COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VIII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Justify visual arts in relation to history and culture.
   1.1   Identify art's role in society.

4. Analyze artworks using the application of media, techniques, and processes.
   4.1.   Explain trends of early 20th-century art.

5. Recognize an artwork or artist by style and time period.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 22:
Early Twentieth Century

Chapter 23:
Between World Wars

The below link contains an interactive audio that will further explain Dali Surrealism using Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* as an example:

Pearson (n.d.). Salvador Dali, *the persistence of memory*. [Audiovisual webpage]. Retrieved from
        http://closerlook.pearsoncmg.com/view.php?type=closerlook&id=656

Click here to access the *Closer Look* video titled "Salvador Dali, *The Persistence of Memory*."

Click here to access the video transcript.

The below link contains an interactive audio that will further explain Pablo Picasso's *Guernica.* The video explains the history of the art piece.

Pearson (n.d.). Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* [Audiovisual webpage]. Retrieved from
        http://closerlook.pearsoncmg.com/view.php?type=closerlook&id=640

Click here to access the *Closer Look* video titled "Pablo Picasso's *Guernica.*"

Click here to access the video transcript.

Unit Lesson

Chapter 22: Early Twentieth Century

Before World War I, 1900 to 1914: Throughout the first decade of the 20th century, many western precepts concerning our understanding of reality changed tremendously. The following include some of the scientific advancements that contributed to these changes:

- Sigmund Freud publishes *The Interpretation of Dreams*, an enormous work that elucidated the supremacy of the subconscious mind, 1900.
- Flight of the first powered aircraft. Wright brothers, 1903.

- The radioactive element radium is isolated by Marie and Pierre Curie, 1903.
- Einstein's theory of relativity forever altered the world's understanding of space, time, and matter, 1905.

Many changes in Western lifestyle were brought about in the 20th century. Countless new factory jobs drew people from the countryside into the unfamiliar and perhaps objectionable environments of the crowded cities (urbanization). The burgeoning market economy and long work days of the industrial revolution displaced the worker from home life—a big adjustment from the rural family-farm lifestyle. Many factory workers were faced with low wages and dangerous or disagreeable working conditions while the affluent prospered. Gross disparities in wealth between social classes resulted in the most brutal uprisings of the 20th century. China, Russia, and Mexico saw the bloodiest of these revolutions.

The early 1900s also saw extraordinary transformations in art. Many 20th-century artists were stirred by changes in thinking and perception brought on by scientific advances. These changes in art, it can be said, somewhat mirrored the 20th century itself in that the changes happened very quickly and in diverse ways. There was a cascade of independent thought brought on by investigation and discovery.

Expressive styles: The new forms of painting in the early 20th century were deeply influenced by Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists, as well as ancient and non-Western cultures such as Africa and Oceania. This influence led them to negate the authority of the Renaissance, which had dominated Western culture and art for over 500 years. As stated by Frank (2014c), "Expressionism is a general term for art that emphasizes inner feelings and emotions over objective depiction" (p. 395).

In Europe, Romantic or expressive tendencies can be traced from 17th century Baroque art to the early 19th century painting of Eugene Delacroix, who influenced the expressive side of post impressionism (Frank, 2014c).

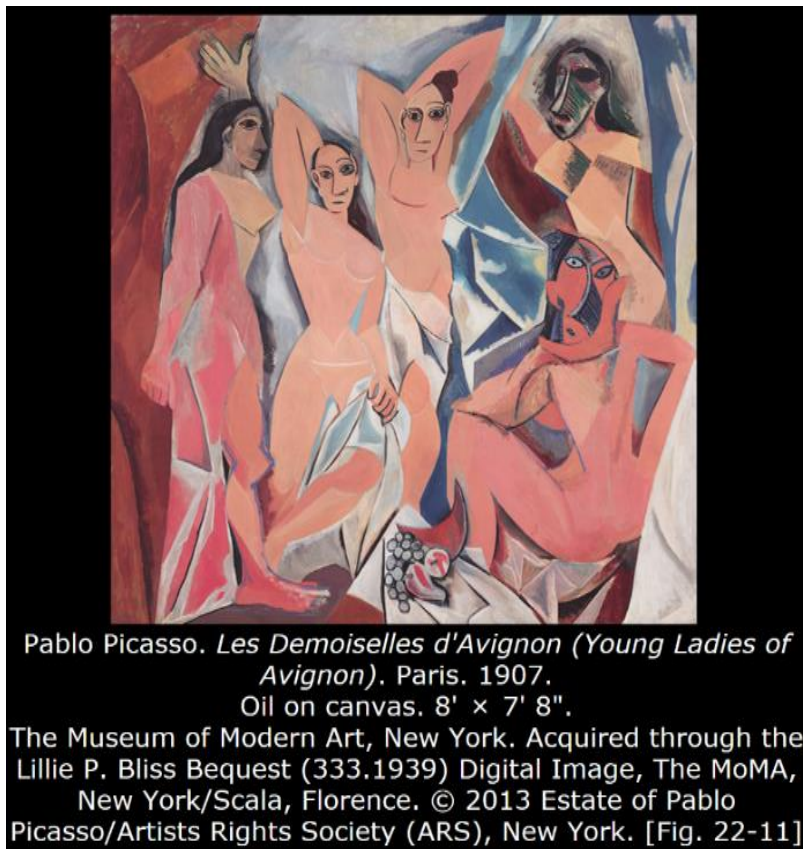The three main schools of Expressionism were:

1. Les Fauves (the Wild Beasts)
2. Die Bricke (The Bridge)
3. Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider)

The Fauves were a French development led by Henri Matisse whose intent was to show enthusiasm. Fauvism used color as an expressive element. While Fauvism is an expressive style, Expressionism refers to art that emphasizes inner feeling and emotion.

The Bridge and the Blue Rider were schools of German Expressionism. Members of the Bridge, who focused on depicting raw emotion, hoped to lead a revolt against academic painting and establish a new, vigorous aesthetic that would form a bridge between the Germanic past and the modern experience (Frank, 2014c). The Blue Rider group, led by Wassily Kandinsky, shared the concern members of the Bridge felt for developing an art that would turn people away from false values toward spiritual rejuvenation.

The three groups shared common goals but differed slightly. The Germans' work was characterized by sharp, vivid, often angular subject matter, loud color, and a crude manner of depiction. They were heavily influenced by the work of Post Impressionists Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and Edvard Munch. They placed great importance on the human condition, exploring the themes of sorrow, passion, spirituality and mysticism. They were also influenced by medieval German art and Africana and Oceana.

Cubism: Cubism was a contrast to Expressionism. Cubist painters emphasized the composition of visual elements in a painting over personal expression. They ignored the concept of linear perspective and depth that the Renaissance painters had established and made the picture plane a two dimensional space. Pablo Picasso used angular shapes, even turning faces into triangular forms in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (as shown below). George Braque painted forms that piled up rhythmically without showing depth.

Pablo Picasso. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (Young Ladies of Avignon)*. Paris. 1907.
Oil on canvas. 8' × 7' 8".
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest (333.1939) Digital Image, The MoMA, New York/Scala, Florence. © 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. [Fig. 22-11]

(Frank, 2014a, slide 25)

Cubism became Synthetic Cubism when Picasso and Braque added color, patterned surfaces, and cut-out shapes to form a collage of materials. This was taken to the extreme when Picasso created a guitar from pieces of sheet metal (shown below), beginning a new trend in sculpture toward constructing sculptures. Previously, sculptures had been either carved or modeled.
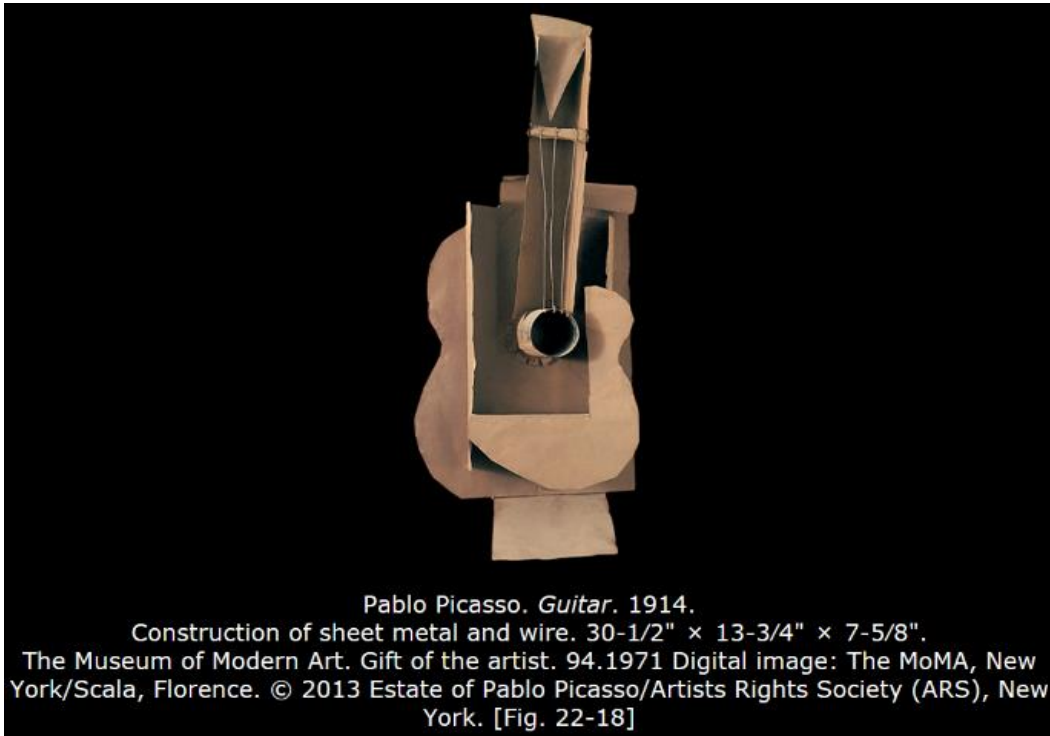
Pablo Picasso. *Guitar*. 1914.
Construction of sheet metal and wire. 30-1/2" × 13-3/4" × 7-5/8".
The Museum of Modern Art. Gift of the artist. 94.1971 Digital image: The MoMA, New York/Scala, Florence. © 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. [Fig. 22-18]

Futurism: Inspiration from Cubism led to Futurism in Italy. Futurists expanded the Cubist concepts of multiple vantage points (no vanishing point) by adding implied motion or the feeling of speed. They were trying to capture the new speed of life in the early 20th century and focused on the idea of a speeding car. This concept of motion was brought back to Cubism by Marcel Duchamp when he was influenced by sequential images captured by a camera. His painting, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, depicts an abstract body in movement.

Marcel Duchamp. *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. 1912.
Oil on canvas. 58" × 35".
Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensberg
Collection, 1950. Photo The Philadelphia Museum of Art/Art
Resource/Scala, Florence. © Succession Marcel
Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New
York 2013. [Fig. 22-29]

(Frank, 2014a, slide 53)

Chapter 23: Between World Wars 1917-1939

Dada: Dada, an ambiguous word, was a protest against the horrors of World War I. Dada was a rebellion against the traditional values that these artists felt had contributed to an absurd and horrific war. WWI was the first mechanized mass killing the world had ever experienced. The Dadaists rejected many of the previously accepted aesthetic and social values (Frank, 2014c). They felt that trying to find meaning in such a horrific world was a pointless exercise. They sought instead to sound an alarm against declining moral values to make a desperate appeal for all art to share a creative basis on which to build a universal consciousness.

The Dadaists used spontaneity, chance, and a sense of play in their work. Marcel Duchamp was their most radical member and was possibly the wildest artist of the 20th century. He often used mass-produced objects, which he called *readymades*. He is most famous for signing a urinal with someone else's name and calling it *Fountain* and for drawing a mustache and goatee on a postcard of the Mona Lisa.
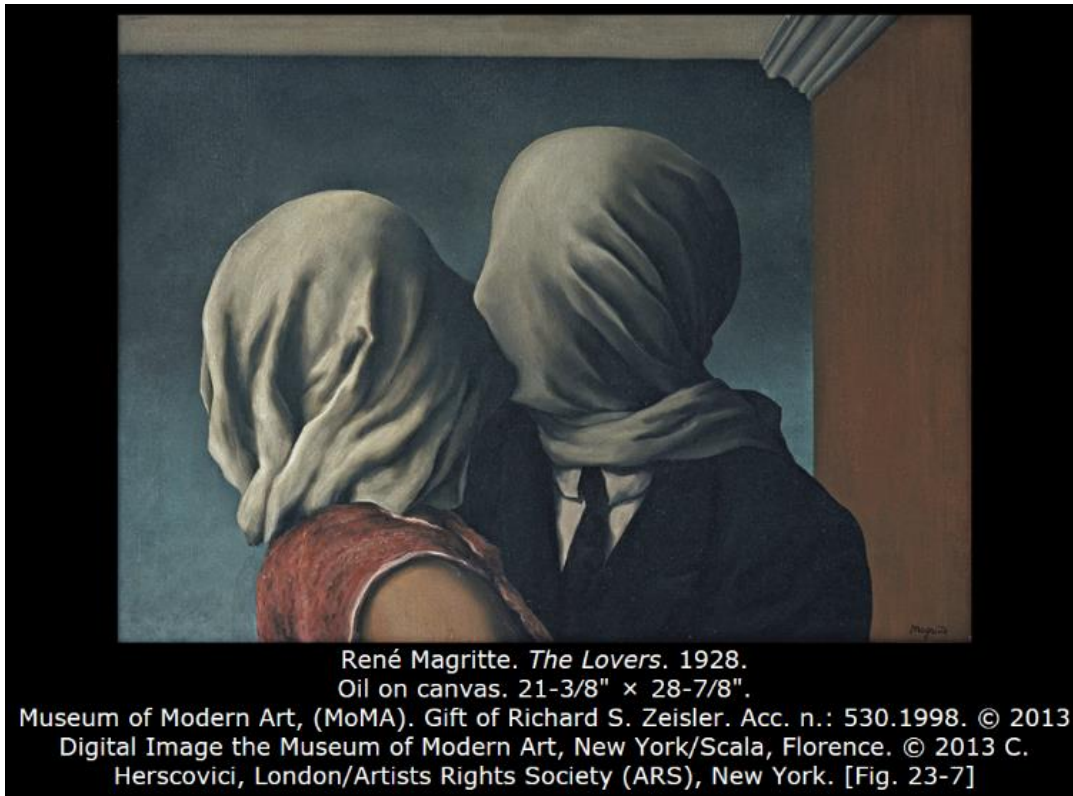
Dadaists expanded on the Cubists' use of collage and created photomontage in which parts of different photographs are reassembled in interesting ways. A commonly held sentiment among Dadaists was that art was dead. "By this they meant that it was useless to try to create beauty in a world that could destroy itself" (Frank, 2014c, p. 413).

Surrealism: Surrealism began in the mid-1920s when a group of writers and painters gathered to protest the direction of European culture (Frank, 2014c). They were concerned that the consciousness of Europeans was unbalanced due to excessive emphasis on science, rationality, and progress.

They believed in the importance of the unconscious mind and in dreams, hallucinations, and fantasies (Frank, 2014c). The Surrealists were influenced by the Dadaists and the writings of Sigmund Freud. In 1924, Andre Breton published the first Surrealist manifesto, in which he argued for dreams and reality to coexist.

Max Ernst, a former Dadaist and soldier, was an important Surrealist. He was haunted by his combat experience. He used frottage technique, rubbing the canvas over a rough surface, to allow for free association and play in his canvasses.

Salvador Dali, a Spanish Surrealist, used a representational technique that looked almost like photography to create paintings with disturbing images that seemed unreal, like dreams where there is a mystery. Belgian Surrealist Rene Magritte also used illogical subjects as in *The Lovers* (shown below and on page 415 of your course textbook) where they cannot kiss due to the cloths over their heads.
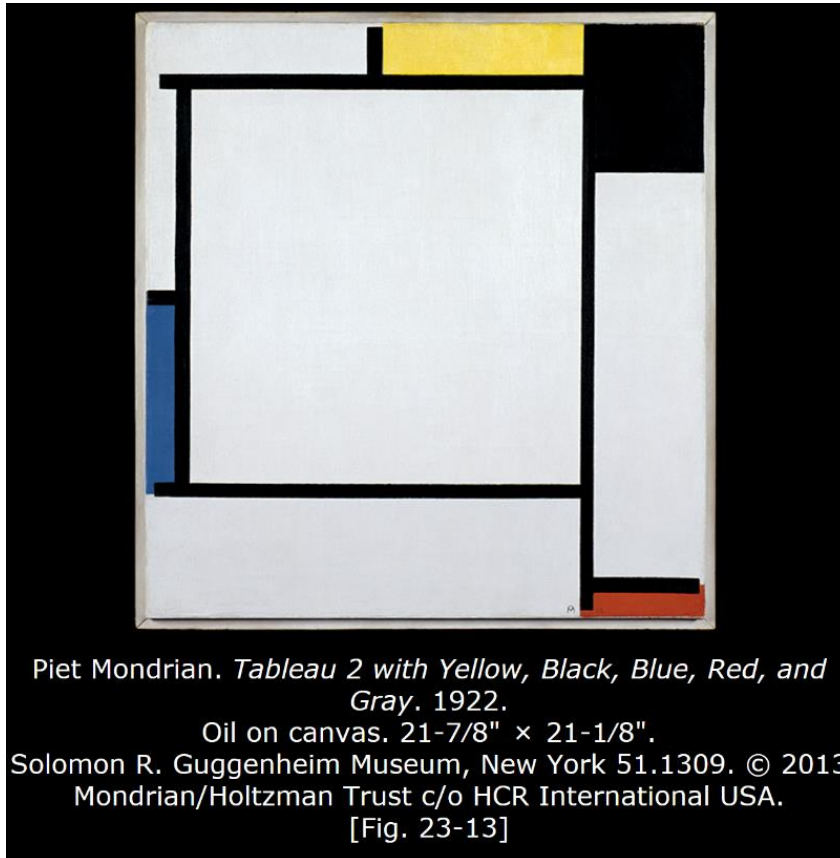

René Magritte. *The Lovers*. 1928.
Oil on canvas. 21-3/8" × 28-7/8".
Museum of Modern Art, (MoMA). Gift of Richard S. Zeisler. Acc. n.: 530.1998. © 2013
Digital Image the Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence. © 2013 C.
Herscovici, London/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. [Fig. 23-7]

(Frank, 2014b, slide 18)

Abstract Surrealist Joan Miro used automatism processes such as scribbling or doodling to explore the unconscious. The hope was that an accident might reveal a suggestion. The Surrealists wanted to expand their consciousness by avoiding using any of the rational planning that art making traditionally involved.

Constructivism and De Stijl: Artists of both Constructivism and De Stijl were hoping to create the basis for a utopian society. "Constructivism, in Russia, focused on developing a new visual language for a new industrial age" (Frank, 2014c, p. 417). Using new materials such as plastic, Constructivists were seeking to create art that was relevant to modern life.

A group of Dutch artists, known as De Stijl, used geometric elements with the goal of creating a world of universal harmony. De Stijl advocated the use of basic shapes, mostly rectangles, to free painting from both depicting objects and expressing personal feelings. Piet Mondrian was known for his many paintings of rectangles using primary colors with black and white. For example, the below image shows Piet Mondrian's work, also shown on page 419.

Piet Mondrian. *Tableau 2 with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red, and Gray*. 1922.
Oil on canvas. 21-7/8" × 21-1/8".
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York 51.1309. © 2013
Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International USA.
[Fig. 23-13]

(Frank, 2014b, slide 28)

Ideas from Constructivism and De Stijl movements regarding the search for a new visual language combined with the new materials like steel frames, plate glass walls, and reinforced concrete resulted in a new style of architecture known as International Style. Building could become 3-dimensional freestanding sculptural artworks. A German school known as the Bauhaus, which designed products, furniture, and buildings, was part of the International Style.

Gerrit Rietveld. Schröder House. 1924.
Image © Collection Centraal Museum, Utrecht. © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ c/o Pictoright Amsterdam. [Fig. 23-14]

(Frank, 2014b, slide 30)

The 1930s: The 1930s was a time of political unrest. The Spanish Civil War saw the first mass bombing in the northern town of Guernica in 1937. Picasso was commissioned by the Spanish government to paint a mural that year. He responded by painting a mural showing the brutal attack as a statement against all war (shown below and on page 421 of your textbook).


Pablo Picasso. *Guernica*. 1937.
Oil on canvas. 11'5-1/2" × 25'5-1/4".
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Photograph: The Bridgeman Art Library.
© 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. [Fig. 23-16]

(Frank, 2014b, slide 34)

Art of social realism took hold in many countries. Social realism was about communicating social causes and issues. This was supported by the governments as a way of showing an ideal life. In Mexico, the government

paid painters to create murals telling the stories of their history and the recent revolution. This was to be a national art to glorify the traditional Mexican heritage and the new government. Look at the below work and consider what you believe it says about the Mexican culture.
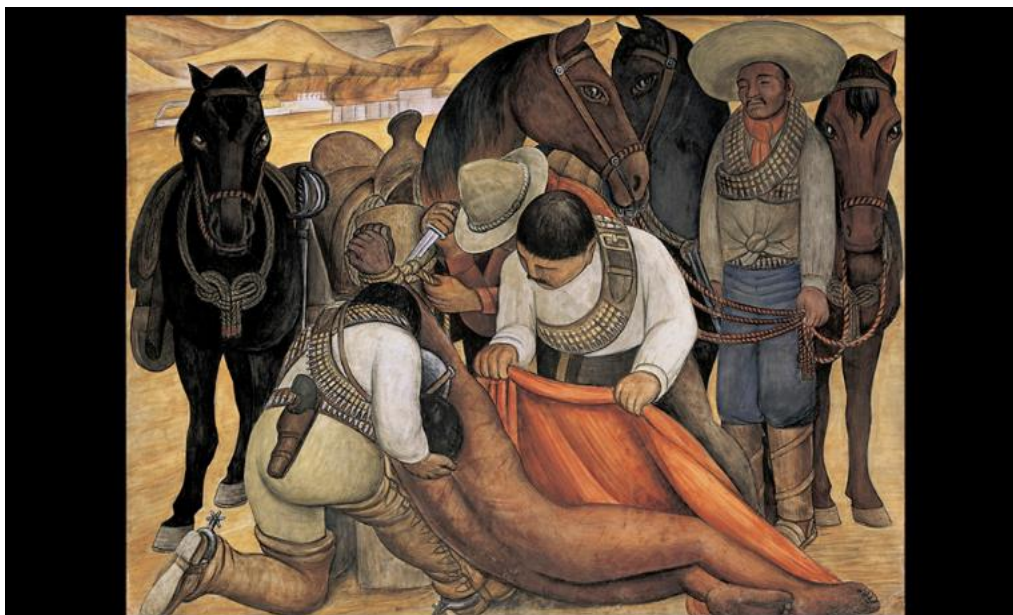
Diego Rivera. *The Liberation of the Peon*. 1931.
Fresco. 73" × 94-1/4".
Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris. 1943–46–1.
Photograph: The Philadelphia Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence. © 2013
Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F./Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York. [Fig. 23-18]

(Frank, 2014b, slide 38)

American artists focused on regional aspects of America after they trained in Paris. Edward Hopper portrayed American life in cities, where he used light to organize the painting. The below image shows Hopper's *Nighthawks* and is also located on page 428 of your course textbook. Grant Wood portrayed life in the rural Midwest with the stiff look of early photographs. Thomas Hart Benton created murals depicting American scenes with curvilinear forms.
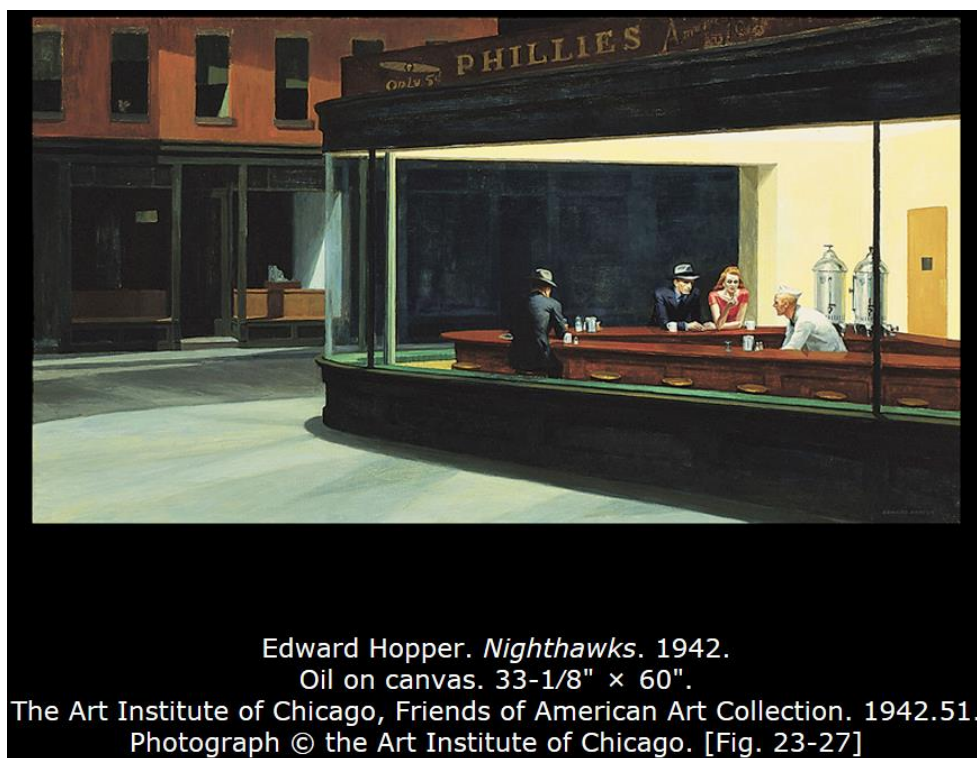
Edward Hopper. *Nighthawks*. 1942.
Oil on canvas. 33-1/8" × 60".
The Art Institute of Chicago, Friends of American Art Collection. 1942.51.
Photograph © the Art Institute of Chicago. [Fig. 23-27]

(Frank, 2014b, slide 55)

The United States was in the Great Depression with many people unable to find work. The government developed programs that paid people to work on public arts projects known as the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The government also hired photographers to document the Dust Bowl.

African American artists were encouraged to connect with their African roots. A style developed on this idea known as the Harlem Renaissance. The WPA had community art centers in 100 cities, one of which was Harlem. This is where Jacob Lawrence got his start. His work, *General Toussaint l'Ouverture Defeats the English at Saline* is shown below and included on page 430 of your course textbook. Their artwork was displayed in a traveling exhibition that influenced other artists across the country.
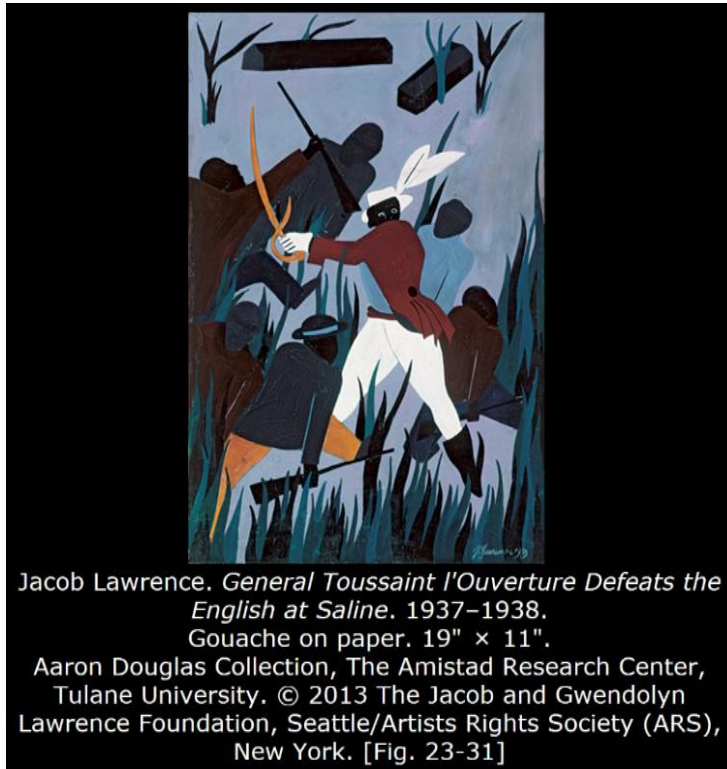
Jacob Lawrence. *General Toussaint l'Ouverture Defeats the English at Saline*. 1937–1938.
Gouache on paper. 19" × 11".
Aaron Douglas Collection, The Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. © 2013 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. [Fig. 23-31]

(Frank, 2014b, slide 63)

References

Frank, P. (2014a). *Chapter 22: Early Twentieth Century* [PowerPoint slides]. Boston, MA: Pearson

Frank, P. (2014b). *Chapter 23: Between World Wars* [PowerPoint slides]. Boston, MA: Pearson

Frank, P. (2014c). *Prebles' artforms: An introduction to the visual arts* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson

Suggested Reading

If you would like to study the content from the required reading further, consider reviewing the below PowerPoint presentations. The presentations include images of the artwork discussed in the chapter and explanations:

Click here to access the Chapter 22 PowerPoint Presentation. Click here for a PDF version of the presentation.

Click here to access the Chapter 23 PowerPoint Presentation. Click here for a PDF version of the presentation.

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Before completing your graded work, consider practicing with the learning activity provided below.

Visit the website titled "Encounter with Marcel Duchamp" at www.marcelduchamp.org and go to the "Encounter Room," which displays reproductions of works by this radical artist. View the works and read the accompanying stories. Write an essay about whether you consider these objects to be art. If so, what makes them art? If not, what is the difference between them and a work of art? Also, write about what kind of Dada sculpture you would create to look similar to Duchamp's. How big would your sculpture be, and how would you construct it?

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.