

Student's Name

Instructor

Course

Date

Western Art History

1. Nowadays it is an outdated opinion that only a beautiful object can be called art. I agree with the idea stated in *Janson's History of Art* "art always serves a purpose" (Davies et al. xxiii). The main demand for an object to be named an object of art is the will of its creator and the message in it. If a person claims to make art, and we look and see that indeed it tells us a story, then it is art. By exhibiting a urinal at the museum, Marcel Duchamp demonstrated that anything placed into the context of art becomes art. In no small part due to originality and freshness of an approach, new artists emerge. Now individuality rules the world, and the art world, too. For example, comparing Keith Haring's works to any teenager's scribbles, one may think that everyone can do it. However, exactly that was his idea of art – "breaking down the barriers between high and low art" (Yarrow). Unlike the teenager who scribbles some figures in his/her copybook, Haring treats himself as an artist, has a story to tell and paints rather weird and original creatures. Therefore, he produces art about which spectators can argue. It only proves all these elements combined foster what we call an object of art.



Fig. 1. Untitled, 1985 by Keith Haring.

2. The first glance at the *Woman of Willendorf* focuses on her ample body shape. The absence of facial features and accentuated genitalia make the spectator think about reproductive qualities of the woman. The swollen breasts and the big belly remind about a possible pregnancy of the woman. With hardly-noticeable arms and almost absent feet, the figurine seems to draw attention to the center of its body where probably lies the real sense of its creation. However, it is not clear whether the figurine was made as an abstract portrayal of the desired fertility, or a realistic portrait of an existing woman. There were found figures of different shapes: with a huge belly or no belly at all (Fig. 2). Therefore, we can suppose that the “fertility” figurines are real-life sculptures showing different stages of pregnancy or obesity (Davies et al. 11; Dixson and Barnaby). The theory with pregnancy may be proved by the figurines from Gönnersdorf that depict headless women in profile with stomachs of various sizes.



Fig. 2. Fertility Figures.

Fig. 3. The figurines from Gönnersdorf.

3. No knowledge about a people can be complete without information on culture and living conditions of all levels of its society. The content of Egyptian tombs informed us more about kings and aristocracy while recent excavations of workmen’s villages allowed a deeper

look into how the common people of ancient Egypt lived. Apart from usual household sites with sleeping and kitchen areas and pens for cattle, there were found chapels and shrines with painted walls and painted wooden tops. Pottery shreds were used for writing and drawing; the level of literacy was high in the villages (Bayfield).

The excavation of traces of an ancient Egyptian trade port revealed that the Egyptians traveled as far as Somali or Punt probably bringing exotic products and animal (for example giraffes) for the Egyptian wealthy people (McLachlan). Further excavation and research “open up new possibilities for Egyptian influence on other ancient cultures” (McLachlan).

4. The official sculptural portrait of the king Akhenaten and his consort Nefertiti of Egypt is made in the typical Amarna style (Fig. 4). The couple looks real-life and is holding hands, which was not inherent to the Egyptian style before the Old Kingdom (David).

Usually the Egyptian kings were portrayed in stately appearance wearing massive headpieces and sitting on the throne. Meanwhile Akhenaten was often depicted in relaxed surroundings of his family playing with his children (Davies 73). Additionally, Akhenaten introduced a new artistic style in depicting a human figure. Both he and his wife have feminine figures with a slender long neck, small round shoulders, slender arms and legs, round hips, and a pot belly. The inscriptions on the back-plate proclaim the connection between the royal couple and the sun god Aten (David). According to scholars, such portable statuettes were common in Egyptian households where “[m]any of the houses had a shrine, before which families would pay homage to the royal couple – the sole living, earthly manifestation of the inaccessible solar disk” (David).



Fig. 4. *Akhenaton and Nefertiti*.

5. [no information found]

6. The Minoan artists conveyed the idea of motion through depicting animals in the very moment of moving. For example, birds are depicted with wide spread wings on the background of the sky. In one of Knossos' premises, there was found a fragment of the wall painting depicting dolphins and fish among blue wavy lines; sea creatures are drawn moving in different directions in water (fig. 5). Another example of the depiction of movement is *Toreador Fresco* that portrays a bull in a full gallop (fig. 6). The animal is seen in profile with a low bent head in a running jump on a human figure dressed in white. On its back there is a dark-skinned figure standing on his hands. Hair and ribbons of both figures are fluttering in the air from their movements.



Fig. 5. The "Queen's Megaron."

Fig. 6. *Toreador Fresco*.

7. The Greeks were the first Western people to celebrate artists and their work by writing about them in literature. With time artists began to leave their signatures on the art objects they made, which demonstrated the pride they took in their work (Davies 121). Artists reflected the development of the society. In the Archaic period, when the Greek society was developing, artists depicted generalized images of people (*kouroi*) and heroes (vase paintings). Around 490-480 BCE, the pottery painter Douris painted on a wine cup the scene with Eos lifting the dead body of her son Memnon. In depicting mythological scenes

“Athenians may have seen a reflection of themselves during the horrors of the Persian Wars” (Davies 123). The artists of the Classical Age were obsessed with the search for harmony and they reached “a heightened naturalism in depicting the human form” (123). A vivid example is a statue of *Diskobolos* by Myron. In Hellenistic times, the physical perfection of sculpture acquires individual likeness as well. For example, Lysippos makes a series of realistic sculpted portraits of Alexander the Great (154).

8. Inasmuch as Greek colonies were established in Italy, Etruscan art was influenced by the Greeks (Davies 165). The Etruscans borrowed from the Greeks the manner of depicting drapery and anatomy both in tomb paintings and sculpture (170). On the *Sarcophagus lid of Larth Tetnies and Thanchvil Tarnai*, the bas-relief couple wears hair in Greek fashion with tight curls (Haynes 291). The man has a bracelet on his right hand, which is also unusual for the Etruscans (290). On the long sides of the sarcophagus the Greek battle scenes are carved, on the short – the fighting animals (291). The sad mood of tomb sculptures was characteristically Etruscan developed in the Late Classical period (Davies 170).

9. Roman artists swung back and forth between different epochs depending on the political climate. The Late Republican portraits of politics demonstrated the veristic style that was necessary to encourage voters to trust them (Davies 192). The images were made very realistic with all wrinkles and face deformities of the advanced age of the sitters (fig. 7). The founder of the Roman Empire Augustus, who came to power at 36 and could not pose as a wrinkled sage, brought (or rather returned) into fashion “a more Hellenizing style” of “an ageless youth” (fig. 8) (Davies 204). The 69 year-old emperor Vespasian returned to the more realistic style of portraits (fig. 9). Meanwhile, he was succeeded to the throne by Hadrian, who came back to the Greek-inspired style in portraiture once more (205). From the second half of the second century CE, Roman portraits gradually take on a more abstract quality reflecting the interest in philosophy (207). For example, the bronze equestrian statue of

Marcus Aurelius has an unfocused stare and half closed eyes as if the sitter is in deep thoughts (fig. 10).

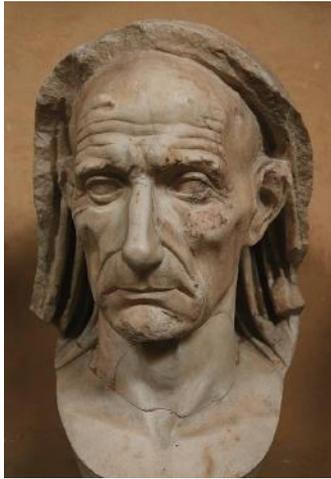


Fig. 7. *Veristic male portrait.*



Fig. 8. *Augustus of Prima Porta.*

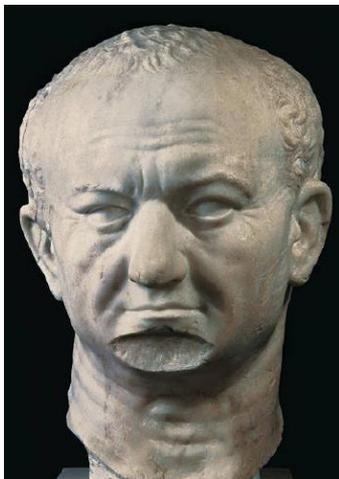


Fig. 9. *Portrait of Vespasian.*



Fig. 10. *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius.*

10. In fact, Second Commandment did not preach down the making of any images per se. Rather it was a rule against idols and worshipping them (Davies 238). Therefore, both the Jews and Early Christians had ritual paintings in this form or another, at least depicting the Bible scenes. The problem arose when Christians wanted to make images of Jesus Christ and pray before them. The Iconoclasts opposed because they saw the breach of the Second

Commandment in it while the Iconophiles stated they it would be worshipping God whose image it is but not the paint or wood or clay it is made of (265). As a figure uniting Church and State, the emperor was threatened by the Iconoclasm conflict. Because of the rise of Islam the Iconoclasts won for the time being but in 843 the Iconophiles finally won (265).

11. The Carolingian art shared the features of the Roman culture, for example, in architecture. The Palace Chapel of Charlemagne in Aachen, Germany seems copied from the church of San Vitale in Ravenna (compare fig. 11 and fig. 12). Placing the nave in the center of the chapel the Charlemagne's creation looked more fundamental with its "massive piers and vaults" (Davies 330).

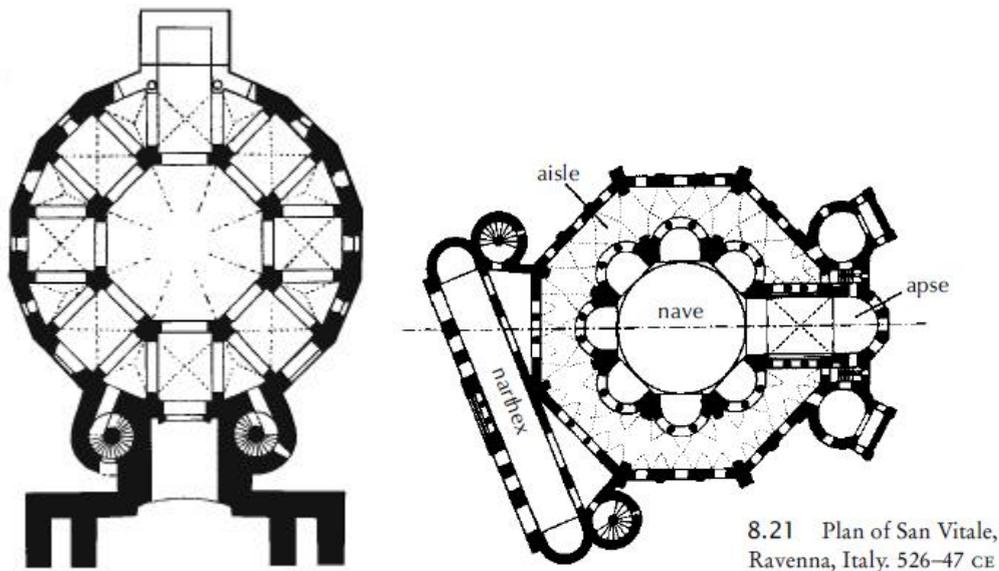


Fig. 11. Plan of San Vitale.

Fig. 12. Plan of Palace Chapel of Charlemagne.

The Ottonian art incorporated many borrowings from the Byzantine artistic manner. Like the Early Byzantine mosaic *Empress Theodora and Her Attendants*, the manuscript illustrations of the *Gospel Book of Otto III* depict similar frontal images of tall slim figures with oval faces and large bulging eyes. The use of color and drapery are similar, too (fig. 13 and fig. 14).

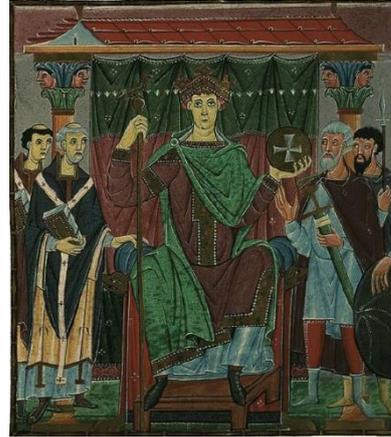


Fig.13. *Empress Theodora and Her Attendants.*

Fig. 14. *Otto III Between Church and State, from the Gospel Book of Otto III.*

In the early Middle Ages, artists were cautious with religious sculpture. It is the first sculptural image of a dead Christ on the Cross (Davies 343). The Byzantine influence is in the manner of depicting Christ with the visible pain of the slung body but at the same time “without pathos, though with a similar simplicity” (270).

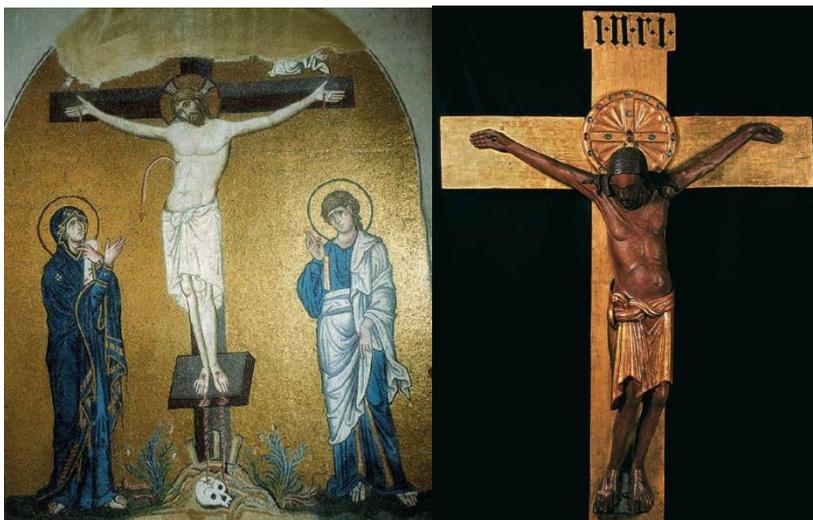


Fig. 15. *The Crucifixion.*

Fig. 16. *Gero Crucifix.*

12. In the early period, vaults and wall arcades were characteristic features of the Romanesque style (Davies 349). The most Roman feature was architectural ornament and sculpture. The Mature Romanesque arranged its sculptures in “intocomplicated and didactic

iconographic programs” (351). Perfecting their vaulting techniques Romanesque architects began building churches taller and with longer naves reaching its culmination with Abbey Church of Cluny. By the end of the twelfth century, the simple geometric shapes of Cistercian Architecture made a stark contrast to the decorative and lavish architecture of the Cluniac order (367). In general, the development of the Romanesque Architecture depended on the region. For example, Western French cathedrals share broad facades (Poitou) while Southern France adheres to the more classical Provençal style (372). Tuscany favored free-standing towers and groin vaults (376). German Romanesque Architecture featured timber-roof naves and groin vaults. Norman and English art of the Romanesque period has examples of separtite (or seven-part) groin vault over three-story naves (Durham cathedral, England).

13. On Brunelleschi’s bronze relief, all figures are made in profile while Ghiberti has a bigger variety of poses: one servant on the left has turned his back to the spectator, the other servant almost hidden behind the mountain has his face turned to the spectator, Isaac is twisted in waiting for the father’s strike, and the angel in the clouds appears in the foreshortened angle. In Brunelleschi’s variant, the triangle of Abraham, Isaac, and the angel make the compositional center of the relief while other participants are engaged in their own business. The ridge of the mountain between Abraham and the servants, with a waiting ram on top, creates an illusion of space. A slightly diagonal line of the ridge brings the main focus to the figures of the father and the son.

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