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[Home](#) > Discover the XXth century

[Return to article list](#) [1]

Discover the XXth century



History of art [5]

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From Cubism to outsider art, Surrealism to Dadaism...

The 20th century saw numerous artistic movements come and go, all different, but all illuminating in terms of the events surrounding them.

We've selected just a few to mention here.

Cubism, a multi-faceted art form

The complete opposite of 19th century works, particularly Naturalism, Cubism is characterised by its use of geometric shapes. This avant-garde movement surely originated with **Picasso's "The Ladies of Avignon"**. The massive geometric shapes of the female bodies show the Spanish painter seeking to magnify certain shapes as if sculpting.

A lover of women, Picasso later created "Head of a Woman III". Painted on Montval® de Canson® watercolour paper, it presents a portrait of Dora Maar, his lover and muse at the time.

Cubism is composed of three different periods:

- **Cézanne Cubism** (1907-1909), which features the first geometric shapes.

Associated artist: **Georges Braque** - "Viaduct at L'Estaque".

- **Analytical Cubism** (1909-1912), which uses less colour, but more geometric shapes.

Associated artist : **Pablo Picasso** - Portrait of Art Dealer Ambroise Vollard.

- **Synthetic cubism**, which adds the technique of glued paper and the use of natural materials and subjects.

Associated artist: **Pablo Picasso** ? "Glass and Packet of Tobacco".

How can we recognise a Cubist piece?

Cubists believe that objects possess different facets, which is why they depict them as geometric shapes which ignore the concept of perspective entirely.

Cubists consider all the objects and utensils of daily life worthy of representation, and they prefer to depict still life in their own way rather than a landscape.

Abstract art, an end to reality

As opposed to representational art, abstract art claims to move away from visual realism, giving greater priority to geometric shapes and colour. It is often said that Vasily Kandinsky is

the inventor of this movement, but it is often also ascribed to two other masters in the field: Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevitch.

There are two main trends:

- Non-geometric abstraction with Vassily Kandinsky and Robert Delaunay.
- Geometric abstraction with Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevitch.

How can we recognise an abstract piece?

Abstract artwork is characterised by the freedom of interpretation offered to the observer. Far from a reproduction of a model or real object, it recreates shapes and makes extensive use of primary or secondary colours.

Ready for anything with Dadaism?

It is said that the name "dada" was chosen by a paper knife randomly falling upon this word in a dictionary in 1916. At the origin of this intellectual, artistic and literary movement, we find personalities such as **Tristan Tzara** or **Marcel Duchamp**, who refused to follow any conventions or rules whatsoever.

Thanks to their irreverent spirit and incredible creative ability, they overturned the traditional artistic approach to invent a new form: "Readymade". Marcel Duchamp's overturned urinal remains an eloquent example.

Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, André Breton were also part of the Dadaist movement.

How can we recognise a Dadaist piece?

Collage, blending, sculpture... Dadaist works incorporate a certain amount of humour and seek above all to spark an emotional response, a reaction from those contemplating them. Stone, wood, iron, tin - any material can be used when the goal is "freedom" above all.

A few famous Dadaist artists:

Jean Arp, Raoul Hausman, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Tristan Tzara?

A touch of the Surrealist...

Originating with the Dadaist movement, Surrealism has developed over the course of 40

years in fields as varied as the visual arts, music, literature, and more. Inspired by Guillaume Apollinaire, Surrealism is based on Sigmund Freud's studies of dreams and the unconscious.

How can we recognise a surrealist piece?

Several subjects which are deformed and have nothing in common? You're surely looking at a surrealist piece drawing upon the themes of dreams, extraordinary phenomena and the imaginary.

Using such techniques as collage, rubbing, writing (exquisite corpse), and automatic writing, surrealists give voice to their deepest thoughts to create strikingly original works.

A few famous surrealist artists:

Joan Miro, Victor Brauner, René Magritte, Salvador Dali, Man Ray...

Outsider art is out there!

Demonstrate spontaneity and innocence. This was the goal set by **Jean Dubuffet** in 1945 when he began to take an interest in the works of madmen, children, the elderly, and all those who were not part of the artistic elite.

Madness, simplicity, and the natural: these are all qualities that Jean Dubuffet considered the best tools to create true masterpieces.

How can we recognise a piece of outsider art?

Outsider art favours the use of crude techniques without bothering with academic artistic rules.

A few famous 'outsider' artists:

Adolf Wölfli, André Robillard, Aloïse Corbaz, Augustin Lesage, Fleury-Joseph Crépin?

American abstract expressionism, a major art form

After the MoMA opened in New York in 1929 and exhibited "Cubism and Abstract Art" in 1936, the United States saw the emergence of a new art form. Its main movement was abstract expressionism, in which **Pollock** played a major role.

This movement is characterised above all by a new relationship to motion, colour and theme.

How can we recognise an American abstract expressionist piece?

There are two styles:

- Colorfield, in which areas of bright colour are widely used to the detriment of depth.
- Action Painting, a style of painting based in movement or action.

A few famous American abstract artists:

- "Colorfield? artists: **Mark Rothko, Arnold Gottlieb, Barrett Newman**
- "Action painting? artists: **Willem de Kooning, Jason Pollock, Robert Motherwell?**

Pop art, very popular!

At the end of the Second World War, which saw the opposition of communism and capitalism, artists seemed smitten with freedom, like Jason Pollock, who angrily dashed his famous streaks of paint across his canvases.

Considered too elitist by Andy Warhol and his peers, "American abstract expressionism" was wholly rejected in favour of "Pop Art" (a contraction of "popular art"), which had just arrived from Great Britain and was enjoying its heyday in the 1960s.

Based on a critical view of the surrounding world and its contemporaries, the Pop Art movement aims to criticise consumer society and denounce the harmful influence of the media and advertising on human behaviour.

How can we recognise a Pop Art piece?

Collage, acrylic painting, photography, silkscreen printing... Pop Artists use all of these techniques with one thing in common: the use of bright colours.

A few famous Pop Artists:

Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein?

Long live New Realism!

This artistic trend was officially born in 1960, following a declaration written by Pierre Restany and signed by artists such as Yves Klein, Raymond Hains, Jean Tinguely, César and Arman. It depicts consumer society and daily life without any trace of splendour. This explosive movement, which came to an end with the death of Yves Klein two years after its creation,

gave rise to an impressive production of works.

How can we recognise a piece from the new realists?

Like the surrealists, new realists aim to use ordinary and commonplace objects to create their pieces. The only difference lies in the fact that these objects were found in bins! The idea is to create symbols of consumption, not to represent the world, but rather to "present" it and nothing more.

A few famous new realists:

Yves Klein, César, Arman, Martial Raysse?

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See also

Set out to discover the king of pop art: Andy Warhol



With this information sheet, set out to discover the king of pop art: Andy Warhol. Children will understand the approach of Pop art artists and put themselves in the shoes of these artists by practising the screen-printing technique.

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Discover abstract expressionism through the works of Jackson Pollock.



Discover abstract expressionism through the works of one of its major figures: Jackson Pollock. Children will discover the Action Painting technique and learn to encourage physical expression and action.

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