be more specifically based in certain cultures. Artists in the twenty-first century are collaborating with others through social media and/or face-to-face encounters. It is interesting to remember that the word “art” derives from a root that means to “join” or fit together. A whole constellation of ideas and practices can be accomplished through networking and collaboration as artists participate in group residencies and apprenticeships similar to workshop traditions of centuries ago to learn the customary methods and advanced techniques of their art.

### 8.3.1 Nation

The Kingdom of Benin, located in the southern region of modern Nigeria and home to the Edo people, was ruled by a succession of *obas*, or divine kings. It grew from a city-state into an empire during the reign of Oba Ewuare the Great (r. 1440-1473). From 1440, obas ruled the kingdom until
it was taken over by the British in 1897. Remarkably, the obas and people of Benin remained in control of their trading relations with Europeans and without interference from the rulers of the nations they traded with until the second half of the nineteenth century, prior to foreign rule. The city of Benin prospered and grew through trade with the Portuguese, Dutch, and British.

One of the benefits of dealing with merchants-sailors who traveled the seas was the variety of goods they brought with them and were eager to trade for foodstuff grown or refined by the Edo people. In particular, the Edo treasured brass and coral, along with the ivory they acquired through elephant hunts. Those materials were reserved for the oba and his court, and were used in abundance in the wide array of ceremonial and sacred objects created under each ruler. Kingship was passed from father to firstborn son, and, upon ascending to the throne, the new oba was expected to create an altar made of brass for his father, as well as one for his mother, generally in ivory, if she had attained the status of queen mother. The new oba also created a brass head to honor his predecessor. (Figure 8.9) Over time, objects such as plaques, bells, masks, chests, and additional altars made of brass or ivory, some adorned with coral, were added. Some were used to commemorate momentous events and honor heroes, but the majority of royal objects were used in ceremonial and symbolic support of the oba, his ancestors and subjects, and the kingship itself.

This nineteenth-century brass head of an oba, for example, is not meant to be a portrait of an individual king so much as a representation of the divine nature and power of being king. The oba derives his power from his interactions with and control over supernatural forces. He is allied with and assisted by his deified ancestors, whom he honors through rituals, offerings, and sacrifices. In stressing this continuity of kingship and his rightful place in that unbroken chain, the oba strengthens his own power and that of his people and nation.

The welfare of the kingdom rests on the oba’s head, a heavy burden, which is emphasized in representations of him using a proliferation of objects weighing upon him (Oba Erediauwa: https://olivernwokedi.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/10993492_326911840841133_1374574355846860660_n.jpg). But, he does not bear the weight of ruling alone; he works with and relies on his advisors and subjects as they support him. That support is shown literally when the oba is in full ceremonial regalia. In this photograph of the current oba, Erediauwa, the King is shown in his royal garb, heavily beaded in coral with ivory bracelets and plaques at his waist; an attendant, supporting his right arm, is helping Oba Erediauwa bear the weight of kingship on behalf of the nation of Edo people.
Following George Washington’s celebratory visit to Charleston, South Carolina, in May 1791, the Charleston City Council voted to celebrate the national hero by having John Trumbull (1756-1843, USA) paint a life-size portrait of the President and hero of the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) to “hand down to posterity the remembrance of the man to whom they are so much indebted for the blessings of peace, liberty and independence.”

Having been Washington’s aide-de-camp during the War of Independence, Trumbull chose to portray Washington as the steadfast and majestic general at the start of the Battle of Trenton, a pivotal engagement for colonial troops discouraged in the aftermath of several recent defeats. (Figure 8.10) The painting depicts clouds in a dark, overcast sky turning pink with the rising sun juxtaposed with the general’s horse, frightened by the ongoing battle, held tightly by his aide. Washington stands with confidence, one glove off to hold a spyglass in his right hand, looking in the distance as if heeding a faraway call for victory.

Trumbull was pleased with “the lofty expression of his animated expression, the high resolve to conquer or to perish” that he captured in *George Washington before the Battle of Trenton.*

His patrons in South Carolina were not, though, and rejected the portrait when he presented it to them in 1792. Speaking on behalf of the people of Charleston, South Carolina Congressman William Loughton Smith “thought the city would be better satisfied with a more matter-of-fact likeness, such as they had recently seen him calm, tranquil, peaceful.”

This was not an isolated occurrence: the question of how a statesman and military hero should be represented had not been resolved to the satisfaction of artists or patrons in the eighteenth century, in the years both before and after the founding of the United States. As a representative democracy, the country’s leaders should be depicted as a commander-in-chief who is also one of the people, many argued. But American artists unfortunately had no clear model for a “matter-of-fact likeness” in the portraits of European royalty and heads of state that they used as examples. Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641, Flanders), who was court painter to the King of England, around 1635 painted *Charles I at the Hunt.* (Figure 8.11) The informal yet
dignified stance van Dyck adopted for his image of the sovereign, a gentleman out in nature, quickly became the favorite pose for aristocrats and other dignitaries sitting for a non-ceremonial portrait. The pose still remained a standard at the time Trumbull painted *George Washington before the Battle of Trenton*, but, as indicated by the painting’s reception, it was not considered appropriate in a representation of the leader of a democratic nation. In addition, as the portrait was to commemorate Washington’s visit to Charleston, townspeople thought the battle setting should be replaced with a view of that city.

Trumbull took note of his patrons’ wishes and painted another version. (*General George Washington at Trenton*, John Trumbull: https://www.flickr.com/photos/35801169@N00/6612343749) While Washington’s pose remains virtually unchanged, Trumbull lightened the sky and inserted a view of Charleston Bay with the city on the far shore. Charleston leaders were satisfied and Trumbull promised delivery of the painting after some minor additions. The addition turned out to be the General’s horse, but reversed from the original painting, with its hindquarters prominently displayed in the space between Washington’s canary yellow breeches and his walking stick, and the distant city visible between the horse’s legs. The painting still hangs in the Historic Council Chamber of Charleston City Hall.

### 8.3.2 Cultural Heritage and Ethnic Identity

One important aspect of cultural and ethnic identity is shared histories or common memories. Such histories are our heritage. However, heritage is not the full history. It connects to culture and ethnicity in order to convey the full story about who we were and who we have become as a society or individual. Self or national identity is built on its foundation. Defining terms will help in understanding how each interplay to identify who we are as an individual or nation.

Christian Ellers, a popular contemporary writer on cultures, defines identity as whatever a person may distinguish themselves by, whether it be a particular country, ethnicity, religion, organization, or other position. Identity is one way among many to define oneself. Ellers defines ethnicity as a group that normally has some connections or common traits, such as a common language, common heritage, and or cultural similarities. *The American Dictionary* defines culture as the way of life of a particular people, especially as shown in ordinary behavior, habits, and attitudes toward each other or one’s moral and religious beliefs (“Culture”). We will look at these terms as they relate to artists, the visual documentarians of society.

Kimsooja (b. 1957, South Korea), a multi-disciplinary conceptual, reflects on her group identity by exploring the roots of her Korean culture. She draws upon tradition and history by selecting familiar everyday items such as fabric to communicate her message. Fabric wrapped into a bundle known as a “bottari” is commonly used to transport, carry, or store everyday objects in Korean culture. What is different is Kimsooja’s use of fabric as an art form. Since 1991, Kimsooja has used fabric, sometimes in the form of a bottari, in an on-going series, *Deductive Objects*, exploring Korean folk customs, daily and common activities, and her cultural background and heritage in relation to her life and experience. (*Bottari Truck-Migrateurs*, “Je Reviendrai”, Thierry Depagne and Jaeho Chong: http://farm8.staticflickr.com/7368/12236788126_2d99de3e56_z.jpg) In this example, she
photographed figures draped in Korean printed fabric that conceals their ethnicity, culture, and identity. Their identity is left to the viewer’s imagination, and their culture is left for the viewer to consider, using the print of the fabric as a clue.

A number of artists such as Kim-sooja choose to communicate through their art who they are in relation to their culture and ethnicity. Their art becomes a means of validating their self-identity. Her Korean heritage represents a treasury of symbols that commemorates who they are as a people and a distinct culture with a common artistic sensibility. Their national self-image is, on one level, unambiguously defined by the convergence of territorial, ethnic, and cultural identities. The geographical conditions of the Korean Peninsula provide a self-contained nautical and continental environment with plenty of resources with which to create and be innovative. These conditions have given the people since prehistoric times a rich and unique culture to draw from and make contributions to humanity. Koreans take great pride in their homogeneous culture, and in their heritage.

Russia, similarly self-contained, for many centuries developed cultural characteristics and ethnic identities distinctly their own, as well. Russia’s rich cultural heritage is visually stunning, from its vivid folk costumes to its elaborate religious symbols and churches. (Figure 8.12) Most Russians identify with the Eastern Orthodox (Christian) religion, but Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism are also practiced in Russia, making it a rich land of diverse ethnic groups and cultures. St. Basil’s Cathedral, located on the grounds of the Kremlin in Moscow, and hundreds of other orthodox churches symbolize Russia’s heritage; indeed, citizens proudly place pictures of the cathedrals in their homes and offices. The churches in Russia are astonishingly beautiful and very much a part of Russia’s heritage.

Ironically, then, in light of such a rich internal history, why did Russia’s rulers look to western European artists and artistic traditions to develop a new artistic identity in eighteenth century?

Carlo Bartolomeo Rastrelli (1675-1744, Italy, lived Russia), an Italian sculptor who moved to St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1716, is associated with the formation of Russia’s “new” culture. As a young artist, Rastrelli moved from his native Florence during an economic downturn to Paris in search of greater opportunities. The lavish and majestic works he created there in the late Baroque style did not earn him the success he sought, but did bring him to the attention of Tsar (and
Peter the Great co-ruled with his brother, Ivan V, and other family members until 1696, when he was twenty-four years old. At that time, Russia was still very much tied to its internal religious, political, social, and cultural traditions. Peter the Great set out to modernize all aspects of his country, from the structure of the military to education for children of the nobility. The Tsar traveled widely in Western Europe, implementing governmental reforms and adopting cultural norms he saw there. France was the model for sweeping changes he had carried out in court life, fashion, literature, music, art, architecture, and even language, with French becoming the language spoken at court over the course of the eighteenth century.

Carlo Bartolomeo Rastrelli and his son Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli were among the painters, sculptors, and architects, then, who were instrumental in introducing to Russia the new conventions and styles that supplanted Russia’s cultural heritage and identity. For example, Carlo Rastrelli’s portrait bust of Peter the Great bears a striking stylistic resemblance to a portrait bust of French King Louis IV (r. 1643-1715) by sculptor and architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680, Italy). (Figures 8.13 and 8.14) Bernini’s bust, created during a visit to Paris in 1665, shows Louis XIV as a visionary and majestic leader who is literally above vagaries of human existence such as the wind that billows his drapery. Carlo Rastrelli’s portrait of Peter the Great, completed posthumously in 1729, draws upon the same traditions—dating back to images of Roman emperors such as Augustus (see Figure 3.23)—of showing absolute authority through such devices as the lift of the head, eyes scanning the distance, and wearing of military armor.

His son Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli was an architect who also worked in the Baroque style. He received his first royal commission in 1721, at the age of twenty-one, but he is
mainly known for opulent and imposing buildings he designed after Peter the Great’s death in 1725. Continuing the modernization and transformation of St. Petersburg, Francesco Rastrelli’s structures are associated with luxurious exuberance of the Baroque, and Russia’s Romanov rulers of the eighteenth century. One of Francesco Rastrelli’s most famous buildings is the Winter Palace, also bears a striking stylistic resemblance to a French palace: Versailles, built for Louis XIV by architects Louis Le Vau (1612-1670, France) and Jules-Hardouin Mansart (1746-1708, France). (Figures 8.15 and 8.16)

8.3.3 Sex/Gender Identity

Kehinde Wiley (b. 1977, USA) is a contemporary portrait painter. In his work, he refers back to poses and other compositional elements used by earlier masters in much the same way that Trumbull did in his portrait of George Washington. Wiley means for his viewers to recognize the earlier work he has borrowed from in creating his painting, to make comparisons between the two, and to layer meaning from the earlier work into his own. Due to the strong contrasts between the sitters in Wiley’s paintings and those who posed for the earlier portraitists, however, this comparison often makes for a complex interweaving of meanings.
Wiley’s 2008 painting *Femme piquée par un serpent*, or *Woman bitten by a serpent*, (*Femme Piquée par un Serpent*, Kehinde Wiley: [http://hyperallergic.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Wiley-NewRepublic.jpg](http://hyperallergic.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Wiley-NewRepublic.jpg)) is based upon an 1847 marble work of the same name by French sculptor Auguste Clésinger (1814-1883, France). (Figure 8.17) When Clésinger’s flagrantly sensual nude was exhibited, the public and critics alike were scandalized, and fascinated. It was not uncommon in European and American art of the nineteenth century to use the subject of the work as justification for depicting the female nude. For example, if the subject was a moral tale or a scene from classical mythology, that was an acceptable reason for showing a nude figure. In Clésinger’s sculpture, the pretext for the woman’s indecent writhing was the snake bite, which, coupled with the roses surrounding the woman, was meant to suggest an allegory of love or beauty lost in its prime rather than simply a salacious depiction of a nude. Unfortunately, the model was easily recognized as a real person, Apollonie Sabatier, a courtesan who was the writer Charles Baudelaire’s mistress and well known among artists and writers of the day. Clésinger defended his sculpture as an artful study of the human form but, having used the features and body of a contemporary woman, his sculpture’s viewers objected to the image as too real. Wiley’s painting is the opposite: it is clearly intended to be a portrait of one individual, but he is clothed and inexplicably lying with his back to the viewer while turning to look over his shoulder. In his painting, Wiley retains the extended arms, and twisted legs and torso of Clésinger’s figure, but the sculpted woman’s thrown back head and closed eyes are replaced by the man’s turned head and mildly quizzical gaze.

Wiley takes that pose and its meanings—indecency, exposure, vulnerability, powerlessness—and uses them in a context that seemingly makes no sense when the subject is a fully clothed black male. Or does it? By using the conventions for depicting the female nude, Wiley asks us to examine the following: what happens when the figure is clothed—with a suggestion of eroticism in the glimpse of brown skin and white briefs above his low-riding jeans; what happens when a young man gazes at the viewer with an unguarded expression of open inquisitiveness; and what happens when a black male presents his body in a posture of weakness, potentially open to attack? The artist uses these juxtapositions of meaning to challenge our notions of identity and masculinity. By expanding his visual vocabulary to include traditions in portraiture going back hundreds of years, Wiley paints a young black man at odds with contemporary conventions of (male) physicality and sexuality.
Ideas about gender identity, that is, the gender one identifies with regardless of biological sex, have developed scientifically and socially, and have in recent years become both more complex and more fluid in numerous cultures. Within other cultures, however, in addition to male or female, there has traditionally been a third gender, and gender fluidity has been part of the fabric of society for thousands of years. Among the ancient Greeks, for example, a hermaphrodite, an individual who has both male and female sex characteristics, was considered “a higher, more powerful form” that created “a third, transcendent gender.” In Samoa, there is a strong emphasis on one’s role in the extended family, or aiga. Traditionally, if there are not enough females within an aiga to properly run the household or if there is a male child who is particularly drawn to domestic life, he is raised as fa’afafine or “in the manner of a woman.” Thus, fa’afafine are male at birth but are raised as a third gender, taking on masculine and feminine behavioral traits.

In India, those of a third gender are known as hijra, which includes individuals who are eunuchs (men who have been castrated), hermaphrodites, and transgender (when gender identity does not match assigned sex). The role of hijras is traditionally related to spirituality, and they are often devotees of a god or goddess. For example, the hijras or devotees of the Hindu goddess Bahuchara Maja are often eunuchs, having had themselves castrated voluntarily to offer their manhood to the deity. Other hijras live as part of the mainstream community and dress as women to perform only during religious celebrations, such as a birth or wedding, where they are invited to participate and bestow blessings.

Although hijras had been a respected third gender in much of Southeast Asia for thousands of years, their status changed in late nineteenth-century India while under British rule. During the twentieth century, many hijras formed their own communities, with the protection of a guru, or mentor, to provide some financial security and safekeeping from the harassment and discrimination under which they lived. In 2014, the supreme court of India ruled that hijras should be officially recognized as a third gender, dramatically changing for the better the educational and occupational opportunities for what is estimated to be half a million to two million individuals.

Tejal Shah (b. 1979, India) is a multi-media artist who often works in photography, video, and installation pieces. She began the Hijra Fantasy Series in 2006, (Southern Siren - Maheshwari from Hijra Fantasy Series, Tejal Shah: http://tejalshah.in/wp-content/themes/tejalshah/lib/timthumb.php?src=http://tejalshah.in/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Image-03.jpg&w=0&h=197&zc=1) creating “tableaux in which [three hijras] enact their own personal fantasies of themselves.” Shah was interested in how each woman—they all had transitioned from male to female—envisioned her own sexuality, separate from the perceptions and projections of others. As described by Shah, “In Southern Siren—Maheshwari, the protagonist envisions herself as a classic heroine from South Indian cinema in the throes of a passionate romantic encounter with a typical male hero.”

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8 Ibid.
In the tableau, or staged scene, Masheshwari sees herself as resplendently dressed in a blue sari, a traditional Indian draped gown, an object of admiration and desire. In this photograph and the others in the series, Shah found it noteworthy that each hijra, participating fully in the creative process, expressed feelings about herself by using visual cues and types from mainstream sources such as, in this example, Indian popular culture. How each hijra represented herself was the stuff of universal human fantasies, Shah found, regardless of sexual or gender identity: "being beautiful, glamorous and powerful, having a family, giving love and being loved in return."\(^9\)

### 8.3.4 Class

Maria Luisa of Parma was a member of the highest circles of European royalty. Born in 1751, she was the youngest daughter of Phillip, Duke of Parma, Italy, and his wife, Princess Louise-Élisa-beth of France, the eldest daughter of King Louis XV. In 1765, she married Charles IV, Prince of Asturias. She was the Queen consort of Spain from 1788, when her husband ascended to the throne, until 1808, when King Charles IV abdicated his throne under pressure from Napoleon.

Royal marriages were intended to foster allegiances and cement alliances. The bride and groom generally did not meet one another until after lengthy negotiations were completed and the wedding date was near. It was not uncommon for portraits of the prospective couple to be exchanged; in addition to the descriptions by the negotiators and others, an artist’s representation was the only way to learn what one’s possible spouse looked like at a time when journeys were not easily or quickly undertaken. At the time of their engagement, Laurent Pècheux (1729-1821, French) painted this portrait of Maria Luisa (Figure 8.18) in 1765 for Princess Maria Luisa fiancé’s family.

*Maria Luisa of Parma* depicts the fourteen-year-old bride-to-be holding a snuffbox in her right hand containing a miniature portrait of her future husband inside its lid. This detail was a formula in formal engagement portraits: the sitter holds a gift such as this finely made and costly trinket to express appreciation and budding affection for one’s betrothed. Additionally, to demonstrate her wealthy and cultured family background, Maria Luisa is posed within an...\(^9\) Ibíd.
interior setting displayed in a silk brocade gown trimmed with lengths of delicate, handmade lace, a medallion of the Order of the Starry Cross suspended from a diamond-encrusted bow on her breast, and diamond stars in her powdered hair. While this is indeed a likeness of the princess, the portrait is meant to convey far more than the color of her eyes or shape of her nose. This portrait is a statement about the prestige and power she will bring to the marriage, and a congratulatory note to the groom’s family on the beauty and worth of the mutually beneficial asset they are gaining.

Maria Luisa’s dress is the exclamation point to that visual statement. She is wearing a style known as a mantua or robe *a la française* (in the French style), a dress for formal court occasions, of silk brocade woven into alternating bands of gold thread and pink flowers on a cream field. This very costly fabric, probably made in France, is stretched over panniers, or fan-shaped hoops made of cane, metal or whalebone extending side-to-side. The panniers create a horizontal but flattened silhouette that allowed the tremendous quantity of magnificent fabric required to be fully displayed. To wear such a gown was a pronouncement of one’s wealth and status, a sign of which was one’s comportment, that is, one’s bearing and behavior. And, it was indeed a challenge to stand or move with the grace expected of a highborn woman in eighteenth-century society while wearing such cumbersome, restrictive, and heavy clothing. Maria Luisa, however, is depicted as poised and charming, the perfect consort for a king.

Twenty-four years after her portrait by Pécheux, Maria Luisa was thirty-eight years old and had borne ten children, five of whom were still alive, when Francisco Goya created this portrait, *Maria Luisa Wearing Panniers* (Figure 8.19). Francisco Goya was named painter to the court of Charles IV and Maria Luisa in 1789, and in celebration of Charles IV’s ascension to the throne, created a portrait of the King, to go along with the Queen’s portrait. Neither the years nor Goya were kind to Maria Luisa. (Between 1771 and 1799, she would have fourteen living children, six of whom grew to adulthood, and ten miscarriages.)

In Goya’s depiction, she is even more richly dressed than in her earlier portrait, but her elaborate and sumptuous costume serves only to provide an unflattering contrast with the Queen’s demeanor. Goya depicts Maria Luisa with her arms awkwardly held to each side to accommodate her
rigid, box-like tontillo (the Spanish variation of panniers); her plain, expressionless face is almost comically topped by a complexly constructed hat of lace, silk, and jewels. The hat represents one extravagant trend in women’s fashion of the 1780s, and Goya did paint its proliferation of textures and surfaces with great skill and sensitivity, but the contrast between the Queen’s hat and her features makes them appear even more coarse and unrefined, regardless of her wealth and class.

What explanation could there have been for the court painter to create such an unflattering representation of Maria Luisa, Queen consort of Spain? In her years of living in her adopted country, she had not endeared herself to members of court or her subjects. Considering that the King preferred to hunt, running the country fell largely on the shoulders of Maria Luisa, who was vain and bad-tempered. Goya’s presentation does not, in fact, contradict that assessment. The emphasis on her luxurious and elegant attire and on the robe and crown to Maria Luisa’s right—signaling her status as Queen consort—represent that she is the individual who is literally in touch with the robes of state. This work and her engagement portrait of nearly twenty-five years earlier were not so much depictions of her as a person as they were means to communicate the power and prestige of her place and her role.

Honoré Daumier (1808-1879, France) in 1864 painted a different sign of
prestige, or lack thereof, in *The Third-Class Carriage*; it was one of three paintings in a series commissioned by William Thomas Walters. (Figure 8.20) The other two paintings were *The First-Class Carriage* and *The Second-Class Carriage*, the only one in the series thought to be finished. (Figures 8.21 and 8.22) Walters, an American businessman and art collector, would later found the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, with work from his collection, including these three paintings.

When Daumier created the works, he had been working prolifically as a painter, printmaker, and sculptor for forty years. In his lifetime, he would create approximately 5,000 prints, 500 paintings, and 100 sculptures. From the beginning of his career, he was interested in the impact of industrialization on modern urban life, the plight of the poor, the quest for social equality, and the struggle for justice. He was especially known for his biting satire of politics and political figures, and his less stinging, ironic commentary on current society and events. Because of the subject matter he chose—everyday people, contemporary life—and the straightforward, truthful, and sincere manner in which he depicted them, Daumier is considered to be part of the Realist movement or style in art.

In *The Third-Class Carriage*, the artist presents four figures in the foreground, bathed in light, with numerous, less individualized figures crowded in the background. The young mother nursing her baby, an elderly woman sitting with folded hands, and a boy sleeping with his hands in his pockets encompass four generations, as well as different stages of life. Although the passengers sit near one another, they appear isolated from each other. They, including the boy, are probably traveling to or from work in the city, and both their body postures and facial expressions convey the toll of hard labor and long hours. Daumier shows compassion for these workers whose lives hold nothing but repetitious drudgery.

Forever changing the mainly agricultural society that existed in much of Europe and the United States prior to the second half of the eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution is the start of the mechanization and manufacturing that would lead to people shifting from country to city life, and from farms to factories. While the shift to an industrial, money-based society improved the lives of many and created the middle class as we know it today, Daumier was well aware that others were being left behind and were essentially trapped in a cycle of little education, unskilled labor, and low wages.
The artist represents different life expectations based on class through the way he paints the windows and through his use of light in each of the three paintings. In *The Third-Class Carriage*, the figures in the foreground have light shining on them from a window to the left, outside the picture plane. There are windows in the background, as well, but nothing can be seen outside of them. Daumier is implying there is nothing to be seen, especially in the case of the literally non-existent window. In *The Second-Class Carriage*, a landscape can be seen through the window, and one of the figures looks out intently. The other three, paying no attention to the world outside, are cocooned in their winter clothes in an attempt to fend off the cold in their unheated train car. But the man who leans forward to observe the passing scenery appears to be younger and is perhaps more eager and capable of adapting to and moving upward in the world of business—suggested by the bowler hat he is wearing, which at the time was associated in city life with civil servants and clerks. In *First-Class Carriage*, the passengers are all alert, each attending to their own business. One young woman looks out at a green landscape; considering her lightweight outerwear, it appears this is a springtime scene, which is suggested, as well, by the colorful ribbons on the two women’s fashionable bonnets. With their relaxed postures and placid, composed expressions, these first-class passengers give the impression of confidence. They are more secure in themselves and their places in the world than either the second-class or third-class passengers.

### 8.3.5 Group Affiliation

History suggests that the quality of human survival is best when humans function as a group, allowing for collective support and interaction. Social psychological research indicates that people who are affiliated with groups are psychologically and physically stronger and better able to cope when faced with stressful situations. Gregory Walton, a social psychologist who studies group interaction, has concluded that one benefit individuals receive is the satisfaction of belonging (to a group, culture, nation or) to a greater community that shares some common interests and aspirations. The unity of groups is achieved through members’ similarities or their having experiences based on the history that brought them together.
Artists throughout history have been associated with groups, movements, and organizations that protect their interests, forward their cause, or promote them as a group or as individuals. The most visible groups during the Renaissance period in Italy, for example, were people belonging to the Catholic Church and other religious organizations, wealthy merchant families, civic and government groups, and guilds, including artists’ guilds. (Figures 8.23 and 8.24)

### 8.3.6 Personal Identity

The city of Palmyra, in modern Syria, had long been at the crossroads of Western and Eastern political, religious, and cultural influences, as it was a caravan stop for traders traveling the Silk Road between the Mediterranean and the Far East. In the first century CE, the city came under Roman rule and under the Romans, the city prospered, and the arts flourished. Following a rebellion by Queen Zenobia of Palmyra in 273 CE, Roman Emperor Aurelian destroyed the city, ending the period of Roman control.

The Palmyrenes, or people of Palmyra, built three types of elaborate, large-scale monuments for their dead called houses of eternity. The first was a tower tomb, some as high as four stories. The second was a hypogeum, or underground tomb, and the third was a tomb built in the shape of a temple or house. All were used by many generations of the same extended family and were located in a necropolis, a city of the dead, what we today call a cemetery. Inside the tombs were loculi, or small, separate spaces, each of which formed an individual sarcophagus, or stone coffin. Inside the opening to the tomb, the first sarcophagus held the remains of the clan’s founder; it was often faced with a stone relief sculpture depicting him as if attending a banquet and inviting others to join him. Surrounding the founder in the loculi, on the face of each family member’s sarcophagus would be a relief portrait of each person interred there. (Loculi: [http://romeartlover.tripod.com/Palmyra5.html](http://romeartlover.tripod.com/Palmyra5.html))

This stele, a portrait of a father, his son, and two daughters, dates to between 100 and 300 CE, sometime during the era of Roman rule. (Figure 8.25) The man is reclining on a couch decorated with flower motifs within circles and diamonds. He holds a bunch of grapes in his right hand and, in his left, a wine cup decorated with flowers similar to those on the couch. His two daughters
flank his son in the background; the son holding grapes and a bird. The son and daughters all wear necklaces. Additionally, the daughters wear pendant earrings and brooches holding the drapery at their left shoulders. The chiton, or tunic, and himation, or cloak, that each daughter wears has some affinities with Greco-Roman types of clothing, but the style of the ornamented veil covering their heads is a local type of garment, based on Parthian, or Persian, styles. Also wearing local garments, the two males wear a loose fitting tunic and trousers, each with a decorative border. The fine fabrics indicated by the embellished borders of both men and women’s clothing indicate goods and wealth amassed from trade, as does the abundant use of precious metals and gems in the variety of jewelry adorned by the Palmyrenes. Thus, the stele is a blend of Greco-Roman and Palmyrene (and larger Parthian) styles and cultural influences.

Coupled upon many Palmyrenes grave steles are inscriptions of text in both Aramaic and Latin that give the person’s name and genealogy, markers of distinctive individual and family traits. While many of the depictions of the frontal-facing, wide-eyed figures—a defining feature of Palmyrene art—show little individualization of features, the coupling with such inscriptions are evident signs that each stele was intended to denote the characteristics of the person entombed within. The figures actively engage the viewer, and provide the reminder that personal identity is an amalgamate of individual, socio-cultural, spiritual, and historical influences.

In July 2015, the city of Palmyra, its people, and its art were again in danger. In April of 2015, Islamic State (ISIS) forces overtook the 3,000-year-old Assyrian city of Nimrud and destroyed its buildings and art. On May 21, 2015, ISIS overtook the city of Palmyra, inducing fear that they would destroy buildings and art there as they did in Nimrud. On July 2, 2015, ISIS was reported to have destroyed grave markers similar to the one discussed here. (Grave Marker Reliefs, http://newsworldindia.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Palmyra.jpg) They lined up six bust-length reliefs of people who lived in Palmyra nearly 2,000 years ago, and smashed them, obliterating the visual and written record of each person. So many have had their portraits made for posterity with the hopes of staying alive, against the odds. And, this is why we need art: it gives us memories of ourselves and our deeds, who we identify with, and how we identify others.
8.4 BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Key Concepts

National and personal identities do not magically happen; they are built on and influenced by immediate and past events, environments, traditions, and cultural legacies. Artists capture and document not only the physical conditions of a society but also the emotional and mental conditions. They construct a sense of who we were and are as a person and as a nation. Society’s identity is always fluid. When we see identity as static, we record people with stereotypes and do not see them for who they are. Art is one way to challenge static notions of identity by engaging the viewer in visual narratives that are unfamiliar to them, and that educate and challenge their previously held notions.

Since the 1970s, postmodern theories have challenged historical and traditional notions of ethnic and cultural identity by developing a model that views identity as being multifaceted, fluid, and socially constructed. Some scholars contend that we are in a period of post-identity and post-ethnicity, repudiating the old essentialist view of identity. Globalization of people, the Internet, and travel have all brought about fluid cultures—which may have contributed to people’s more fluid sense of identity, and also to their interest in researching their heritage, culture, and ethnic identity. Heritage is the treasure and symbols of pride for an individual, country, and nation. Many works of art are seen as part of national heritage because they help citizens appreciate their past. Art provides life to the past, something that can be visualized, touched, walk through, and identified as being part of a legacy and culture.

Test Yourself

1. On the surface Kim Sooja’s art seems simple, but underneath it is an enigma of traditions that make a metaphoric identity statement; for example, her use of fabric as an art form evokes intimacy and honor of her culture and history. Discuss and identify at-least two artists whose work makes a personal and historical statement. Be specific as you reference each image associated with your essay. (minimum of 500 words).

2. A number of circumstances throughout history have compelled artists to confront the context of social issues, select at-least two works of art that best describe an event or issue. Discuss the problems associated with the issue, and how the event and art shaped the legacy or identity of the country or nation. Describe the power the work communicates, discuss the significance of the work and how it convey a message, and identity of the people in that period of time. At the end of your essay make commentary on why you selected the art works what you think about the art. (Attach selected work with captions.) Answer to the question is located throughout the chapter)

3. Throughout history building were constructed in a manner to symbolize power; spirituality; and godlessness. Structures house institutions that guide, influence and shape a society’s morals, values, politics, religious and social conditioning. Select 4 structures that best symbolize the
identity or culture of a society. Describe its impact on influencing a nation, significance to the nation and how the structure contributes to national or individual identity. At the end of your essay discuss why you selected the structures and the aesthetics of the building. (Attach selected structures with captions.)

4. Compare and contrast four works of art that best describe a personal or national identity. Discuss with specifics how the artist is able to capture the character of the person or nation. At the end of your essay add a commentary why you selected the works and their significance. (Attach selected works with captions.)

8.5 KEY TERMS

Baroque: a style of architecture and art that originating in Italy in the early seventeenth century

Bottari: Cloth wrapped and tied around clothes, fabric, or/and items into a bundle for carry

Grave stele: is a stone or wooden slab, generally taller than it is wide, erected usually in Greek cemeteries as a monument, for funerary or commemorative purposes.

Hypogeum: an underground prehistoric burial site

Impressionism: is a nineteenth-century art movement that developed in France during the late nineteenth century by a group of artists called the Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors

Impressionist: A painter whose painting have characteristics of the impressionism movement, emphasizing accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities, uses small, thin, yet visible brush strokes, open composition,

Individualism: emphasizes potential of man and self development own beliefs. The Individualism during the Renaissance period became a prominent theme in Italy

Industrial Revolution: period during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in western Europe and the United States when industry quickly developed due to the invention of steam-powered engines and the growth of factories. Fundamental changes occurred in agriculture, textile and metal manufacture, transportation, economic and policies, and had a major impact on how people lived

Obas: The title of “oba,” or king, is passed on to the firstborn son of each successive king of Benin, Africa at the time of his death

Renaissance Period: a period of time from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century in Europe. The era bridged the time between the Middle Ages and modern

Tableau: is an incidental scene, as of a group of people

Tower tomb: are mausoleums, built in 1067 and 1093
9.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe why and how art and artists have in some cultures been considered to have exceptional power.
- Distinguish between images of persuasion and propaganda, and specify characteristics of each.
- Recognize how and why images are used for such purposes as to display power, influence society, and effect change.
- Indicate ways that images establish and enhance a ruler’s position and authority.
- Identify changes in images of conflict, heroic action, and victims of violent confrontation in various cultures and time periods, including the artist’s intentions as well as the public response.
- Distinguish between and describe the prohibition of images enforced within some religions.
- Describe why protestors or conquerors might destroy images and monuments of a past or defeated culture.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

Art has always been associated with power. At times in history, the individuals who made art were seen as having special powers. They could conceptualize shapes and forms and then bring them into being. They could create images and objects from dirt, ashes, and stone that looked like living creatures. These individuals were set apart—they could transform, they could give life. And the images and objects they created held powers, as well. They were a means of communication with an unseen world, of exerting influence over the well-being and actions of humans. So both the
artists and their art were considered to be magical in that they were out-of-the-realm of everyday, common, and shared existence: they were super-natural and extra-ordinary.

The ancient Greeks believed the creativity artists possessed came to them from a **muse**, a personification of knowledge and the arts that inspired them to write, sculpt, and compose. The ancient Romans, who strongly believed in the family as the most basic and essential hub of societal organization, called its guiding spirit the **genius**, from the Latin verb meaning *genui* or “to bring into being or create.” The word **genius** came to be associated with the arts during the Renaissance, when it took on the meaning of inspiration and ingenuity visited upon the artist, often as a form of possession, setting the artist apart from, and at odds with, non-geniiuses.

In addition to the power of the artist, there is the power of the art itself to imitate or mimic life. Again, according to the ancient Greeks, art’s power resides in its ability to represent nature; the closer, more real, and more natural the representation, the closer the art work is to truth, beauty—and power. Among other cultures, especially those that avoid representation, art is still a means of aesthetic expression with considerable power, but with abstracted forms. For example, in Islamic cultures the human figure and forms based on direct observation are not used in religious art and architecture as only God has the ability to create living things. Instead, elaborate ornamentation based on the written word and human, animal, and plant forms is used to decorate surfaces with intricate motifs, or patterns.

The visual force of the image or object, whether representational or non-representational, has been used throughout the ages by those in power to give form to and communicate messages about themselves, their wishes or dictates, their accomplishments, and their very right to rule. Literacy has, until the recent past, in human history been a skill few had the means to develop, but leaders in secular and religious roles have fostered among their subjects and followers a visual literacy, the ability to “read” and understand images through a common “language” of subjects, symbols, and styles. Those who wish to use their art as a means of protest against an established power have traditionally used the same “vocabulary” to visually communicate their messages, as well. Especially in times of war and during periods of oppression, art has been used as a tool to protest, document, provide an alternative version, and communicate to others about people and events that become our historical record.
9.3 PROPAGANDA, PERSUASION, POLITICS, AND POWER

The word *propaganda* has gotten a bad reputation. The Latin origin of the word *propaganda* is *propagare*, meaning “to spread or disseminate.” As it is used today, the word mainly refers to promoting information—often biased or misleading, sometimes hidden—in order to influence views, beliefs, or behavior. Originally, the word was not associated with politics, as it is generally today, nor did it imply lies or bad faith; propaganda was simply a means of publicly communicating ideas, instruction, and the like. In such a case, we now are more likely to use the word *persuasion*, which has a more neutral connotation and suggests convincing rather than coercing. For example, advertising tries to persuade—or entice—the consumer to make a choice or purchase. To many, however, there is a fine line between propaganda and persuasion. They are separated more by purpose and intention—good, bad, or neutral—than how they are carried out. Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell describe the fine but crucial differences between the two words:

> Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist. Persuasion is interactive and attempts to satisfy the needs of both persuader and persuadee.¹

King Darius I (r. 522-486 BCE) had both persuasion and propaganda in mind when he built the Apadana at Persepolis, today Iran. (Figure 9.1) Darius I was the first king of the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550-330 BCE) to have royal structures erected on the site, but construction would continue under succeeding Persian kings for approximately one hundred years. The Apadana was begun in 515 BCE and completed thirty years later by Darius I’s son, Xerxes I. Apadana means hypostyle hall, a stone building with a roof supported by columns. It originally had seventy-two columns—thirteen still stand—each sixty-two feet tall in a grand hall that was 200 x 200 feet, or 4,000 square feet. Needless to say, a building of such monumental proportions was an overwhelming sight for those who approached it. Brightly painted in many colors and raised on a platform with the Kuh-e Rahmat or Mountain of Mercy rising behind it, the towering structure could be seen for miles from the sparsely vegetated plain to the east.

For King Darius I, the Apadana and Persepolis—the city of Persians—as a whole was a statement of propaganda. The hypostyle hall and the city were awe-inspiring and intimidating; they in no uncertain terms let the viewer know the King had formidable power and tremendous resources. Upon entering the King’s hall, the viewer was surrounded by his strength in the form of columns the height of a modern six-story building, holding up a ceiling of incalculable weight. How small and powerless the visitor was in the midst of such force. But Darius I, whose empire stretched from Egypt in the west to the Indus Valley, today Pakistan, to the east, knew that he could not effectively rule through domination and fear. So, he had elements of persuasion included at Persepolis, as well.

In addition to the building’s resplendent majesty, it was adorned with sumptuous and masterful frescoes, glazed brickwork, and relief sculpture. Two staircases led up to the platform on

which the Apadana was built, on the north and east sides, but only the north staircase was completed during Darius’s lifetime. That staircase and the platform walls to either side are covered with reliefs: figures in even, orderly rows as they approach the Persian King’s hall. (Figure 9.2) They are representatives of the twenty-three countries within the Achaemenid Empire, coming to pay homage to the King during festivals for the New Year, carrying gifts. Accompanying them are Persian dignitaries, followed by soldiers with their weaponry, horses, and chariots. The native Persian and foreign-born delegates are shown together in these friezes, or rows, of relief sculpture. (Figure 9.3) They have facial features that correspond with their ethnicity, and hair, clothing, and accessories that indicate what region they are from. Even the gifts are objects and animals from their own countries. Rather than showing the foreigners as subservient to the Persians, they mingle with one another and at times appear to be in conversation.

The staircase reliefs, as opposed to the magnificent building as a whole, can be seen as a form of persuasion. It was in the king’s better interests to win over his subjects, to gain their trust, allegiance, and cooperation, than to bend them to his will through force and subjugation. Having already demonstrated from a distance that he had the power to defeat his enemies, Darius I could, as the delegates ascended the stairs to his great hall, literally show them the respect with which he treated his loyal subjects.

In more recent history, Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825, France) painted five versions of Napoleon Crossing the Alps between 1801 and 1805. (Figure 9.4) David was born and raised in Paris and entered the École des Beaux-Arts in 1866 at the age of eighteen. After eight years of mixed success in his studies there, David won the Prix de Rome in 1774, a prestigious government scholarship that also included travel to Italy. He lived in Rome from 1775 to 1780, studying the art of great masters from the classical past, through the Renaissance, and...
to the present. But, he was most impressed with the philosophical and artistic ideals of some of his contemporaries, the Neoclassical thinkers and painters he met in Italy.

When he returned to France, he soon began exhibiting work in this new style; with their somber, moral tones, stories of family loyalty and patriotic duty, fine detail, and sharp focus, works in the Neoclassical style (c. 1765-1830) were in stark contrast to the frivolous, sentimental subjects and delicate, pastel hues of the prevailing Rococo style (c. 1700-1770s). Over the course of the 1780s, as social disconnect and political upheaval were building toward the French Revolution of 1789, the self-sacrificing, stoic heroes from classical and contemporary history David painted increasingly reflected the public desire for liberté, égalité, fraternité, or liberty, equality, and fraternity (universal brotherhood).

In the aftermath of the revolution, during the mercurial times of the 1790s, David was first a powerful figure in the short-lived Republic and then a jailed outcast. When Napoleon Bonaparte, named First Consul in 1799, commissioned David to paint his portrait in 1800, however, David’s return to official favor was complete.

The commission came about this way: in the spring of 1800, Napoleon led troops south to support French troops already in Genoa, Italy, in an effort to take back land captured by the Austrians. He did so on June 9th at the Battle of Marengo. The victory led to France and Spain re-establishing diplomatic relations eleven years after the French Revolution and, as part of the formal exchange of gifts to mark the occasion, King Charles IV of Spain requested a portrait of Napoleon to hang in the Royal Palace of Madrid. Learning of this, Napoleon requested three more versions from David (and the painter independently created a fifth, which remained in his possession until his death.)

It was to be an equestrian portrait, Napoleon specified, that is, depicting him on horseback, crossing the Great St. Bernard Pass in the Alps, leading the Reserve Army south to Italy. David was to show Napoleon on a spirited, rearing horse as a calm and decisive leader, much like his heroes Hannibal and Charlemagne, who crossed the Alps before Napoleon and whose names are inscribed with his on rocks in the left foreground of the painting. In actuality, however, it did not happen that way at all: Napoleon crossed on the Alps on the back of a mule, in good weather, a few days after the soldiers went through the pass.
What Napoleon was asking David to paint was a piece of propaganda. And, the artist succeeded admirably. With the wind whipping his cloak around him, assuredly holding the reins of his wild-eyed horse in one hand while gesturing the way up and over the peaks with the other, and holding the viewer’s gaze with his look of complete composure, David has shown Napoleon as a leader who guides his people to victory and who will be remembered as a hero throughout the ages. That was the story Napoleon wanted told: the timeless ideal of the great man, not the transitory pettiness of his physical likeness. For, as Napoleon is attributed with claiming, “History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.”

9.4 IMAGERY OF WAR

Considering the potential for art to give expressive form to ideas and emotions, it is not surprising that art has often been used to present a wide range of messages about war, one of the most dramatic of human events. All forms of art have been used for documenting war, stating reasons for supporting or opposing it, and showing reflections about its meanings, implications, and effects. On a broader scale, all human activities, of course, may be occasions for people to criticize one another, to condemn ideas, ideals, and actions, to promote or oppose causes that express cultural, societal, or individual values. We will examine a number of works that are concerned with these issues in various ways.

9.4.1 Historical/Documentary

From the earliest times, artists have responded to issues of war and conquest and their implications for the cultures in which they took place. Often, the art appears to have been created to mark a moment of triumph and to interpret the conquest as a validation of a leader’s right to rule, established through the victory. Such was the case with the Palette of Narmer. (Figure 9.5) On the two-sided palette are relief-carved depictions of the subjugation of the
enemy by Egyptian King Narmer (also referred to as Menes)—under the watchful protection of the deities—and a procession of the King and his attendants toward the decapitated bodies of ten of the defeated. On the first side, Narmer wears the crown of Upper Egypt and on the reverse he wears the crown of Lower Egypt, symbolizing the union of the two regions under one ruler (c. 3,100-3,050 BCE). He is depicted far larger than both his enemies and his own men, showing the figures’ relative importance. Narmer is literally depicted as a powerful, firm, and resolute warrior who will be a strong and worthy leader.

Grand artistic depictions of rulers in battle have always been used to help form their reputations and to bolster the images of their good and wise rulership. Military success has long been equated, correctly or not, with political prowess. The heroic feats of Alexander the Great (r. 336-323 BCE) at the Battle of Issus (333 BCE) with the powerful Persian King Darius III (r. 336-330 BCE) were portrayed in a Greek painting that no longer exists. Like much of Greek art, though, it was copied by the Romans, so we do have a mosaic version of the tumultuous battle that was created for the House of the Faun in Pompeii, Italy. (Figure 9.6) This enormous depiction, although damaged and now incomplete, gives a lively, somewhat riotous account of the dramatic encounter of these two renowned warriors. Alexander can be seen to the left on his chestnut horse, staring with wide-eyed intensity at the fleeing Darius, who turns to look at his opponent with one arm extended as if pleading for mercy while the driver of his chariot whips the King’s horses into a frenzy of motion.
We should consider to what extent these accounts are documentary, based on factual records, and what we can discern that is propagandistic in purpose. In many eras, the glorification of heroes and heroic deeds in war was perhaps paramount, not only from a political and patriotic standpoint, but also because these were the values promoted as part of artistic training in academic settings (values that prevailed for most successful artists at least through the middle of the nineteenth century, when anti-academic rebellions began in art circles).

American heroism in war was certainly envisioned in these terms, as evidenced in Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill by John Trumbull. (Figure 9.7) As discussed in Chapter 8 Art and Identity, Trumbull was an aide-de-camp to General George Washington. After witnessing Warren’s death in Boston, Trumbull was commissioned by Warren’s family to immortalize the event. The Battle of Bunker Hill took place in 1775, the first year of the American Revolutionary War. Although the colonialists were defeated, the British were stunned by their far greater number of casualties, boosting the morale of the young army. In his painting, Trumbull focused on the General’s tragic death as the colonial forces retreated, as well as the compassion of British major John Small, who held back one of his men as the soldier was about to bayonet Warren. Doing so, Trumbull could celebrate the heroism of the Americans while also acknowledging the honor-
able behavior of the enemy, an expectation in eighteenth-century codes of conduct during pitched battles.

Trumbull’s depiction of the battle scene is greatly romanticized: an historically accurate rendering of General Warren’s death was neither expected nor desired by viewers of the day. Many questions have been asked, as well, about the accuracy of the grand tableau by Emanuel Leutze (1816-1868, Germany, lived USA) of Washington Crossing the Delaware, a painting that is an iconic symbol of the American Revolutionary War and the first president of the United States. (Figure 9.8) Leutze created the work in 1851, seventy-five years after the Battle of Trenton occurred in 1776. Far from attempting to reconstruct the scene as it took place, Leutze intended his work to be an evocation of a grand and inspirational event, dramatically pictured.

By the time Frederic Remington (1861-1909, USA) painted Charge of the Rough Riders in 1898, warfare and depictions of it were much different. Remington gives us the spirit of the fray—more down to earth, momentary, and rough and tumble. (Figure 9.9) The implications are much less aggrandized and heroic, the viewer’s sense of the event much more intimate. And by the time of the World War I appearance of Gassed by John Singer Sargent (1858-1925, USA, lived England), we see a different tenor altogether. (Figure 9.10) Here, we are privy to Sargent’s personal response to the deadly aspects of war, to the after-effects for the individuals who were each physically assaulted by poison mustard gas and are showing its ill effects as they were weakened, nauseated, and felled.

The changes in interpretation are due in part to those changes towards realism in art during the nineteenth century that we have explored. Also, they were heightened by the advent and evolution of photography, which had enhanced potential for documentation of actual conditions. But
photography did not, by any means, always present the viewer with unvarnished truth, since it could, like painting, be manipulated in its effects. Nonetheless, the potential for a different view of war and its effects was ushered in with the advent of photography.

The American Civil War provided a venue for photographers to use the new medium in recording exactly what they were seeing, through the lens. But the processes were still not up to the task of capturing the actions, because equipment was cumbersome, and exposed photographic plates had to be developed on the spot in specially outfitted wagons. The result was that most of the photographs were of groups of dead bodies and battlefields laid waste, after the actual event. (Figure 9.11) The sights were nonetheless sobering to the viewers who had never before been privy to views of the result of war on such a scale. Alexander Gardner (1821-1882, Scotland, lived USA) was one of a number of photographers who captured many battlefield scenes, as well as views of campsites and many other details of the deployments, including visits from such dignitaries as President Lincoln. (Figure 9.12)

The potential for a more critical interpretation afforded by photography had in the past been taken at times, even though not as the norm. Notable examples come from several periods when artists responded to the horrors and agonies of war and injustice in various ways and created memorable interpretations that reveal their protests of conditions. In 1633, Jacques Callot (1592-1635, France) created a suite of panoramic etchings that dramatize The Miseries of War. (Figure 9.13) Francisco Goya’s monumental Third of May, 1808, painted in 1814, showed the fear and horror of an encounter between Napoleon’s troops and citizens of the town.
of Medina del Río Seco, where 3,500 Spaniards lost their lives. (Figure 9.14) Goya’s sympathies are clear in his presentation of a terrified white-shirted martyr-like figure facing a firing squad while in the midst of his equally horrified compatriots.

Similarly, Honoré Daumier dramatized the injustice of a night raid in the home of a working-class family in Paris during protests in 1834. Following a shot having been fired from a window in the building where twelve members of the Breffort family lived, soldiers stormed their apartment and killed them all. Six months later, Daumier created, a stark lithograph depicting helpless family members as they fell. (Figure 9.15) Daumier had been jailed two years earlier, in 1832, for caricatures (portraits containing features or characteristics exaggerated for comic effect) he made ridiculing King Louis Phillipe I (r. 1830-1848). Immediately after the artist created Rue Transnonain, the street on which the Breffort family lived, the lithographic stones he used were confiscated by government officials and all copies of the print were destroyed. The following year, political caricatures were banned entirely. This indicates the power Daumier’s work was perceived as having and the danger it could hold for those in power. As noted, the potential for a different view of war and its effects was ushered in with the advent of photography. The American Civil War in the 1860s provided a venue for photographers to use the new medium in recording exactly what they were seeing, through the lens. But the processes were still not up to the task of capturing the actions, because equipment was cumbersome and exposure...
times were still relatively long and slow. Alexander Gardner’s photographic corps created many after battle scenes as well as portraits of generals, the president, campsites, and many other details of the deployments. (Figures 5.18 and 5.19) The potential for capturing action and momentary pathos only increased from then on, and the capacity for documenting graphic events has been used widely ever since. (Figures 5.20, 5.21, 5.22, 5.23) Compare the image of corpses being bulldozed and buried wholesale to the photos of Gardner and the previous painted glorifications of the battlefield.

### 9.4.2 Reflective/Reactionary and Anti-war

One of the most powerful anti-war statements ever painted was by Pablo Picasso, created in 1937 following the bombing of the town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. He was commissioned by the Spanish Republican Government to create a mural for that country’s pavilion at the 1937 World’s Fair in Paris and, after learning of the attack, designed this poignant abstraction of symbolic and iconic motifs to express the horror of the event. (Pavilion of the Spanish Republic at the Paris International Exposition, 1937: [https://thespacearchitecture.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/int2.jpg](https://thespacearchitecture.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/int2.jpg)) His knowledge of the details had been gleaned from newspaper reporting, so he elected to create the imagery in the graphic black, gray, and white of the photographs through which he learned of the bombing and its impact. His dramatic distortions of form convey the deep anguish and disgust that had been engendered in him, his fellow Spaniards, and the world.

Over the course of the twentieth century, documentary photography was used not only to
capture the brutal events of war, but also to broadcast moments of utter horror in such graphic ways that they have influenced public sentiment, sometimes turning opinion from support to outrage. By the time of World War I, technology permitted the reproduction of photographs in newspapers, which meant that the average citizen had far greater access to visual news of the war than in earlier conflicts. Some leaders, such as German Kaiser Wilhelm II (r. 1888-1918), were in favor of using photographs as a means of bolstering public support for the war, but others restricted photographers’ access and censored photographs, citing security concerns. Shortly before the beginning of World War I, the British Army was the first to realize the potential of photography for aerial reconnaissance, greatly expanding their research capabilities and troop maneuverability. (Figure 9.16)

During World War II, American military and government agencies tremendously expanded the use of photography for purposes ranging from conducting espionage and assisting training, to recording atrocities and providing documentation. (Figures 9.17 and 9.18) During the Vietnam War (USA involvement, 1955-1975), the American military gave unprecedented access to non-military reporters and photographers. As the war extended in the 1960s, far longer than the American people expected, images of conflict and suffering in the war-torn country began having an impact on public opinion. (Women and children crouch in a muddy canal as they take cover from intense Viet Cong fire, Horst Faas: http://media2.s-nbcnews.com/j/streams/2013/october/131016/8c9400532-pb-131016-vietnam-01.nbcnews-ux-2880-1000.jpg ) By 1972, when Nick Ut (b. 1951, Vietnam, lives USA) photographed children fleeing their village after it was attacked with napalm, the tide had turned and many Americans no longer supported the Vietnam
CHAPTER NINE: ART AND POWER

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9.4.3 Prohibition or Destruction of Imagery: Iconoclas

Controversy over imagery and its use, especially in sacred contexts, also has a long history. Debates on the topic have, at times, erupted into deep and bitter arguments. It has often been thought that, because of the Old Testament statements forbidding the use of idols, the Jewish religion has never allowed pictorial or figural art as part of its religious expression. More current findings, though, lead to the conclusion that the biblical statements were actually pointedly made at times against the real danger of idolatry, or the worship of idol images, rather than being a broad prohibition of images altogether. Dura-Europos was a military outpost in Syria held by the Romans 114-257 CE where the garrisoned soldiers obviously practiced a wide variety of religions. The site has a great number of different pagan temples, a Christian house church, and a Jewish synagogue, or house of worship, that is decorated with a great array of lively figural frescoes that depict Old Testament stories. (Figure 9.19)

Early Buddhist art was, according to some, aniconic, or characterized by the avoidance of figural imagery that represented Sakyamuni Buddha, its fifth-century BCE founder. Others disagree. We have no examples of Buddhist art until the second century BCE, well after the death of Sakyamuni, probably because early works were of impermanent materials and have not endured. In the earliest we do have, the figure of the Buddha does not appear; rather, we see the seat where he achieved enlightenment and the Bodhi tree that shaded it (Figures 9.20) Scholars disagree as to whether the absence
of the Buddha confirms a prohibition of showing his figure.

On the contrary, we do know there is a general aversion to the use of figural imagery in sacred uses in Islam, although it is not universally heeded. There is no specific prohibition in the Koran, the central sacred scripture for Islam; however, there are authoritative statements among the writings of the Hadith, the commentaries on the Koran that supplement its teachings. The rationale is that the creation of human and animal form is reserved for God and should not be an act of man. Thus, the decorations of mosques and related structures are usually accomplished with lavish linear scripts, embellished with arabesques and vegetal and floral motifs. (Figure 9.21) The script is usually drawn from the Koran or is simple praise of Allah; this sort of design is often also applied to all sorts of goods and décor for the Muslim household. (Figure 9.22)

A dramatic example of the anti-imagery debate took place in the Byzantine Christian Church in the eighth and ninth centuries CE. Based on the perception of the biblical prohibition, an assault was mounted against all religious images, and much of the existing artwork was destroyed in an effort to eradicate what was considered an evil practice. The defenders of the use of imagery argued that the problem was not the images themselves, which could be positive aids to spiritual inspiration and religious devotion, but to their improper usage, which resulted in a sort of idolatry, akin to pagan idol worship. The images, according to proponents of their use, should be seen as tools, associated with understanding God and the saints, and as means of furthering the contemplation of Christian mysteries. Further, they argued, to obliterate existing images, to deface pictures and to destroy statues was to desecrate sacred things and, effectively, to disrespect the holy beings which they represented.

This notion was expressed in the mid-ninth-century Chludov Psalter with an illustration that equates
the destruction of an icon with insulting Christ on the cross when he was forced to take gall (bile) and vinegar by the mocking Roman soldiers. (Figure 9.23) The controversy was settled in 843 and the use of icons and imagery thrived thereafter. Unfortunately, very little of the religious artwork that was produced prior to this time survived for us to examine.

Other chapters in the debate over imagery open in later centuries. For some Christians, it was one point of disagreement leading to the Protestant Reformation that began in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517. According to those protesting what they saw as abuses of power in the Roman Catholic Church, the proliferation of images of holy figures and stories from the Bible distracted the faithful from true worship: reading the word of God in the Bible. As new religious practices spread, there
was a widespread removal of religious paintings and sculpture from all churches and public buildings. (Figure 9.24) In the Wars of Religions that raged in many places in Europe (c. 1524-1648), the destruction of images was one of the violent forms of protest by angry crowds that railed against any and all prevailing practices and the powers they held responsible. A great many church portals (doors) were damaged by those who saw lopping off heads of sculptures above the doorways as a fitting expression of their anti-Church sentiment. (Figure 9.25)

Throughout history, such destruction has certainly not been restricted to religious controversies. From very early examples, we know of what is likely purposeful defacement of ruler images that were made either in protest or as a sort of proclamation of defeat and superiority. The gouging out of the jeweled eyes in this bronze head of Assyrian King Sargon II might have been for theft of the precious materials, but it may also indicate conquest over the man himself. (Figure 9.26) In recent times, we have seen the dramatic toppling in 2003 of the statue of Saddam Hussein in a public square in Baghdad, Iraq, as a symbolic overthrow of a despised and despotic ruler. (Figure 9.27) Further humiliation of him was clearly intended by the widespread publication of photos of captors picking lice from his head after his discovery in a spider hole.

**Figure 9.26 | Bronze head of a king, most likely Sargon of Akkad but possibly Naram-Sin.**
Author: Iraqi Directorate General of Antiquities
Source: Wikimedia Commons
License: Public Domain

**Figure 9.27 | Statue of Saddam Hussein being toppled in Firdos Square after the US invasion of Iraq.**
Photographer: U.S. military employee
Author: User “Ipankonin”
Source: Wikimedia Commons
License: Public Domain

**Figure 9.28 | The taller Buddha of Bamiyan before (left) and after destruction (right).**
Author: User “Tsui”
Source: Wikimedia Commons
License: CC BY-SA 3.0
The power of such pointed symbolism in visual terms is employed to fight culture wars, as well. In Afghanistan, in 2001, the Taliban undertook to dynamite two colossal images of the Buddha dating to the sixth century CE that had been carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamyan valley of central Afghanistan. (Figure 9.28) Arguments came from all over the world, pleading with them to preserve monuments that were considered part of the cultural heritage of humankind. Nonetheless, they completed their task, declaring it a duty to eliminate an image that violated their spiritual beliefs.

A similar scenario unfolded more recently, when ISIS militants went on a destructive campaign to destroy historically and culturally valued artwork in the Mosul Museum, Iraq, despite pleas from curators and art lovers around the globe. (Extremists used sledgehammers and power drills to smash ancient artifacts at a museum in the northern city of Mosul: http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2015/02/26/261DB11500000578-2970270-image-a-1_1424957194042.jpg) This sort of protest is often made on a smaller scale, as well, when symbolic or iconic imagery is defaced or destroyed as a means of mocking its value to those who respect it, as with the Nazi symbols made on Jewish gravestones or the burning of the American flag. (Desecrated Jewish gravestones: http://cdn.timesofisrael.com/uploads/2012/10/AP100127022968.jpg) (Figure 9.29) All such incidents reinforce our understanding of the varieties of power that art and visual imagery can have.

9.5 BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Key Concepts

Due to their ability to create art, throughout history artists have often been considered to have special and mysterious powers. Images can be used to enhance the power of an individual, system of government, or form of religion. Artists can use images to bring attention to and have an impact on social issues. Images of war can be used to validate and strengthen a ruler’s authority and power. From the nineteenth century to the present, violent conflicts have been depicted with a greater range of imagery, in part due to technological advances and social attitudes toward the impact of war. Imagery is forbidden within some religions based on interpretations of religious texts. The destruction of images can be the result of religious, social, or political beliefs or protests.
Test Yourself

1. Describe why and how art and artists have in some cultures been considered to have exceptional power.

2. What are propaganda and persuasion, and what are some differences between them?

3. How did King Darius I use images of both persuasion and propaganda at the Apadana in Persepolis?

4. Describe how rulers have used images of them to enhance their authority.

5. How and why did images of war change in the United States from the time of Revolutionary War through World War I?

6. Give an example of an art work that was meant to protest war or social injustice, and describe how it did so.

7. Describe how and why Nick Ut and Pablo Picasso focused on the individual in their depictions of war.

8. Why are images forbidden within some religions? Give specific examples.

9. What prompted the destruction and avoidance of religious images during the Protestant Reformation?

10. Explain why images of a defeated or dead ruler or monuments of an occupied culture might be defaced or destroyed.

9.6 KEY TERMS

Aniconic: the avoidance of figural imagery within a religion

Caricature: portrait containing features or characteristics exaggerated for comic effect

Documentary: in artistic or written forms, work that records actual events as they happened

Frieze: a horizontal row of relief sculpture or painting on a building

Genius: (from the Latin genui: to bring into being or create) a person of remarkable intelligence or with outstanding creative abilities

Muse: personification of knowledge and the arts, and inspiration to write, sculpt, and compose

Persuasion: the attempt to influence, convince or entice someone to make a choice (often a purchase)
Propaganda: information (written, verbal, artistic) that promotes a particular viewpoint or set of ideas about a person or event. The word indicates information that is biased, misleading, or sometimes hidden that is used in order to influence views, beliefs, or behavior.

Synagogue: Jewish house of worship.
10.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify and describe the different architectural forms that are used for diverse ritual purposes and those associated with specific religious groups
- Recognize a variety of symbolic and functional components of architectural centers for worship, including building parts, auxiliary structures, and furniture, as well as to discuss its significance and uses
- Identify and describe sculpture, paintings, and a variety of religious objects that are used to express beliefs, to teach religious doctrine, and to perform ritual acts
- Recognize and discuss some of the specific forms of art associated with funerary and memorial functions in different belief systems

10.2 INTRODUCTION

Art and architecture have ever been used to express our deepest human interests, including the universal concerns with the meaning of human life itself and whether or not our spirit will continue in an afterlife. Thought and belief about these concerns have led individuals to create art about them; they also have led people to ally with like-minded individuals, forming philosophical and religious groups and institutions that have frequently further formalized their thought and belief concepts and contemplations and used art and architecture to give concrete form and image to these ethereal notions.

10.3 EXTERIOR RITUAL SPACES

The well-known site of Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, England, although not completely understood today, provides us with insight into the early evolution of a ritual location. (Figure 10.1) It
was developed over the course of some 1,500 years (c. 3,000-1,600 BCE). The site’s configuration has astronomical implications, with a design of a ritual offering or sacrifice table, and portal placed in relationship to the sunrise at the summer solstice. (Figure 10.2) Its concentric rings were made of wooden posts, earthen ditches, and thirty megaliths, or large stones, each of which is approximately thirteen feet high, seven feet wide, and weighing more than twenty-five tons. In places where two megaliths support another horizontal stone, a dolmen or cromlech is formed. (Figure 10.3) Other parts of stone, wood, and earth were placed in particular spots for which the choice of location and use are now unclear.

How could Stonehenge have been built with prehistoric knowledge and technology? It is believed that the large stones were quarried from twenty-five to 150 miles away, floated, and log rolled to the final site and then placed by creating inclined dirt ramps. (Figure 10.4) Once the upright stones were placed, the spaces were filled with dirt, the capstones rolled into place, and all the dirt removed. As is clear with these construction methods, it is important to recognize that prehistoric people did not lack in either clever mental ability or tireless devotion.

Many sites across England and other parts of Europe show a kinship to it in their use of space and materials and their desire to engage with the cosmos. Stonehenge is the largest of approximately 1,000 stone circles found on the British Isles. Their existence and the fact that these sites were used for such a long time gives us some insight into the ways our earliest known ancestors devised views of the universe and their place in it, as well as how they addressed such issues through artistic expression.

Human societies from widely separated times and locations have constructed strikingly similar forms...
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of symbolic or physical enclosure or elevation of the sacred. The altar is the simplest and expedient means. An altar, found in religious settings and structures to this day, is a piece of liturgical (religious ritual) furniture possessing ancient symbolism—primarily as the site of sacrifice, most often in the offering of animals ritually slain for the deity.

It is a short step to placing the altar on a built, raised platform to accentuate its status. For example, a heiau is a Hawaiian temple composed of a Polynesian raised earthen or stone temple platform in an enclosed area that might also contain stone markers and cult images. Heiau were used for a variety of reasons: to treat the sick, offer first fruits, control rain, and achieve success in war (for which human sacrifices were made). Heiau are found throughout the Pacific island. This print depicts the heiau at Waimea, on Kauai, one of the Hawaiian islands, as it existed prior to European occupation. (Figure 10.5) The print was created by artist John Webber (1751-1793, England), who accompanied British explorer Captain James Cook on this third Pacific expedition (1776-1779). Although many Hawaiian Heiau were deliberately destroyed at the official end of the Hawaiian religion in the nineteenth century, some have since been fully rebuilt and are now public attractions.
Olmec, Maya, and Aztec, built large temple complexes dedicated to religious worship, which included animal and human sacrifice. One such fine example of these large complexes is the Mayan temple at Chichen Itza. It is a four-sided pyramid with staircases of ninety-one steps on each side all leading to a temple at the top. The number ninety-one is no accident: four times ninety-one equals 364, which, paired with one final step at the top, represents the number of days in the solar year. Quetzalcoatl appears in succeeding Central American religions. In the Aztec culture, Quetzalcoatl was related to gods of the wind, of the planet Venus, of the dawn, of merchants, and of arts, crafts, and knowledge. He was also the patron god of the Aztec priesthood, of learning and knowledge.

The gateway is another architectural method for creating or recognizing a ritual or sacred space. Ritual gateways are found more often in Asian religious settings, though with a broad view any entrance could be construed to be a marker for a physical and spiritual transition. Shinto is an ancient religion native to Japan.

The main focus of Shinto is the veneration of the deeds and images of ancestors in home shrines. In public places, torii, or Shinto gateways, are often found marking the sites of important ancient events or framing beautiful views. The “floating gate,” so named because when the tide is high, it is surrounded by water and appears to float, of the Itsukushima Shrine near Hiroshima is a good example. (Figures 10.6 and 10.7) The entrance gate was erected in 1168; it has been destroyed, redesigned, and rebuilt several times.

10.4 THE SACRED INTERIOR

Sacred interior spaces offer several advantages over exterior sites such as platforms and gateways. In particular, they offer controlled access to the ritual space, for example, as we saw with complexes such as the Temple of Horus at Edfu (see Figure 7.42) and the Temple of Hephaestus.
in Athens, Greece, (see Figure 7.44) and they permit a new level of control over who is admitted. The nature of an interior space may also act as a metaphor for a personal encounter with the sacred within oneself.

We have noted that architectural forms have often been adopted and adapted according to the ways they serve group or congregational needs. Many religious centers meet a variety of purposes and needs, so they might include spaces or separate buildings for schools, meeting rooms, and any type of subsidiary accommodations. We will look, however, primarily at the basic distinctions among architectural forms that articulate and address the ritual and practical needs of the group.

It should be added that many practices are personal and individual and so may not require any sort of separate building; some may use a space within another sort of building or a room or corner within the home. Also, many rituals have been conceived as addressing a natural setting, such as an open field, a sacred grove of trees, a grotto or cave, or a specific spring, lake, or seaside spot. (Figure 10.8)

Some of the basic features within many churches and temples reflect these notions. Although there are many exceptions, the layout of a structure most often relates to the four directions of the compass and the sites of most sacred precincts address the rising and setting of the sun. Altars are usually placed in the east. Over time, some adaptations have been made to accommodate other considerations; for example, a church or temple might be situated near a sacred mountain or a place where a miraculous occurrence took place. With these ideas in mind, we will briefly survey a few important types and features.

10.4.1 Features and Forms

Innumerable symbolic features are associated with worship; a few stand out as basic to identification of a building or site associated with a specific belief system. We quickly recognize and identify the distinctive implications of a steeple (church tower and spire) or a minaret, or the form of a stupa or pagoda, and we can sometimes discern how these and other such expressions came into use and accrued significance. (Figures 10.9 and 10.10) As discussed in Chapter Seven: Form in Architecture, the Islamic minaret was developed as a tower associated with a mosque that was used primarily to issue the call to prayer (and also to help ventilate the building). (see Figure 7.50) In the
past, the **imam**, or prayer leader, charged with the ritual task would climb to its summit and intone the *adhan* five times each day, making the call in all directions so that the surrounding community would be notified; now, electronic speaker systems achieve this function. But the minaret has other implications and uses, as well. (Figure 10.11) It has become a striking visual symbol of the very presence of the mosque and of Islam’s presence in the community; over time, many mosque complex designs have incorporated multiple minarets—most often four, with one at each corner of the main structure. The visual significance may have been further accentuated to rival the Christian presence of a nearby steeple or bell tower.

The bell tower has been used similarly to announce the onset of Christian services by ringing at specific times. Public clocks are sometimes added, with the function of noting the time, ringing or chiming a tune on the hour, the half hour, or the quarter hour. Because churches were often community centers, the bells could also give public notice of celebration, mourning, or warnings of emergency like fire. In the Middle Ages, the control of the bell ringing was sometimes a political issue, especially as urban communities developed governments and sought independence from local churches.
in certain ways. At Tournai, Belgium, such struggles notably led to a sort of visual combat of towers on the town skyline. The city’s civic leaders there were granted the right to control the bell ringing for community notices and built a separate tower away from the church located on the town square. The Church countered by renovating the church building to include four bell towers, seeking thereby to assert its own rights to identify itself with the task. (Figure 10.12)

The steeple or bell tower visually implies a Christian presence and is generally part of the church building, usually on the façade. Over time, builders have added multiple towers, as they did at Tournai and elsewhere. Doing so emphasized the width of the façade, or other parts of the building, such as the transept, the “arms” in a Latin cross plan church, or the crossing, where the “arms” meet. For example, at Lincoln Cathedral in England, towers are placed at either side of the façade and another marks the crossing. (Figure 10.13) Some steeples and towers associated with Christian use, however, have been erected independently of other buildings. For example, the Campanile, or bell-tower, by Giotto in Florence follows the Italian tradition of erecting the tower adjacent to the church. (Figure 10.14)

More specific features of church and stupa structures, among others, include space within or outside for circumambulating, walking around a sacred object. In medieval churches that
featured display of relics and accommodated pilgrim visitation, the ambulatory might be altered to allow visitors to walk around a ring or succession of chapels at the end of the church where the apse was located. (Figure 10.15) As referred to in Chapter 7 Form in Architecture, at the Sanchi Stupa, provisions were made for the devotee to walk around the fence surrounding the stupa, then enter one of the gateways and circumambulate the mound on the ground level, then climb the stairs and circumambulate again on a walkway attached to its exterior surface. (see Figures 7.52) (Great Stupa at Sanchi: https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/e2/14/b2/e214b2e65c63f16198bf64b1db63d67.jpg) Since the stupa is an earthen mound faced with masonry, it has no
interior space accessible to the practitioner and all of the rituals are accomplished outside.

The provisions for making an offering of animals ritually slain for the deity can be seen in the ruins of the Anu or White Temple in Uruk (c. 3,000 BCE), today Iraq, which stood atop the ziggurat there. (The White Temple floorplan: https://classics.unc.edu/files/2014/02/UkWhTpl.gif; Temple and Ziggurat: https://classics.unc.edu/files/2014/02/UkWhTRecon.gif) The sanctuary chamber included a large altar table with channels along a sloped ditch to carry away the blood and other fluids resulting from the ritual sacrifice. Other types of sacrificial altars were provided for fire rituals that involved making offerings to a deity of an animal, grain, oil, or other substances, as can be seen in this Roman relief depiction of the sacrifice of a bull. (Figure 10.16) Some of these altars were part of temple complexes, while others were found in homes and used for private devotions. Larger ritual fires are also part of the practices among some sects and are still in use; bonfires are a related practice.

Ritual ablutions, or cleansings, also have artistic accommodations in the forms of fountains and pools, which were once a standard part of Christian atrium courtyards that marked the entryways to churches and are frequently provided in courtyards for mosques. (Islamic Pre-Prayer Ablution Fountain in Kairaouine Mosque Courtyard in Fes, Morocco: http://encircleworldphotos.photoshelter.com/image/I0000EvE9geT8XFA) Vestiges are found in holy water fonts that still stand at portals to Catholic churches, where the practitioner dips the fingers and makes the sign of the cross. Also related are baptismal fonts or tanks used for the ritual cleansing, which, along with other ceremonial rites, signifies the entry into some faiths (Figure. 10.17) Another type of symbolic liturgical furniture that appears in many worship contexts and is given considerable artistic attention is the pulpit, or minbar, as is it called in Islamic centers. It is the site of preaching, reading scriptures, and other addresses to congregations, and is, sometimes, very elaborately adorned. (Figures 10.18 and 10.19)
10.4.2 Sculptural and Painted Expressions of Belief

Beyond the types of symbolic features and forms we have explored, there exists a tremendous variety of objects expressing common or personal belief and devotions. In many instances, they adorn temples, synagogues, and churches; at other times, they were designed to be used in private or family settings. Even the sects with the most austere attitudes about the use of art, such as the Shakers, have a design aesthetic that is related to the belief system of finding creative solutions in the functionality of the form. (Figure 10.20). A lot of artistic efforts have been applied to religious expression, often entailing the notion that the most lavish and sumptuous goods should be provided for these purposes.

Sculptures, paintings, drawing, prints, film, video, performance art, visual demonstrations, all have been brought into service in this regard. They might vary as to whether they embody a point of doctrine or a shared tenet, or express a personal veneration for a deity or holy personage, or offer a viewpoint about exuberance or restraint; regardless, they have abounded. Often, they also epitomize the sentiment of a cultural moment in a particular place or the development of a particular line of thought in theology, philosophy, or devotional practice.
An example is the elegant and graceful Bodhisattva Guanyin, a spiritual figure of compassion and mercy, created in China in the eleventh or twelfth centuries during the Liao Dynasty (907-1125). (Figure 10.21) The sculpture acts as a compassionate guide for the Buddhist devotee who would look to such an elevated being for loving guidance on the spiritual journey. The ideas of patron saints or dedicated intercessors like the Virgin Mary were popular in the West, as well, especially during the Middle Ages, an era when great riches were often lavished on images of veneration for these spiritually accomplished models of sanctity. The graceful Virgin of Jeanne d’Evreux was a gift in the early twelfth century from the French queen to the Abbey of Saint-Denis, the site for royal burial at the time. (see Figure 7.64 and Figure 10.22) The young mother, playfully engaged with her divine infant son, was rendered with striking and inspiring emotional effect.

In Christian churches of the Middle Ages, and for some denominations today, the sculptural embellishment...
ment of the interior not only showed the respect of believers but also provided considerable food for devotional thought, often in the form of Bible stories, tales of the saints, and theological ruminations. Such was the case at the French Romanesque Vézelay Abbey (1096-1150). (Figure 10.23) The tympanum above the portal contains a relief sculpture by Gislebertus depicting the Last Judgment, with Christ sitting in the center (Figures 10.24 and 10.25). The capitals on the piers in the interior have lively depictions of Old Testament tales such as Jacob and the Angel, and other scenes such as the Conversion of St. Eustace, a Roman general who while hunting saw a vision of a crucifix between a stag’s antlers and adopted Christianity. (Figures 10.26 and 10.27). These are all told through delightful, puppet-like Romanesque figural forms. Visual stories such as these were meant to reinforce the importance of remaining true to God despite challenges to their faith in this lifetime.

10.4.3 Ritual and Devotional Objects

In devotional centers where the philosophical or religious beliefs allow the use of figural imagery, the use of cult statues and other images of deities or persons associated with the ideology are important focal points for worshippers. Some, like the cross, are essential statements; others play subsidiary roles, designed for amplifying or enhancing the spiritual experience and providing additional opportunities for contemplation or stimulus of devotional response. As we have noted, Buddhist and Hindu temple complexes often have a great array of portrayals of deities and/or spiritual
leaders, as befits polytheistic religions. Part of the complaint of the Protestant revolt was that Christian churches had become too similar in spirit to polytheistic cults, with the wide selection of saints comprising a system that seemed no longer sufficiently focused on the central singular God. Part of the effect, in artistic terms, was that the decoration of many Protestant churches changed character—as well as liturgical focus—eliminating many of the lavish accouterments that had accrued around Catholic ritual.

While few general rules exist for Christian decoration, the Catholic churches usually have a large and prominent crucifix above the main altar where the **Mass/Eucharist**, the primary religious ritual for Catholics, is celebrated; Protestant sites are more likely to have a plainer cross or none at all, and are unlikely to have an altar. Throughout the ages, the character of the crucifix has seen tremendous variation, from an expression of the extreme suffering of Christ to a much more iconic expression of the belief behind the symbol. Between the time of Christianity’s legitimization in 313 CE and the tenth century, for example, representations of Christ on the cross generally showed him as alive, having gloriously defied death. Crosses also varied considerably in scale. The Gero Crucifix (c. 965-970), now placed over a side altar in Cologne Cathedral, Germany, compared to others of its era was very large at six feet, two inches, and was considered to be provocative in eliciting contemplation of the suffering of Christ. (Figure 10.28) Over the next several centuries, depictions of Christ on the cross in northern Europe would increasingly emphasize the agony of the human being in the throes of death, as opposed to his everlasting triumph, in ever more graphic portrayals of the event central to Catholic worship and to the liturgy of the Mass. (Figure 10.29) The range of
emotional content in Christian imagery is vast and ever changing. This diversity is a typical characteristic for objects that are related to devotional use, as the nature of active faith is to grow and change, ever producing fresh new expression.

The variety of liturgical equipment that was conceived for Christian ritual over the centuries provided great outlet for inventiveness. While some versions of ritual objects were simple and utilitarian in design, others clearly spurred flights of great fancy and flair. An important symbolic and functional object in all worship centers is the candlestick and a tremendous variety of these were created. One of the most elaborate was the enormous seven branched candelabra cast of gem studded bronze and covered with a mass of imagery of saints, plants, animals, and angels, with the whole immense and tangled array supported on four large dragon-form feet. (Duomo Milano - Candelabro Trivulzio: http://www.panoramio.com/photo_explorer#view=photo&position=765&with_photo_id=66286657&order=date_desc&user=4102448; Candelabro Trivulzio base detail: http://neuteboom.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/20121029-063521.jpg) The complexity of the iconography, as well the intricacy of the work, is befuddling.

Candleholders were not simply basic pieces of equipment, but also carriers of implications for the spiritual quest and the nature of religious inspiration, at least in part based on the symbolism of light as a representation of the Holy Spirit, purity, and peace.

Service objects for the altar table also received a great deal of attention, respect, and their fair share of artistic ingenuity. The chalice of Doña Urraca, from Spain, exemplifies spolia, the re-use of precious objects and materials from the past. (Figure 10.30) As daughter and sister to kings, Doña Urraca oversaw monasteries and made provisions for their liturgies with lavish equipment. Made up of two antique onyx vessels for the base and cup, the chalice was fashioned with gem-studded bands and inscribed as a gift from Doña Urraca to the palace chapel in Léon, Spain. (Figure 10.31) This example is finely carved out of ivory with scenes from the
life of Christ and supplied with bands and inlay of gilt copper. Additional liturgical equipment includes vestments; these often have received great attention, as well. (Figure 10.32) This fourteenth century example from England is of velvet embroidered with silk, metal thread, and seed pearls that ornament scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary.

Special attention was also paid to books of Scriptures, as well as those that were used for the Mass and other ceremonies. In the Middle Ages, the pages of books had to be created as manuscripts on parchment or vellum, as we have observed before; they were frequently supplied with lavish and showy covers, particularly those that might be used by important people or for important occasions. The commissioning of such was another deep and significant expression of faith due to the sacred writings they contained, the value of all liturgical equipment, and the merit accrued by donating riches for spiritual purposes.

The front and back covers of the Lindau Book Gospels were created at two different times and places with somewhat different design ideas. (Front Cover of the Lindau Gospels: http://www.themorgan.org/sites/default/files/images/collection/download/m1-front-cover.jpg; Back Cover of the Lindau Gospels: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rear_cover_of_Lindau_Gospels.jpg) The front cover (c. 880 CE), which features a crucifix motif of the victorious Christ in gold repoussé, is further embellished with fluttering angels and an extraordinary encrustation of gems set with high prongs. The back cover dates to a century earlier and is thought to have been made for another (lost) manuscript. It is flatter, with engraved and enameled designs in the Hiberno-Saxon or insular style, which originated in the British Isles around 600 CE. The intricate serpentine and geometric patterns are similar to those found on the delicately crafted gold and cloisonné objects at the Sutton Hoo royal burial site in England. (see Figures 5.18 and 5.19)

The contents of such books also often warranted rich illumination, or illustration, as we see in the prayer book or book of hours called the Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry. (Figure 10.33) It was created by the Limbourg Brothers (Herman, Paul, and Johan, active 1402-1416, Netherlands) for John, Duke of Berry, a French prince. Throughout its heavily illustrated pag-
es or leaves, it is brightly colored, carefully inscribed, and replete with depictions of the Duke and of his many architectural and land holdings. It is well known for its calendar pages that depict activities associated with the changing seasons of the year, such as this scene of January showing the Duke seated in resplendent blue to the right at a sumptuous feast. (Figure 10.34)

A significant visual spiritual event is the ritual creation of a sand mandala, often performed for a specific occasion by a group of Tibetan Buddhist monks, although there are other spiritual and cultural groups that create related works. (Figure 10.35) To systematically build a complex mandala involves a carefully planned and meticulously executed approach and one that has very specific pictorial implications. Basically a diagram of the Buddhist conception of the universe, mandalas might vary in expression of particular beliefs, teachings, or purposes. The process takes up to several weeks; surprisingly, at its completion, it is destroyed and ritually discarded, perhaps in a fire or a lake, to symbolize the fleeting nature of the material world. An impressive and colorful spectacle to witness, it is accompanied by additional sensual stimulation from the sounds of chanting and the scraping of the colors for the design, as well as the fragrance of flowers and incense.
10.5 MASKS AND RITUAL BEHAVIOR

Masks are found in all cultures throughout history. Early human cultures were primarily nomadic, so the portability of masks and other ritual objects may have been an important feature of their design and partly why they are so prevalent. Masks and the rituals in which they function may have been among the earliest ways in which humans acknowledged the objects and forces of nature as spirits or conscious beings.

The design of a mask is determined by its functions, and these functions are determined by the religious worldview of the culture in which they are made. In animist cultures, the forces of nature, objects, and animals are all thought to have spirits or essences. Rituals are performed that are aimed to please or guide these spirits in the hope that they will bring good fortune or that will help the culture avoid calamity.

Contemporary African tribal rituals generally center on a number of life issues: birth, puberty, courtship and marriage, the harvest, the hunt, illness, royalty, death, and ancestors. In Burkina Faso, animal masks enter the community to purify its members and protect them from harm. (Figure 10.36) In Nigeria, Yoruba Egungun, or masquerades, involve both masks and costumes. (Figure 10.37) Costumes are made from layers of cloth chosen not only to demonstrate the family’s wealth and status, but also to connect the wearer to the spirits of ancestors who return to the community to advise and to punish wrongdoing. Once completely concealed, the wearer is possessed by and assumes the power of the ancestor through dance: as the pieces of cloth lift, they bestow blessings.

Due to a generally harsh climate not conducive to agriculture, Inuit cultures located in the Arctic regions of North
America subsisted mainly on fish and other sea dwelling animals, including whales. Early twentieth-century explorer and anthropologist Knud Rasmussen asked his guide, an Inuit shaman, about Inuit religious belief. His response was that “we don’t believe, we fear.”

While it is a myth that Inuit elders were sent off into the wild to die (elders were and still are highly valued members of the tribe), many of the totemic and mask images of this culture are warnings against the dangers of making bad choices in a cold, harsh, and unforgiving environment. In this circa 1890 image, a Yupik (Eskimo) shaman exorcises evil spirits from a young boy; note the complex mask and large claws. (Figure 10.38)

Mardi Gras, which is French for “Fat Tuesday,” is the day of Christian celebrations immediately before Ash Wednesday. Today, it is commonly considered the season of festivals, or carnivals, extending from Epiphany (Three Kings’ Day, when the Magi attested to the infant Christ’s divinity) on January 6 each year to the actual day of Mardi Gras, that is, the day before Lent begins. Originally associated with pagan rites of spring—the renewal of life and fertility—Mardi Gras dates back as a Christian rite to the Middle Ages in Europe when people ate as plentifully as they were able before the fasting and lean eating that took place during Lent. The associated festivities were a time to
ignore normal standards of behavior and celebrate the excesses of life. Often dressed in masks and costumes as a means of casting aside one’s identity and social restrictions, the carnivals of Mardi Gras allowed a sense of freedom rarely known in societies that upheld a strict social hierarchy. (Figures 10.39 and 10.40) We could discuss many more such visual experiences in the context of spiritual and philosophical ideas about the artistic expressions we devise to reflect our beliefs about mortality and immortality and how we connect these notions for ourselves. Suffice it to say that we can stay aware of the pervasive nature of art and visual experience in reflecting them.

10.6 FUNERARY SPACES AND GRAVE GOODS

Archaeologists have dated the earliest burial sites found worldwide to around 100,000 BCE, though some argue that certain ones are as old as 300,000 BCE. A considerable body of art related to funerary customs and beliefs has been found at such sites, and in many instances it is much more extensive than other types of evidence of how people lived. This disparity is likely due to the general respect given to sites of tombs and burial grounds. Usually considered sacred places, they have often been left intact when other parts of a settlement have been destroyed and rebuilt. These places, the ways they are marked, decorated, and furnished, supply us with a good deal of data to explore for insights into beliefs and practices related to burial practices and the afterlife, including how

the people prepared for both during their lifetimes. Burial sites often include grave goods, such as personal possessions of the buried individual, as well as food, tools, objects of adornment, and even a variety of household goods.

The Etruscans and their culture, predecessors to the Romans on the Italian peninsula, existed from c. 800 BCE until conquered by the Romans in 264 BCE. They are well known for their highly developed burial practices and the elaborate provisions they made for the afterlife. They created a type of mound tomb known as a tumulus, made from tufa, a relatively soft mineral/rock
substance that is easy to cut and carve, but hardens to become very strong. (Figure 10.41) Like the Egyptians, the Etruscans grouped their tombs into a necropolis, but they were not reserved for the highly born.

Within each tomb, the Etruscans created and decorated chambers in ways that showed what they expected would happen in a “next lifetime.” (Figure 10.42) They expected to rejoin their family and friends and to continue many of their ordinary activities and their celebrations. (Figure 10.43) Some tombs were supplied with a complete stock of household furnishings, while others showed scenes of athletic or leisure activities, and still others, ritual banquets. Their terra cotta sarcophagi included portraits of individuals and couples who expected to reunite and continue their married life in the afterlife. (Figure 10.44)

In other cultures, as we have seen, the wealthy and powerful were provided with exquisitely detailed tombs and mausolea. The Samanid Mausoleum (892-943) was created in what is today Bukhara, Uzbekistan, for a Muslim amir, or prince, of the Persian Samanid dynasty (819-999). (Figure 10.45) Islamic religious traditions forbid the construction of a mausoleum over a burial site; this is the earliest existing departure from the tradition. The carved brickwork shows remarkably refined design and craftsmanship.

In ancient China, tombs for the important and the wealthy were very richly appointed and it is clear that the expectations for the afterlife included a need for food and other sustenance, as
well as ongoing ritual appeasement of deities and evil spirits. Artisans’ remarkable skills at casting bronze were put to use for a variety of fine vessels for food and wine, altars for ritual, and various other objects. (Figure 10.46) Also included were jade amulets, tools, and daggers. Some tombs were laid out like a household of the living, and nested coffins were decorated with mythological and philosophical motifs similar to those on the bronzes and jades. In the tomb of a woman known as Lady Dai (Xin Zhui, c. 213-163 BCE), a fine silk funerary banner carried mythological symbolism of her life and death as well as a depiction of her and her coffin. (Figure 10.47) The expectation for musical enjoyment was exemplified in tombs that enclosed elaborate sets of tuned bells along with a carving showing how they would be arranged and played.

The Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang (r. 247-210 BCE), who unified China and ruled as the first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE), is another dramatic example of craft, devotion, and ritual meant...
to honor the dead. The figures were first uncovered in 1974 by local farmers in the Shaanxi Province. The Terracotta Army is a now famous collection of more than 8,000 life-sized, fired clay sculptures of warriors in battle dress standing at attention, along with numerous other figures, pieces of equipment, and animals such as horses, around the mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shi Huang, from whom China’s name originates. (Figures 10.48 and 10.49) It is believed the figures were intended to protect the emperor in the afterlife.

Research has shown that the figures were created in local workshops in an assembly line fashion. Heads, arms, torsos, and legs were created separately, modified to give individual character, and assembled. The figures were then placed in rows according to rank. They were originally brightly colored and held weapons. It is believed that most of these weapons were looted shortly after the creation of the Terracotta Army.

Finally, we will take a brief glimpse at a remarkable tomb complex that was developed over time near Beijing, China, for the emperors of the Ming Dynasty (1369-1644). (Figure 10.50)
A series of thirteen tomb complexes cover more than twenty-five square miles of land on a site nestled on the north side of a mountain, where, according to Feng Shui principles of harmonizing humans with their environment, it would be best situated to ward off evil spirits. The layout includes a number of ceremonial gateways leading to “spirit paths.” (Figures 10.51 and 10.52). The walkways are lined with various large sculptures of guardian animals that would also foster protection for the emperors, each of whom had a large and separate tomb complex within the precincts. Mostly unexcavated as yet, the findings so far reveal burial sites that resembled the imperial palaces in form with throne rooms, furnishings, and thousands of artifacts, including fine silks and porcelains. Again the expectation of continued power, prestige, and enjoyment of life’s pleasures is clear.

10.7 BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Key Concepts

As for the design of a building for sacred purposes, its many features will be determined by the requirements of specific rituals and cult usage. Meeting individual or community needs determines the most defining elements of design and plan. If a space is needed for a large gathering, it might be accomplished either out-of-doors or within a building. If an outdoor arrangement serves the purposes, it may or may not require a building, as well. For instance, as we noted with Greek temples, the cult rituals were performed in the open area outside the structure that housed the deity. Similarly, Buddhist stupas were set into a complex where devotees could approach the stupa itself, as well as visit any of the subsidiary shrines or other buildings around it. Some of them might house cult statues for deities or include libraries for scriptures, treasuries, dining halls, or
other features of use or interest. Often the grounds of a sacred complex will emphasize natural features of the settings used for contemplation, such as gardens or wooded pathways, fountains, pools, and lakes. These might include careful and meaningful arrangements of statues, iconic imagery, or rocks, trees, and plants. Monastery complexes often provide for all the activities needed to sustain the community, providing for their sacred and social activities in community and individually, while also making accommodation for visitors.

Art and architecture, from the earliest times, have been used to express human beliefs about life and death, as well as to provide for worship, burial, and memorial needs. Basic differences in worship centers are related to ritual purposes and the forms provide for rites that are performed by individuals or congregations. The settings and décor will express the distinctive doctrine and beliefs of the sect that worships there. Burial sites and centers reflect both the customs for treatment of human remains and the beliefs about what will happen to the individuals after death.

Objects created for worship centers and for individual contemplation and devotion are also designed to refer to specific beliefs and to inspire believers in religious practices. Both the religious architecture and the artworks also serve to emphasize and glorify the central beings and concepts of the belief system, often with elaborate or lavish artistic expression.

**Test Yourself**

1. Discuss some of the implications we can draw from the use of grave goods by citing three specific examples and their meanings.

2. Name several ways in which customs and practice for burial and commemoration affect the creation of art and architecture.

3. Describe the ritual use of tribal masks in different cultures.

4. Describe the specific features of artworks in two different cultures that show their belief that gods reside in the heavens.

5. Describe the uses and meanings of effigy mounds.

6. Discuss specific ways in which religious complexes address astronomical features at two or three different sites.

7. Discuss at least three art or architectural works that are specifically related to ritual use and describe the ways that they work in this regard.

8. Describe the ways and the reasons that some religious groups use or reject artwork that includes figural imagery for sacred context and its results for the artwork they use.

9. Consider the use of precious and luxurious materials for ritual art objects and cite examples, discussing their specific meanings.
10.8 KEY TERMS

Altar: a sacrificial or offertory table.

Animist: the belief that spirits are associated with objects in the natural world.

Burial Mounds: early cultural collections of skeletal remains and grave goods.

Cromlech: a circular arrangement of megaliths.

Dolmen: a large upright stone or marker.

Effigy Mounds: earth mounds formed in the shape of animals or symbols.

Egungun: a general term for Yoruba masquerade rituals.

Elevated Platform: a raised area intended to confer status.

Gateway: a structure intended to mark a passage from one state, world, or phase to another.

Grave Goods: artifacts interred with deceased members of family or tribes.

Imam: Islamic prayer leader, the one charged with the duty to issue the call to prayer at appointed times.

Mandala: a ritual diagram with cosmic significance. Used by many different religions, and either circular or containing circular components, often designed for contemplation of specific teachings or tenets related to the particular belief system. Varieties are used in diverse sects of Hinduism, Buddhism, Native American tribal worship, and others.

Mausolea: plural of mausoleum. An above-ground structure designed for entombment of the deceased.

Megalith: literally, “large stone.”

Minaret: a tower, usually tall and slender, associated with a mosque and signifying Islamic presence in a location.

Pagoda: a Buddhist structure in China, Japan, elsewhere that signifies the practice of Buddhism in that place. The form evolved from the burial mound conception of the Stupa that appeared in India as the primary structural symbol of the belief system, as it spread to China and took on the native architectural form of the watchtower.

Portal: an exceptionally grand entrance, most often referring to cathedral or other church architecture.

Ritual Mask: masks designed to be used in religious or secular ceremonial events.

Sacred Interior: interior spaces devoted to ritual or ceremony invoking a highest good.
Sacred: held as a highest good.

Sarcophagi: plural of sarcophagus – a burial container, usually of stone or other masonry material, often embellished with sculptural decoration.

Stonehenge: a famous arrangement of vertical stones from prehistoric Britain.

Stupa: a Buddhist monument signifying the presence of relics of Sakyamuni Buddha or sacred objects associated with the beliefs. Formed of an earthen mound, faced with brick, stone, or stucco. Worshippers circumambulate outside the stupa, rather than enter it.

Temple Mound: earthen mounds formed to elevate a ceremony, ritual, or elite.

Terra Cotta: porous low fired ceramic.

Terracotta Army: famous arrangement of 6,000 clay soldiers meant to guard the grave of the first emperor of China.

Toranas: stone structures placed at the Buddhist Stupa at Sanchi and at other stupa sites which form gateways to the circular path around the stupa.
11.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

• Understand why art and ethics are associated
• Identify works of art that were censored due to their failure to meet societal ethics
• Indicate why ethical values change over time by society
• Articulate why some societal groups may consider some works of art controversial
• Identify ethical considerations in the artist’s use of others’ art work in their own, the materials used in making art, manipulation of an image to alter its meaning or intent, and the artist’s moral obligations as an observer
• Identify roles that museums play in the preservation, interpretation, and display of culturally significant objects

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the perception, susceptibility, and ethics of art. It will explore and analyze the moral responsibility of artists and their rights to represent and create without censorship.

Morality and art are connected usually in art that provokes and disturbs. Such art stirs up the artist’s or viewer’s personal beliefs, values, and morals due to what is depicted. Works that seem to purposely pursue or strongly communicate a message may cause controversies to flair up: controversies over the rights of artistic freedom or over how society evaluates art. That judgment of works created by artists has to do with society’s value judgment in a given time in history.

The relationship between the artist and society is intertwined and sometimes at odds as it relates to art and ethics. Neither has to be sacrificed for the other, however, and neither needs to bend to the other in order to create or convey the work’s message.
Art is subjective: it will be received or interpreted by different people in various ways. What may be unethical to one may be ethical to another. Because art is subjective, it is vulnerable to ethical judgment. It is most vulnerable when society does not have a historical context or understanding of art in order to appreciate a work’s content or aesthetics. This lack does not make ethical judgment wrong or irrational; it shows that appreciation of art or styles changes over time and that new or different art or styles can come to be appreciated. The general negative taste of society usually changes with more exposure. Still, taste remains subjective.

Ethics has been a major consideration of the public and those in religious or political power throughout history. For many artists today, the first and major consideration is not ethics, but the platform from which to create and deliver the message through formal qualities and the medium. Consideration of ethics may be established by the artist but without hindrance of free expression. It is expected that in a work of art an artist’s own beliefs, values, and ideology may contrast with societal values. It is the art that speaks and adds quality value to what is communicated. This is what makes the power of free artistic expression so important. The art is judged not by who created the work or the artist’s character, but based on the merits of the work itself.

However, through this visual dialogue existing between artist and society, there must be some mutual understanding. Society needs to understand that freedom of expression in the arts encourages greatness while artists need to be mindful of and open to society’s disposition. When the public values art as being a positive spiritual and physical addition to society, and the artist creates with ethical intentions, there is a connection between viewer and creator. An artist’s depiction of a subject does not mean that the creator approves or disapproves of the subject being presented. The artist’s purpose is to express, regardless of how the subject matter may be interpreted. Nevertheless, this freedom in interpretation does not mean that neither the artist nor society holds responsibility for their actions.

Art and ethics, in this respect, demands that artists use their intellectual faculties to create a true expressive representation or convey psychological meaning. This type of art demands a capability on the viewer’s part to be moved by many sentiments from the artist. It demands the power of art to penetrate outward appearances, and seize and capture hidden thoughts and interpretations of the momentary or permanent emotions of a situation. While artists are creating, capturing visual images, and interpreting for their viewers, they are also giving them an unerring measure of the artists’ own moral or ethical sensibilities.

Ethical dilemmas are not uncommon in the art world and often arise from the perception or interpretation of the artwork’s content or message. Provocative themes of spirituality, sexuality, and politics can and may be interpreted in many ways and provoke debates as to their being unethical or without morality. For example, when Dada artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968, France) created *Fountain* in 1917, it was censored and rejected by contemporary connoisseurs of the arts and the public. (*Fountain*, Marcel Duchamp: [http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/25853#ixzz3mwCWDOxZ](http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/25853#ixzz3mwCWDOxZ)) A men’s urinal turned on its side, Duchamp considered this work to be one of his *Readymade*, manufactured objects that were turned into or designated by him as art. Today, *Fountain* is one of Duchamp’s most famous works and is widely considered an icon of twentieth-century art.
More recently, *The Holy Virgin Mary* by Chris Ofili (b. 1968, England) shocked viewers when it was included in the 1997-2000 *Sensation* exhibition in London, Berlin, and New York. (*The Holy Virgin Mary*, Chris Ofili: [https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/global-culture/identity-body/identity-body-europe/a/chris-ofili-the-holy-virgin-mary](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/global-culture/identity-body/identity-body-europe/a/chris-ofili-the-holy-virgin-mary)) The image caused considerable outrage from some members of the public across the country, including then-mayor of New York City Rudolph Giuliani. With its collaged images of women’s buttocks, glitter-mixed paint, and applied balls of elephant dung, many considered the painting blasphemous. Ofili stated that was not his intention; he wanted to acknowledge both the sacred and secular, even sensual, beauty of the Virgin Mary, and that the dung, in his parents’ native country of Nigeria, symbolized fertility and the power of the elephant. Nevertheless, and probably unaware of the artist’s meaning, people were outraged.

Traditionally, aesthetics in art has been associated with beauty, enjoyment, and the viewer’s visual, intellectual, and emotional captivation. Scandalous art may not be beautiful, but it very well could be enjoyable and hold one captive. The viewer is taken in and is attracted to something that is neither routine nor ordinary. All are considered to be meaningful experiences that are distinctive to Fine Arts. Aesthetic judgment goes hand in hand with ethics. It is part of the decision-making process people use when they view a work of art and decide if it is “good” or “bad.” The process of aesthetic judgment is a conceptual model that describes how people decide on the quality of artworks created and, for them individually or societally, makes an ethical decision about a certain work of art.

As we can see, art indubitably has had the power to shock and, as a source of social provocation, art will continue to shock unsuspecting viewers. Audiences will continue to feel scandalized, disturbed, or offended by art that is socially, politically, and religiously challenging. Being considered scandalous or radical, as already observed, does not take away from experiencing or appreciation of the art, nor do such responses speak to the artist’s ethics or morality. Art may, however, fail in some eyes to offer an aesthetic experience. Such a failure also depends on the complex relationship between art and the viewer, living in a given moment of time.

### 11.3 Ethical Considerations in Making and Using Art

#### 11.3.1 Appropriation

Artists have always been inspired by the work of other artists; they have borrowed compositional devices, adopted stylistic elements, and taken up narrative details. In such cases, the artist incorporates these aspects of another’s work into their own distinct creative endeavor. ** Appropriation, on the other hand, means taking existing objects or images and, with little or no change to them, using them in or as one’s own artwork. Throughout the twentieth century and to the present day, appropriation of an object or image has come to be considered a legitimate role for art and artists to play. In the new context, the object or image is re-contextualized. This allows the artist to comment on the work’s original meaning and bring new meaning to it. The viewer, recognizing the original work, layers additional meanings and associations. Thus, the work becomes different, in large part based on the artist’s intent.
Sherrie Levine (b. 1947, USA) has spent her career prompting viewers to ask questions about what changes take place when she reproduces or makes slight alterations to a well-known work of art. For example, in 1981 Levine photographed images created by Walker Evans (1903-1975, USA) that had been reproduced in an exhibition catalogue. (After Walker Evans: 4, Sherrie Levine: http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/267214) She titled her series After Walker Evans, freely acknowledging Evans as the creator of the “original” photographic works. And, she openly stated, the catalogue—containing reproductions of Evans’s photographs—was the source for her own “reproductions.” Levine created her photographs by photographing the reproduced photographs in the exhibition catalogue; the photographs in the catalogue were reproductions of the photographs in the exhibition.

Visitors to the exhibition who were familiar with Evans’s depictions of Alabama sharecropper families struggling to make a living during the Great Depression were being challenged to view Levine’s photographs, such as this one of Allie Mae Burroughs titled After Walker Evans: 4, independent of their historical, intellectual, and emotional significance. Without those connections, what story did the photograph tell? Did the photograph itself having meaning, or is its message the sum of what meanings the viewer ascribes to it? Levine’s work in the 1980s was part of the postmodern art movement that questioned cultural meaning over individual significance: was it possible to consider art in such broad categories any longer, or is there such a thing as one, agreed-upon, universal meaning? She was also questioning notions of “originality,” “creativity,” and “reproduction.” What product can truly be attributed to one individual’s thought processes and efforts, with no contribution from a collective of influences? If none exists, then we cannot state something is an original work of art, springing from a single source of creativity, after which all subsequent works are reproductions. One is not more authentic or valuable than the other.

In 1993, Levine was invited by the Philadelphia Museum of Art to be the first artist to participate in Museum Studies, a series of contemporary projects: “new works and installations created by artists specifically for the museum.” Levine created six translucent white glass “reproductions” of a 1915 marble sculpture by Constantine Brancusi (1876-1957, Romania), titled Newborn I. (Crystal Newborn, Sherrie Levine: https://s3.amazonaws.com/classconnection/93/flashcards/7114093/jpg/theneverborn1334629599199-14C4C09054F51F15F.jpg) She titled her 1993 work Crystal Newborn; it is shown here along with Black Newborn of 1994. (Crystal Newborn and Black Newborn, Sherrie Levine: http://whitney.org/WatchAndListen/AudioGuides?play_id=568) Both works are cast glass, which in the case of Black Newborn, has been sandblasted. (Black Newborn, Sherrie Levine: http://www.moma.org/collection/works/89955?locale=en)

Similar to her 1981 photograph After Walker Evans: 4, these works are meant to examine notions about something being an original or, instead, being a reproduction. Just as her earlier photographic reproductions of Evans’s work themselves could be reproduced, so also were these glass works part of a series; Levine cast a total of twelve versions from one (original?) mold. In addition, although sculpture such as Brancusi’s Newborn I, is generally displayed on a pedestal or stand that elevates the work to a comfortable viewing height and separates it from its surroundings, Levine had her work displayed on a grand piano. Doing so changed the setting from a more conventional, expected, but consciously neutral mode of display, the pedestal, to the more nu-
anced, domesticated, yet sophisticated tone of a polished piano top. She wanted the difference to register in the viewer’s mind and influence the viewer’s response to the work, including thinking of the contrast: the typical museum display is masculine, that is, part of the male world of wealthy collectors and museum board members. The piano, on the other hand, brings to mind the feminine world of the comforting and comfortable home—it is a sculpture of a newborn, after all. But the cool, smooth, hard surface of Levine’s glass, as was the case of Brancusi’s marble, does not allow the infant head to descend to the level of maternal sentimentality.

Levine maintains tremendous similarities to the works preceding hers that she appropriates from, but she opens up their accumulated meanings to even more, new ones.

11.3.2 Use of Materials

The materials artists use to create their art throughout history have generally contributed to the value of the work. Using silver or ivory or gems or paint made from a rare mineral or numerous other materials that are costly and difficult to obtain literally raised the monetary value of the work produced. If the artwork was made for a political or religious leader, the cultural value of the work increased because it was associated with and owned by those of high status in society. On the other hand, using materials at odds with social values raises questions in the viewer’s mind. For example, ivory was—and still is—a desirable material for carving, but it is illegal to trade in elephant ivory within the United States as African elephants are now an endangered species. Viewers’ awareness of and sensitivity to the plant and animal life impacted in the production of art is increasing, and may actually be a factor in the materials an artist chooses to use.

Damien Hirst (b. 1965, England) began his career in the late 1980s associated with the Young British Artists (YBA). Hirst, along with others in the group, was known for his controversial subjects and approaches in his art. Much of his art from that time to the present has been concerned with spirituality—Hirst was raised Catholic—and with death as an end and a beginning, a boundary and a portal. One of the motifs he has returned to throughout his career is the butterfly. With its transformative life cycle, from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to adult, the butterfly serves for Hirst as a “universal trigger.” That is, the symbolism associated with the butterfly’s life cycle, linked by the ancient Greeks to the psyche, or soul, by early Christians to resurrection, and by many to this day to innocence and freedom, is so deeply imbedded in human consciousness that it springs to the viewer’s mind automatically. In his art, those associations are the foundation upon which Hirst builds.

Hirst began his experiments with butterflies in 1991 when he created a dual installation and exhibition, In and Out of Love (White Paintings and Live Butterflies) and In and Out of Love (Butterfly Paintings and Ashtrays). Both contained living butterflies that were intended to and did die over the course of the five-week display. (http://www.damienhirst.com/exhibitions/solo/1991/in-out-love) His first solo show, In and Out of Love, set the stage for Hirst’s career and reputation as an artist who confronts definitions of art and provokes the viewer to explain how art helps us to grapple with boundaries between and intersections of life and death, reason and faith, hope and despair.
Touching upon his interests in religion and science, including lepidoptery, the study of butterflies, Hirst often makes biblical references in the titles of his artwork, and he mimics aspects of how butterflies have traditionally been displayed in his compositions. He began the *Kaleidoscope* series in 2001, not using entire living or dead butterflies, but using only their wings, symbolizing for him a separation from the unavoidable ugliness and unpleasantness of life—the butterfly’s hairy body—to preserve only the fleeting beauty of the wings and their associations with the swift passing of time. *The Kingdom of the Father* is a later work in the series, dating to 2007. (*Kingdom of the Father*, Damien Hirst: http://broadmuseum.msu.edu/sites/default/files/Hirst-Kingdom%20of%20the%20Father_%72.jpg?width=90%25&height=90%25) The title, compositional elements, and overall shape of the mixed-media work are directly linked to the artist’s absorption with religion: here, as with a number of works in the *Kaleidoscope* series, the work looks like a stained glass window found in the Gothic cathedrals that fascinated Hirst as a child.

Despite the splendid effect of their vivid colors, energized compositions, and iridescent glow, some viewers object to the materials Hirst uses: the beauty and luminosity is derived from thousands of butterflies killed so that their wings could be used in his work. In 2012, the Tate Modern in London mounted a retrospective of Hirst’s art, the first major exhibition in England to review work from his entire career. His 1991 installation, *In and Out of Love*, was recreated as part of the show. (http://www.damienhirst.com/exhibitions/solo/2012/tate) Some critics and animal rights activists lodged complaints about the estimated 9,000 butterflies that died over the course of the twenty-three week event. For example, a spokesperson for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) stated, “There would be national outcry if the exhibition involved any other animal, such as a dog. Just because it is butterflies, that does not mean they do not deserve to be treated with kindness.” The Tate Modern issued a statement that the butterflies were “sourced from reputable UK butterfly houses.” They also defended their use as integral to Hirst’s art, stating, “the themes of life and death as well as beauty and horror are highlighted, dualities that are prevalent in much of the artist’s work.”

In essence, the museum, along with many other individuals and institutions over the course of Hirst’s career, acknowledged the complaints, but accepted the artist’s actions as an acceptable part of his creative process, and determined his artistic intentions were of greater importance than any issues of morality raised. Simply, the butterflies were the means to a higher end, his artwork.

### 11.3.3 Digital Manipulation

Digital manipulation of photographs through the use of Adobe Photoshop and other computer software is so commonplace today it generally goes unnoticed or without comment. Digital manipulation is used by amateur and professional photographers alike, and can be a helpful, constructive tool. When photographs are manipulated with the aim of altering factual information, however, an ethical line has been crossed.

In 2006, freelance photographer Adnan Hajj made changes to a photograph, carried by Reuters Group, a news agency, of smoke rising in the midst of buildings in Beirut following an Israeli attack during the Israel-Lebanon conflict. (The Adnan Hajj photographs controversy revolving
around digitally manipulated photographs: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/0/0f/Adnan_Hajj_Beirut_photo_comparison.jpg) A blogger commented that the photograph showed signs of manipulation. Comparing the unaltered photograph on the left to the published image on the right reveals that the smoke is obviously darker; in addition, the spreading smoke at the top of the photograph shows the telltale patterning, known as cloning, which indicates a digital effect that has been repeatedly duplicated. Reuters immediately retracted the photograph and issued the statement, “Reuters takes such matters extremely seriously as it is strictly against company editorial policy to alter pictures.”

The ethical premise is that photojournalists are expected to conform to accepted professional standards of conduct. In fact, the National Press Photographers Association has established a Code of Ethics that addresses the issue: “Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images’ content and context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects.” Of importance here is that, as news, these images must remain factual, and must represent the events and people truthfully and faithfully. When a photograph is manipulated with the intent to deceive the viewer, as was the case with Hajj’s enhancement of the damage done by an Israeli strike against the Lebanese, it changes the historical record; it is unethical.

11.3.4 As an Observer

Photojournalists are expected to follow the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) Code of Ethics not only when it comes to the manipulation of news images, but also in the acquisition of those images. In times of war, political unrest, or natural disasters, for example, they may be in the midst of events that unfold in unexpected and disturbing ways. The photojournalist is an observer whose role is to make a record of the events, but as a fellow human being, should the photographer become involved or offer aid?

In 1993, photojournalist Kevin Carter (1960-1994, South Africa) photographed a starving young girl being watched by a vulture during a time of famine in Sudan. (Vulture, Kevin Carter: http://theunsolicitedopinion.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/kevin-carter-vulture.jpg) The photograph was sold to The New York Times and was featured in that newspaper and numerous others worldwide, generating tremendous concern about the fate of the child and commentary on the ethics of taking the photograph, especially as the scene was described as a toddler having collapsed on her way to a relief station for food. But, guidelines in the NPPA Code of Ethics state: “While photographing subjects do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events.” Many felt, however, that in light of the child’s condition and helplessness, the photographer had the responsibility to take action.

According to Carter and Joao Silva, a friend and fellow photographer, the situation and Carter’s responses were more nuanced than it may appear in the photograph. Carter and Silva arrived by airplane in the village of Ayod with United Nations personnel bringing provisions to the local feeding center. As women and children began gathering at the center, Carter photographed them. The child was a short distance away in the bush, approaching the center with difficulty on her own; as Carter watched, the vulture landed. As recounted later in Time magazine:
Careful not to disturb the bird, he positioned himself for the best possible image. He would later say he waited about 20 minutes, hoping the vulture would spread its wings. It did not, and after he took his photographs, he chased the bird away and watched as the little girl resumed her struggle. Afterward he sat under a tree, lit a cigarette, talked to God and cried. “He was depressed afterward,” Silva recalls. “He kept saying he wanted to hug his daughter.”1

So while Carter did not otherwise aid the child, he did remove a source of immediate danger to her by waving away the vulture. He expressed regret he did not, and felt he could not, further help the girl and the many other victims he saw while on assignments. The unrelenting suffering he witnessed contributed to the depression he was subject to for years. A little more than a year after the photograph of the starving child was published, in April 1994, Carter received the Pulitzer Prize for the controversial image. A week later, Ken Oosterbroek, another friend and fellow photojournalist, was killed during a violent conflict they were photographing in their native South Africa. Haunted by sorrow, regret, atrocities he had witnessed, and the pain he felt, Carter committed suicide three months later.

### 11.4 CENSORSHIP

The word censorship brings up ideas of suppressing explicit, offensive images and written material, perhaps of a sexual or political nature, or accounts of violence. What is considered prurient or sacrilegious or barbarity is not universal, however, so what was acceptable during one era may be banned in the next.

Michelangelo was a sculptor, painter, and architect. He considered his sculptural and architectural works to be of far greater importance than his relatively few painted works. But many know him today as much for the two frescoes, or wall paintings, he completed in the Sistine Chapel in Rome as for the far greater number of marble figures and buildings he created. The chapel is within the Pope’s residence in Vatican City, the seat of the Roman

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Catholic Church, in Rome. The first fresco Michelangelo painted on the 134-foot-long ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, from 1508 to 1512, is a complex series of nine scenes from the Book of Genesis, architectural elements, and figures. It was the first large-scale painting of his career. He returned to paint *The Last Judgment* on the wall behind the altar from 1535 to 1541. (Figure 11.1)

The Catholic Church had changed tremendously in the twenty-four years between when the first work was completed and the second one begun. In 1517, the singular authority of the Catholic Church was called into question when Martin Luther, a German monk, issued a series of complaints against Church practices, especially the selling of indulgences, or pardoning of sins. As opposed to the complex hierarchy of the Church, and an emphasis on its teachings as the only means to salvation, Luther championed personal faith and adherence to the word of the Bible. Although his beliefs were denounced, and Luther was excommunicated from the Church in 1521, the new Protestant faith swept through northern Europe. The Protestant Reformation, as Luther’s attempts to revise the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church were known, was not just a serious threat to the Church’s authority, it prompted the wholesale examination and revision of the Church’s structure, activities, and methods.

Michelangelo began to paint *The Last Judgment* in 1535. In that time of upheaval and uncertainty, the subject of the faithful rising to their reward at Christ’s side in eternity while those who doubt or turn away fall to their eternal damnation could have been intended to reassure those remaining true to the Church. Rather than sticking to a clearly structured and hierarchical organization of figures, however, Michelangelo broke from tradition to show dynamic groups of moving, gesturing, and emotion-filled angels, saints, blessed, and damned. Although Christ is in the center with His right arm raised, it is not clear if He is caught up in the erratic and chaotic swirl of the figures surrounding Him or confidently directing them according to their fates. The lack of distinction was originally heightened by the uniformity of clothing, or lack thereof, as Michelangelo painted the majority of figures nude, removing signs of earthly status and riches.

When completed, the fresco was hailed as a masterpiece, but in the following decades, it came under sharp criticism. As the Protestant Reformation by Martin Luther and his followers continued to revolutionize religious doctrine and practices throughout Europe, the Catholic Church formed The Council of Trent (1545-1563) in response. The Counter-Reformation remained adamant in condemning the new Protestant faith but did away with many excesses and leniencies that had grown within the Church, including art that served as a distraction from its proper use as a tool of worship. In its findings, The Council of Trent stated that used properly, art instructed the faithful to “order their own lives and manners in imitation of the saints; and may be excited to adore and love God; and to cultivate piety.” Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* lacked the clarity of message and propriety now demanded in religious art so that, at odds with the Council’s decree, “there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God.”

In 1565, two years after the Council’s decree and the year after Michelangelo’s death, Daniele da Volterra (1509-1566, Italy) was commissioned to paint drapery on the nude figures and alter the positions of some that were deemed too indecent. Some of his modifications, and others carried out in the eighteenth century, were removed when the fresco was cleaned and restored between 1980 and 1994.
11.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE COLLECTING AND DISPLAY OF ART

11.5.1 Collecting/Holding

Art is part of the cultural heritage and identity of the society in which it is made. It shares characteristics with work made by other artists such as how figures of authority are depicted or what is considered appropriate subject matter in art. Because art is closely aligned with the history and values of the people in the society it comes from, individuals and governments alike take care to preserve and protect the cultural treasures in their possession. For the same reasons, invaders often loot and confiscate or destroy the works of art and architecture most cherished by those they have conquered to demoralize and subjugate them.

Representatives of the Nazi Party in Germany took art from its rightful owners, both museums and individuals, from 1933 until the end of World War II in 1945. When Adolf Hitler assumed the role of Chancellor of Germany in 1933, he began a campaign to sell or destroy art he did not approve of in the collections of German museums. Much of that art had been produced by artists who were part of twentieth-century art movements such as German Expressionism, Dadaism, Cubism, and Surrealism. Hitler objected to avant garde—experimental and innovative—art and to the artists who were part of those groups. By 1937, his agents had amassed nearly 16,000 works, 650 of which were included in the Degenerate Art Exhibition (Die Ausstellung Entartete Kunst) held in Munich that year and viewed by more than 2,000,000 people. Hitler condemned the degenerate art as contributing to, if not the cause of, the decay of German culture, and the artists as racially impure, mentally deficient, and morally bereft. Thousands of the works were then destroyed by fire, and thousands more were sold to collectors and museums worldwide.

The funds generated by works sold were earmarked for the purchase of more traditionally acclaimed artists and subjects that were to go into the Führermuseum, or Leader’s Museum, in Linz, which Hitler intended to be the greatest collection of European art in the world but which was never built. Art for the Leader’s Museum was purchased from museums, private owners, and art dealers, often under pressure to sell the work at a steep discount to Hitler’s agents or risk arrest. And, the Nazis acquired

Figure 11.2 | German loot stored at Schlosskirche Ellingen
Author: Department of Defense
Source: Wikimedia Commons
License: Public Domain
art by confiscating it from institutions and private owners, many of whom were Jewish. The Nazis purchased and looted work in every country they occupied during World War II. They had amassed 8,500 works intended for the *Führermuseum* by the time Hitler committed suicide in 1945.

They plundered tens of thousands more for the private collections of Hitler and a few of his top commanders, including Hermann Göring, who held approximately 2,000 works of art by the end of the war. Art and other cultural spoils of war (such as books) were stored in numerous locations throughout Germany and Austria, including air raid shelters, estates that had been seized by the Nazis, and salt mines. In the photograph shown here, hundreds of crates holding sculptures and cloth-wrapped paintings are stacked in the Palace Chapel (*Schlosskirche*) in the town of Ellingen, in Bavaria. (Figure 11.2) Standing guard is a United States soldier.

In 1943, Allied forces created an organization known as Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA). At first, the approximately 350 men and women from thirteen countries who were part of the “Monuments Men,” as they became known, worked to prevent damage to historically and culturally significant monuments. As the war was ending, they began locating and documenting art held by the Nazis and then led the effort to return art to the country from which it had been taken. By the time they completed their work in 1951, the Monuments Men had located and returned to their owners 5,000,000 works of art and other culturally significant items, as well as domestic objects of value such as silver, china, and jewelry. As of 1997, approximately 100,000 objects were still missing.

### 11.5.2 Display

Museums of all types play many roles. In the collections they hold, museums act as keepers of the public trust. The objects or artifacts have value to all, from the casual viewer to the avid scholar, in one or more realm: scientific, educational, cultural, social, historical, political. The objects help preserve our memories and carry them into the future; they also help us to understand the lives, thinking, and actions of others. Through the exhibitions they hold and objects they display, museums promote debate, encourage new ideas, and stimulate our imaginations. The objects in museums communicate with us by appealing to our senses, emotions, intellect, and creativity. That is why we continue to wonder about and ponder on what we see and experience in museum settings.

When objects are placed within a context in a museum display, it stimulates our ability to make connections and broaden our understanding. For example, if a historical museum presents information about the geography and history of an area as part of a display on canoes and river trading, we have a context in which to appreciate the objects and interpret the practices of the people in that place and time. That was the approach artist Fred Wilson (b. 1954, USA) took when asked to create an exhibition for the Maryland Historical Society (MHS) in 1992. He titled his show “Mining the Museum.” (Metalwork: [http://africanah.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FredWilsonMiningTheMuseum2.jpg](http://africanah.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FredWilsonMiningTheMuseum2.jpg))

The mission of the MHS is to collect, preserve, and study objects related to Maryland history. This is often accomplished through the display of objects in its collection. As the organizer of the
exhibition, or guest curator, Wilson was allowed to explore the thousands of artifacts in storage, many of which are seldom if ever displayed. He was seeking to bring to light, so to speak, objects rarely seen, and to present groupings of objects in unexpected ways, sometimes humorous and at other times disturbing. For example, with the label identifying the objects as “Metalwork 1793-1880,” Wilson placed iron slave shackles in the midst of ornately decorated silver tableware. No explanatory text accompanied these things; Wilson wanted viewers to contemplate what they saw and make connections without directions:

By displaying these artifacts side by side, Wilson created an atmosphere of unease and made apparent the link between the two kinds of metal works: The production of the one was made possible by the subjugation enforced by the other. When the audience made this connection, Wilson succeeded in creating awareness of the biases that often underlie historical exhibitions and, further, the way these biases shape the meaning we attach to what we are viewing.

So, in addition to asking viewers to question the meaning of the objects through his mode of display, he also wanted them to think about how history is made or constructed by what we include and omit; what we value, and why; and how we highlight objects and information of value in exhibitions within museum settings.

11.5.3 Property Rights, Copyright, and the First Amendment

Artist Shepard Fairey (b. 1970, USA) designed a poster with a portrait of President Barack Obama above the word “hope” in red, beige, and two tones of blue in 2008. (Barack Obama “HOPE” poster, Shepard Fairey: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/5/55/Barack_Obama_Hope_poster.jpg) Sometimes printed instead with the words “progress” or “change,” the poster and image quickly became associated with Obama’s campaign for presidency and was soon officially adopted as its symbol. After the election, the Smithsonian Institution acquired for the National Portrait Gallery a mixed-media version of the portrait.

It soon came to light, however, that the poster was based on a photograph taken by freelance photographer Mannie Garcia in 2006. The Associated Press (AP) stated they owned rights to the photograph and that Fairey had not obtained permission from AP for its use. The Associated Press claimed they owned the copyright on the photograph, having contracted ownership of the image from its creator, Mannie Garcia. Garcia, on the other hand, stated that according to his contract with AP, he still possessed the copyright. The exclusive legal right to print, publish, or otherwise reproduce a work of art or to authorize others to do so belongs to the artist who created it according to the U.S. Constitution, Article 1 Section 8: “The Congress shall have Power: To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.” That right, or copyright, remains in place for the artist’s lifetime plus seventy years, granting the artist the power to control their work, its use, and its reproduction.
Fairey, through his attorney Anthony Falzone, countered with the statement, “We believe fair use protects Shepard’s right to do what he did here.” Fair use allows for brief excerpts of copyright material to be used without permission of payment from the copyright holder under certain conditions: commentary and criticism, or parody. The idea behind allowing quotes and summaries of copyright material to be used freely is that what is written will add to public knowledge. Parody is referencing a well-known work clearly, but in a comic way; by its very nature, the original work is recognizable in a parody of it. Unfortunately, Fairey’s case was settled out of court, so the question of how his use of Garcia’s photograph in his poster was an example of fair use was not answered.

11.6 BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

Key Concepts

Traditionally, art has a history of being judged and censored and more than likely in the future artists will continue to blur many boundaries, sometimes even offending the audience’s sensitivities. Offenses may address politics, social injustices, sexuality or nudity, among numerous other subjects and concerns. Contemporary societies, on the other hand, generally do not want to endorse any form of censorship; but, at times due to the sensitive nature of art, it happens. Some contemporary art is expected to make some groups in society uncomfortable. Artists over time have pushed many boundaries in society and have brought to the surface questions about a society’s moral beliefs. Just the questions alone have perhaps expanded the freedom of artistic manifestation. So, works such as Duchamp’s Urinal, or Ofili’s The Holy Virgin Mary challenge society’s moral beliefs and values by the nature of the art itself. They also shock segments of society by exploring the notion of aesthetic taste. Such works that challenge traditional notion of ethics and aesthetics, in fact, have led some to believe that contemporary art practices are based more on the idea than the object of art.

Nevertheless, artists do make ethical decisions in such areas as the appropriation of others’ work, what materials they use in their work and how they use them, the digital manipulation of their work, and what role they play as observers of the events they capture in their art. And, as we have seen, museums and other places in which art is exhibited play distinct roles and have responsibilities in how art is preserved, interpreted, and displayed.

Test Yourself

1. Is there a relationship between art and ethics? Defend your answer explaining why you agree or disagree. Select works not used in this text to clarify your stance. Attach selected works with captions. Add a commentary at the end of your response explaining why you selected the art works and their significance to the topic.

2. Select two ethically controversial works of art from different periods in history. Explain how each work was received at the time it was made, and how changes in societal values have impacted acceptance of the works today.
3. Should certain types of art be censored? Explain your answer and select at least two examples to assist in clarifying your statement. Give an opposing response with justifications and select works to describe and clarify your opinion.

4. Describe one way appropriation has become acceptable in contemporary art.

5. What does it mean when some contemporary artists question what is an “original” work of art, and what is a “reproduction?”

6. What concepts was Damien Hirst exploring in using butterflies in his artwork? What did the butterflies symbolize for Hirst?

7. Why is it important that news photographs not be altered?

8. What was the ethical dilemma photojournalist Kevin Carter faced when he photographed a child during the 1993 famine in Sudan?

9. What acts of censorship did Adolf Hitler and his associates engage in prior to and during World War II?

10. As guardians of culturally significant objects, what obligations do museums have?

11. Describe how claims of “copyright” and “fair use” came into play in relation to Shepard Fairey’s portrait of Barack Obama.

### 11.7 KEY TERMS

**Appropriation:** the use of pre-existing objects or images with little or no transformation applied to them.

**Censorship:** the suppression of art and other forms of communication considered to be objectionable or harmful for moral, political, or religious reasons.

**Cloning:** the repeated duplication of a digital effect.

**Ethical Judgment:** an alternative decision between being morally right or morally wrong.

**Ethical Values:** principles that determine one proper behavior in society.

**Formal qualities:** the elements and principles of design that make up a work of art.