Renaissance

The Renaissance (French for "rebirth"; Italian: Rinascimento), was a cultural movement that spanned roughly the 14th through the 17th century, beginning in Italy in the late Middle Ages and later spreading to the rest of Europe. It encompassed the revival of learning based on classical sources, the rise of courtly and papal patronage, the development of perspective in painting, and advancements in science. The Renaissance had wide-ranging consequences in all intellectual pursuits, but is perhaps best known for its artistic aspect and the contributions of such polymaths as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who have inspired the term "Renaissance men". There is a consensus, though not a unanimous one, that the Renaissance began in Florence in the fourteenth century. Various theories have been proposed to explain its origin and characteristics, focusing on an assortment of factors, including the social and civic peculiarities of Florence at this time including its political structure and the patronage of its dominant family, the Medici. The Renaissance has a long and complex historiography, and there has always been debate among historians as to the usefulness of the Renaissance as a term and as a historical age. Some have called into question whether the Renaissance really was a cultural "advance" from the Middle Ages, instead seeing it as a period of pessimism and nostalgia for the classical age. While nineteenth-century historians were keen to emphasise that the Renaissance represented a clear "break" from Medieval thought and practice, some modern historians have instead focused on the continuity between the two eras. Indeed, it is now usually considered incorrect to classify any historical period as "better" or "worse", leading some to call for an end to the use of the term, which they see as a product of presentism. The word Renaissance has also been used to describe other historical and cultural movements, such as the Carolingian Renaissance and the Byzantine Renaissance. Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man shows clearly the effect writers of antiquity had on Renaissance thinkers. Based on the specifications in Vitruvius's De architectura, da Vinci tried to draw the perfectly proportioned man. The Renaissance was a cultural movement that profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period. Beginning in Italy, and spreading to the rest of Europe by the 16th century, its influence was felt in literature, philosophy, art, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual enquiry. Renaissance scholars employed the humanist method in study, and searched for realism and human emotion in art. Renaissance thinkers sought out learning from ancient texts, typically written in Latin or ancient Greek. Scholars scoured Europe's monastic libraries, searching for works of antiquity which had fallen into obscurity. In such texts they found a desire to improve and perfect their worldly knowledge; an entirely different sentiment to the transcendental spirituality stressed by medieval Christianity. They did not reject Christianity; quite the contrary, many of the Renaissance's greatest works were devoted to it, and the Church patronized many works of Renaissance art. However, a subtle shift took place in the way that intellectuals approached religion that was reflected in many other areas of cultural life. Artists strove to portray the human form realistically, developing techniques to render perspective and light more naturally. Political philosophers, most famously Niccol? Machiavelli, sought to describe political life as it really was, and to improve government on the basis of reason. In addition to studying classical Latin and Greek, authors also began increasingly to use vernacular languages; combined with the invention of printing, this would allow many more people access to books, especially the Bible. In all, the Renaissance could be viewed as an attempt by intellectuals to study and improve the secular and worldly, both through the revival of ideas from antiquity, and through novel approaches to thought.

Assimilation of Greek and Arabic knowledge

Latin translations of the 12th century

The Renaissance was so called because it was a "rebirth" of certain classical ideas that had long been lost to Europe. It has been argued that the fuel for this rebirth was the rediscovery of ancient texts that had been forgotten by Western civilization, but were preserved in some monastic libraries and in the Islamic world, and the translations of Greek and Arabic texts into Latin. Renaissance scholars such as Niccol? de' Niccoli and Poggio Bracciolini scoured the libraries of Europe in search of works by such classical authors as Plato, Cicero and Vitruvius. Additionally, as the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from Islamic Moors progressed, numerous Greek and Arabic works were captured from educational institutions such as the library at C?rdoba, which claimed to have 400,000 books. The works of ancient Greek and Hellenistic writers (such as Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, and Plotinus) and Muslim scientists and philosophers (such as Geber, Abulcasis, Alhacen, Avicenna, Avempace, and Averroes), were imported into the Christian world, providing new intellectual material for European scholars. Greek and Arabic knowledge was not only assimilated from Spain, but also directly from the Middle East. The study of mathematics was flourishing in the Middle East, and mathematical knowledge was brought back by crusaders in the 13th century. The decline of the Byzantine Empire after 1204 - and its eventual fall in 1453 - led to a sharp increase in the exodus of Greek scholars to Italy and beyond. These scholars brought with them texts and knowledge of the classical Greek civilization which had been lost for centuries in the West.

Social and political structures in Italy

A political map of the Italian Peninsula circa 1494.The unique political structures of late Middle Ages Italy have led some to theorize that its unusual social climate allowed the emergence of a rare cultural efflorescence. Italy did not exist as a political entity in the early modern period. Instead, it was divided into smaller city states and territories: the kingdom of Naples controlled the south, the Republic of Florence and the Papal States the center, the Genoese and the Milanese the north and west, and the Venetians the east. Fifteenth-century Italy was one of the most urbanised areas in Europe. Many of its cities stood among the ruins of ancient Roman buildings; it seems likely that the classical nature of the Renaissance was linked to its origin in the Roman Empire's heartlands.

Italy at this time was notable for its merchant Republics, including the Republic of Florence and the Republic of Venice. Although in practice these were oligarchical, and bore little resemblance to a modern democracy, the relative political freedom they afforded was conducive to academic and artistic advancement. Likewise, the position of Italian cities such as Venice as great trading centres made them intellectual crossroads. Merchants brought with them ideas from far corners of the globe, particularly the Levant. Venice was Europe's gateway to trade with the East, and a producer of fine glass, while Florence was a capital of silk and jewelry. The wealth such business brought to Italy meant that large public and private artistic projects could be commissioned and individuals had more leisure time for study.

The Black Death

One theory that has been advanced is that the devastation caused by the Black Death in Florence (and elsewhere in Europe) resulted in a shift in the world view of people in 14th century Italy. Italy was particularly badly hit by the plague, and it has been speculated that the familiarity with death that this brought thinkers to dwell more on their lives on Earth, rather than on spirituality and the afterlife. It has also been argued that the Black Death prompted a new wave of piety, manifested in the sponsorship of religious works of art. However, this does not fully explain why the Renaissance occurred specifically in Italy in the 14th century. The Black Death was a pandemic that affected all of Europe in the ways described, not only Italy. The Renaissance's emergence in Italy was most likely the result of the complex interaction of the above factors.

Cultural conditions in Florence

Lorenzo de' Medici, ruler of Florence and patron of arts. It has long been a matter of debate why the Renaissance began in Florence, and not elsewhere in Italy. Scholars have noted several features unique to Florentine cultural life which may have caused such a cultural movement. Many have emphasized the role played by the Medici family in patronizing and stimulating the arts. Lorenzo de' Medici devoted huge sums to commissioning works from Florence's leading artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, and Michelangelo Buonarroti.

The Renaissance was certainly already underway before Lorenzo came to power, however. Indeed, before the Medici family itself achieved hegemony in Florentine society. Some historians have postulated that Florence was the birthplace of the Renaissance as a result of luck, i.e. because "Great Men" were born there by chance. Da Vinci, Botticelli and Michelangelo were all born in Tuscany. Arguing that such chance seems improbable, other historians have contended that these "Great Men" were only able to rise to prominence because of the prevailing cultural conditions at the time.

The Renaissance's characteristics

Renaissance humanism

Humanism was not a philosophy per se, but rather a method of learning. In contrast to the medieval scholastic mode, which focused on resolving contradictions between authors, humanists would study ancient texts in the original, and appraise them through a combination of reasoning and empirical evidence. Humanist education was based on the study of poetry, grammar, ethics and rhetoric. Above all, humanists asserted "the genius of man... the unique and extraordinary ability of the human mind." Humanist scholars shaped the intellectual landscape throughout the early modern period. Political philosophers such as Niccol? Machiavelli and Thomas More revived the ideas of Greek and Roman thinkers, and applied them in critiques of contemporary government. Theologians, notably Erasmus and Martin Luther, challenged the Aristotelian status quo, introducing radical new ideas of justification and faith.

Art

Italian Renaissance painting, Renaissance painting, and Renaissance architecture

One of the distinguishing features of Renaissance art was its development of highly realistic linear perspective. Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337) is credited with first treating a painting as a window into space, but it was not until the writings of architects Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) that perspective was formalized as an artistic technique. The development of perspective was part of a wider trend towards realism in the arts. To that end, painters also developed other techniques, studying light, shadow, and, famously in the case of Leonardo da Vinci, human anatomy. Underlying these changes in artistic method was a renewed desire to depict the beauty of nature, and to unravel the axioms of aesthetics, with the works of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael representing artistic pinnacles that were to be much imitated by other artists. Concurrently, in the Netherlands, a particularly vibrant artistic culture developed, the work of Hugo van der Goes and Jan van Eyck having particular influence on the development of painting in Italy, both technically with the introduction of oil paint and canvas, and stylistically in terms of naturalism in representation. Later, the work of Pieter Brueghel the Elder would inspire artists to depict themes of everyday life. In architecture, Filippo Brunelleschi was foremost in studying the remains of ancient Classical buildings, and with rediscovered knowledge from the 1st century writer Vitruvius and the flourishing discipline of mathematics, formulated the Renaissance style. Brunelleschi's major feat of engineering was the building of the dome of Florence Cathedral. The outstanding architectural work of the High Renaissance was the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica, combining the skills of Bramante, Michelangelo, Raphael, Sangallo and Maderno.

Science

History of science in the Renaissance

The upheavals occurring in the arts and humanities were mirrored by a dynamic period of change in the sciences. Some have seen this flurry of activity as a "scientific revolution," heralding the beginning of the modern age. Others have seen it merely as an acceleration of a continuous process stretching from the ancient world to the present day. Regardless, there is general agreement that the Renaissance saw significant changes in the way the universe was viewed and the methods with which philosophers sought to explain natural phenomena.

Science and art were very much intermingled in the early Renaissance, with artists such as Leonardo da Vinci making observational drawings of anatomy and nature. Yet the most significant development of the era was not a specific discovery, but rather a process for discovery, the scientific method. This revolutionary new way of learning about the world focused on empirical evidence, the importance of mathematics, and discarding the Aristotelian "final cause" in favor of a mechanical philosophy. Early and influential proponents of these ideas included Copernicus and Galileo. The new scientific method led to great contributions in the fields of astronomy, physics, biology, and anatomy. With the publication of Vesalius's De humani corporis fabrica, a new confidence was placed in the role of dissection, observation, and a mechanistic view of anatomy.

Religion

Alexander VI, a Borgia pope infamous for his corruption. Main articles: Reformation and Counter-Reformation

It should be emphasized that the new ideals of humanism, although more secular in some aspects, developed against an unquestioned Christian backdrop, especially in the Northern Renaissance. Indeed, much (if not most) of the new art was commissioned by or in dedication to the Church. However, the Renaissance had a profound effect on contemporary theology, particularly in the way people perceived the relationship between man and God. Many of the period's foremost theologians were followers of the humanist method, including Erasmus, Zwingli, Thomas More, Martin Luther, and John Calvin.

The Renaissance began in times of religious turmoil. The late Middle Ages saw a period of political intrigue surrounding the Papacy, culminating in the Western Schism, in which three men simultaneously claimed to be true Bishop of Rome. While the schism was resolved by the Council of Constance (1414), the fifteenth century saw a resulting reform movement know as Conciliarism, which sought to limit the pope's power. While the papacy eventually emerged supreme in ecclesiastical matters by the Fifth Council of the Lateran (1511), it was dogged by continued accusations of corruption, most famously in the person of Pope Alexander VI, who was accused variously of simony, nepotism and fathering four illegitimate children whilst Pope, whom he married off to gain more power. Churchmen such as Erasmus and Luther proposed reform to the Church, often based on humanist textual criticism of the New Testament. Indeed, it was Luther who in October 1517 published the 95 Theses, challenging papal authority and criticizing its perceived corruption, particularly with regard to its sale of indulgences. The 95 Theses led to the Reformation, a break with the Roman Catholic Church that previously claimed hegemony in Western Europe. Humanism and the Renaissance therefore played a direct role in sparking the Reformation, as well as in many other contemporaneous religious debates and conflicts.

Renaissance self-awareness

By the fifteenth century, writers, artists and architects in Italy were well aware of the transformations that were taking place and were using phrases like modi antichi (in the antique manner) or alle romana et alla antica (in the manner of the Romans and the ancients) to describe their work. The term "la rinascita" first appeared, however, in its broad sense in Giorgio Vasari's Vite de' pi? eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori Italiani (The Lives of the Artists, 1550, revised 1568).Vasari divides the age into three phases: the first phase contains Cimabue, Giotto, and Arnolfo di Cambio; the second phase contains Masaccio, Brunelleschi, and Donatello; the third centers on Leonardo da Vinci and culminates with Michelangelo. It was not just the growing awareness of classical antiquity that drove this development, according to Vasari, but also the growing desire to study and imitate nature.

The Renaissance spreads

In the 15th century the Renaissance spread with great speed from its birthplace in Florence, first to the rest of Italy, and soon to the rest of Europe. The invention of the printing press allowed the rapid transmission of these new ideas. As it spread, its ideas diversified and changed, being adapted to local culture. In the twentieth century, scholars began to break the Renaissance into regional and national movements, including:

The Italian Renaissance ,The English Renaissance, The German Renaissance, The Northern Renaissance, The French Renaissance, The Renaissance in the Netherlands, The Polish Renaissance, The Spanish Renaissance, Renaissance architecture in Eastern Europe.

Northern Renaissance

The Renaissance as it occurred in Northern Europe has been termed the "Northern Renaissance". It arrived first in France, imported by King Charles VIII after his invasion of Italy. Francis I imported Italian art and artists, including Leonardo Da Vinci, and at great expense built ornate palaces. Writers such as Fran?ois Rabelais, Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay and Michel de Montaigne, painters such as Jean Clouet and musicians such as Jean Mouton also borrowed from the spirit of the Italian Renaissance.

In the second half of the 15th century, Italians brought the new style to Poland and Hungary. After the marriage in 1476 of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, to Beatrix of Naples, Buda became the one of the most important artistic centres of the Renaissance north of the Alps. The most important humanists living in Matthias' court were Antonio Bonfini and Janus Pannonius. In 1526 the Ottoman conquest of Hungary put an abrupt end to the short-lived Hungarian Renaissance. An early Italian humanist who came to Poland in the mid-15th century was Filip Callimachus. Many Italian artists came to Poland with Bona Sforza of Milano, when she married King Zygmunt I of Poland in 1518. This was supported by temporarily strengthened monarchies in both areas, as well as by newly-established universities. The spirit of the age spread from France to the Low Countries and Germany, and finally by the late 16th century to England, Scandinavia, and remaining parts of Central Europe. In these areas humanism became closely linked to the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation, and the art and writing of the German Renaissance frequently reflected this dispute.

In England, the Elizabethan era marked the beginning of the English Renaissance with the work of writers William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, John Milton, and Edmund Spenser, as well as great artists, architects (such as Inigo Jones), and composers such as Thomas Tallis, John Taverner, and William Byrd. The Renaissance arrived in the Iberian peninsula through the Mediterranean possessions of the Aragonese Crown and the city of Valencia. Early Iberian Renaissance writers include Ausi?s

March, Joanot Martorell, Fernando de Rojas, Juan del Encina, Garcilaso de la Vega, Gil Vicente and Bernardim Ribeiro. The late Renaissance in Spain saw writers such as Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Luis de G?ngora and Tirso de Molina, artists such as El Greco and composers such as Tom?s Luis de Victoria. In Portugal writers such as S? de Miranda and Lu?s de Cam?es and artists such as Nuno Gon?alves appeared.

While Renaissance ideas were moving north from Italy, there was a simultaneous southward spread of innovation, particularly in music. The music of the 15th century Burgundian School defined the beginning of the Renaissance in that art and the polyphony of the Netherlanders, as it moved with the musicians themselves into Italy, formed the core of what was the first true international style in music since the standardization of Gregorian Chant in the 9th century. The culmination of the Netherlandish school was in the music of the Italian composer, Palestrina. At the end of the 16th century Italy again became a center of musical innovation, with the development of the polychoral style of the Venetian School, which spread northward into Germany around 1600. The paintings of the Italian Renaissance differed from those of the Northern Renaissance. Italian Renaissance artists were among the first to paint secular scenes, breaking away from the purely religious art of medieval painters. At first, Northern Renaissance artists remained focused on religious subjects, such as the contemporary religious upheaval portrayed by Albrecht D?rer. Later on, the works of Pieter Bruegel influenced artists to paint scenes of daily life rather than religious or classical themes. It was also during the northern Renaissance that Flemish brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck perfected the oil painting technique, which enabled artists to produce strong colors on a hard surface that could survive for centuries.

The Renaissance's historiography

Conception

It was not until the nineteenth century that the French word Renaissance achieved popularity in describing the cultural movement that began in the late 13th century. The Renaissance was first defined by French historian Jules Michelet (1798-1874), in his 1855 work, Histoire de France. For Michelet, the Renaissance was more a development in science than in art and culture. He asserted that it spanned the period from Columbus to Copernicus to Galileo; that is, from the end of the fifteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century. Moreover, Michelet distinguished between what he called, "the bizarre and monstrous" quality of the Middle Ages and the democratic values that he, as a vocal Republican, chose to see in its character. A French nationalist, Michelet also sought to claim the Renaissance as a French movement. The Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, (1818-1897) in his Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien, by contrast, defined the Renaissance as the period between Giotto and Michelangelo in Italy, that is, the 14th to mid-16th centuries. He saw in the Renaissance the emergence of the modern spirit of individuality, which had been stifled in the Middle Ages. His book was widely read and was influential in the development of the modern interpretation of the Italian Renaissance.

More recently, historians have been much less keen to define the Renaissance as a historical age, or even a coherent cultural movement. As Randolph Starn has put it,“ Rather than a period with definitive beginnings and endings and consistent content in between, the Renaissance can be (and occasionally has been) seen as a movement of practices and ideas to which specific groups and identifiable persons variously responded in different times and places. It would be in this sense a network of diverse, sometimes converging, sometimes conflicting cultures, not a single, time-bound culture. ”

For better or for worse?

Much of the debate around the Renaissance has centered around whether the Renaissance truly was an "improvement" on the culture of the Middle Ages. Both Michelet and Burckhardt were keen to describe the progress made in the Renaissance towards the "modern age". Burckhardt likened the change to a veil being removed from man's eyes, allowing him to see clearly.

On the other hand, many historians now point out that most of the negative social factors popularly associated with the "medieval" period - poverty, warfare, religious and political persecution, for example - seem to have worsened in this era which saw the rise of Machiavelli, the Wars of Religion, the corrupt Borgia Popes, and the intensified witch-hunts of the 16th century. Many people who lived during the Renaissance did not view it as the "golden age" imagined by certain 19th-century authors, but were concerned by these social maladies. Significantly, though, the artists, writers, and patrons involved in the cultural movements in question believed they were living in a new era that was a clean break from the Middle Ages.

Some Marxist historians prefer to describe the Renaissance in material terms, holding the view that the changes in art, literature, and philosophy were part of a general economic trend away from feudalism towards capitalism, resulting in a bourgeois class with leisure time to devote to the arts. In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness--that which was turned within as that which was turned without-- lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues.

Jacob Burckhardt, The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy

Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) acknowledged the existence of the Renaissance but questioned whether it was a positive change. In his book The Waning of the Middle Ages, he argued that the Renaissance was a period of decline from the High Middle Ages, destroying much that was important. The Latin language, for instance, had evolved greatly from the classical period and was still a living language used in the church and elsewhere.

The Renaissance obsession with classical purity halted its further evolution and saw Latin revert to its classical form. Robert S. Lopez has contended that it was a period of deep economic recession. Meanwhile George Sarton and Lynn Thorndike have both argued that scientific progress was slowed.Historians have begun to consider the word Renaissance as unnecessarily loaded, implying an unambiguously positive rebirth from the supposedly more primitive "Dark Ages" (Middle Ages). Many historians now prefer to use the term "Early Modern" for this period, a more neutral designation that highlights the period as a transitional one between the Middle Ages and the modern era.

Other Renaissances

The term Renaissance has also been used to define time periods outside of the 15th and 16th centuries. Charles H. Haskins (1870–1937), for example, made a convincing case for a Renaissance of the 12th century. Other historians have argued for a Carolingian Renaissance in the eighth and ninth centuries, and still later for an Ottonian Renaissance in the tenth century. Other periods of cultural rebirth have also been termed "renaissances", such as the Bengal Renaissance or the Harlem Renaissance.

Expressionism

"View of Toledo" by El Greco, 1595/1610 has been pointed out to bear a particularly striking resemblance to 20th century expressionism. Historically speaking it is however part of the Mannerist movement.Expressionism is the tendency of an artist to distort reality for an emotional effect; it is a subjective art form. Expressionism is exhibited in many art forms, including painting, literature, theatre, film, architecture and music. The term often implies emotional angst. In a general sense, painters such as Matthias Gr?newald and El Greco can be called expressionist, though in practice, the term is applied mainly to 20th century works.

Origin of the term

Although it is used as term of reference, there has never been a distinct movement that called itself "expressionism", apart from the use of the term by Herwald Walden in his polemic magazine Der Sturm in 1912. The term is usually linked to paintings and graphic work in Germany at the turn of the century which challenged the academic traditions, particularly through the Die Br?cke and Der Blaue Reiter groups. Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche played a key role in originating modern expressionism by clarifying and serving as a conduit for previously neglected currents in ancient art.

In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche presented his theory of the ancient dualism between two types of aesthetic experience, namely the Apollonian and the Dionysian; a dualism between the plastic "art of sculpture", of lyrical dream-inspiration, identity (the principium individuationis), order, regularity, and calm repose, and, on the other hand, the non-plastic "art of music", of intoxication, forgetfulness, chaos, and the ecstatic dissolution of identity in the collective. The analogy with the world of the Greek gods typifies the relationship between these extremes: two godsons, incompatible and yet inseparable. According to Nietzsche, both elements are present in any work of art. The basic characteristics of expressionism are Dionysian: bold colors, distorted forms-in-dissolution, two-dimensional, without perspective.

More generally the term refers to art that expresses intense emotion. It is arguable that all artists are expressive but there is a long line of art production in which heavy emphasis is placed on communication through emotion. Such art often occurs during time of social upheaval, and through the tradition of graphic art there is a powerful and moving record of chaos in Europe from the 15th century on the Protestant Reformation, Peasants' War, Spanish Occupation of Netherlands, the rape, pillage and disaster associated with countless periods of chaos and oppression are presented in the documents of the printmaker. Often the work is unimpressive aesthetically, but almost without exception has the capacity to move the viewer to strong emotions with the drama and often horror of the scenes depicted.

The term was also coined by Czech art historian Anton?n Mat?j?ek in 1910 as the opposite of impressionism: "An Expressionist wishes, above all, to express himself....[An Expressionist rejects] immediate perception and builds on more complex psychic structures....Impressions and mental images that pass through mental peoples soul as through a filter which rids them of all substantial accretions to produce their clear essence [...and] are assimilated and condense into more general forms, into types, which he transcribes through simple short-hand formulae and symbols." (Gordon, 1987)

Expressionist groups in painting

There was never a group of artists that called themselves "The expressionists". This movement primarily originated in Germany and Austria, though following World War II it began to influence young American artists. Norris Embry (1921-1981) studied with Oskar Kokoschka in 1947 and over the next 43 years produced a large body of work grounded in the Expressionist tradition. Norris Embry has been called "the first American German Expressionist". Other American artists of the late 20th and early 21st century have developed distinct movements that are generally considered part of Expressionism. Another prominent artist who came from the German Expressionist "school" was Bremen born Wolfgang Degenhardt. After working as a commercial artist in Bremen he migrated to Australia in 1954 and became quite prominent and sought after in the Hunter Valley region. His paintings captured the spirit of Australian and world issues but presented them in a way which was true to his German Expressionist roots. There were a number of Expressionist groups in painting, including the Blaue Reiter and Die Br?cke. The Der Blaue Reiter group was based in Munich and Die Br?cke was based originally in Dresden (although some later moved to Berlin). Die Br?cke was active for a longer period than Der Blaue Reiter which was only truly together for a year (1912). The Expressionists had many influences, among them Munch, Vincent van Gogh, and African art. They also came to know the work being done by the Fauves in Paris. American Expressionism and particularly the Boston figurative expressionism were an integral part of American modernism around the Second World War.

Major figurative Boston expressionists included: Karl Zerbe, Hyman Bloom, Jack Levine, David Aronson, Philip Guston. The Boston figurative expressionists post World War II were increasingly marginalized by the development of abstract expressionism centered in New York City.

Later in the 20th century, post World War II, figurative expressionism influenced worldwide a large number of artists and movements:

New York Figurative Expressionism, of the fifties represented American figurative artists such as: Robert Beauchamp, Elaine de Kooning, Willem de Kooning, Robert Goodnough, Grace Hartigan, Lester Johnson, Alex Katz, George McNeil, Jan Muller, Jackson Pollock, Fairfield Porter, Larry Rivers and Bob Thompson.

Lyrical Abstraction, Tachisme of the 1940s and 1950s in Europe represented by artists such as Georges Mathieu, Hans Hartung, Nicolas de Sta?l and others.

Abstract Expressionism, of the 1950s represented primarily of American artist such as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning and others. some of whom took part in figurative expressionism.

In the United States and Canada Lyrical Abstraction beginning in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

Neo-expressionism was an international revival movement beginning in the late 1970s and centered around artists across the world:

Many other artists from different countries joined the movement of Neo-expressionism.

Influenced by the Fauves, Expressionism worked with arbitrary colors as well as jarring compositions. In reaction and opposition to French Impressionism which focused on rendering the sheer visual appearance of objects, Expressionist artists sought to capture emotions and subjective interpretations: It was not important to reproduce an aesthetically pleasing impression of the artistic subject matter; the Expressonists focused on capturing vivid emotional reactions through powerful colors and dynamic compositions instead. The leader of Der Blaue Reiter, Kandinsky, would take this a step further. He believed that with simple colors and shapes the spectator could perceive the moods and feelings in the paintings, therefore he made the move to abstraction.