

Style

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

Often, trends can be seen over time within works of art. The identification of these trends is important because stylistic trends, along with a similar overall consistent philosophy between artists, is indicative of an artistic movement. In this lesson, you will learn about:

1. Period Style



BIG IDEA

Style is the unique method and form used to make a work of art.

Period style refers to shared visual characteristics that are unique to a period of time. Period style can be a way to categorize works of art by similar characteristics or common preferences. It can also categorize works by instructors or the importance of the subject matter to a larger collection of people. Period style is heavily influenced by the geographical location where the artists live.

Even though there are strong stylistic elements that persist throughout the ancient Egyptian time frame, there were major historical events that had a profound impact on the visual style. However, it is not uncommon for people outside of art history to lump the art of ancient Egypt together.

IN CONTEXT

Look at the images below. Take note of how they change over time (from top to bottom).

Shown below, the Statue of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III, who reigned around the 14th century BC, embodies the traditional elements we have come to associate with a lot of ancient Egyptian art, such as:

- Generic-looking face
- Almond-shaped eyes
- Headdress
- Ornamental beard
- Rigid posing



Statue of Pharaoh Amenhotep III

Notice how the overall style changes dramatically in this next example. This change in style began when Ahmenhotep's son, Akhenaten, assumed the throne after Ahmenhotep's death. Pay attention to the headdress, the ornamental beard, and the rigid pose. These remain the same for the most

part. However, the face has now gained a rather distinct appearance and is widely believed to closely represent the actual appearance of Akhenaten.





Statue of Pharaoh Akhenaten



DID YOU KNOW

The rise of Akhenaten as pharaoh brought with it one of the earliest documentations of a major religious shift among the Egyptians from a polytheistic religion (many gods) to a more monotheistic religion (emphasis on one supreme god, an obscure sun god named Aten). Aten had existed in the Egyptian religion prior to this, but it was Akhenaten who elevated his status to the supreme being, or the supreme god. Needless to say, this didn't go over too well with the population in general, and was subsequently dispatched as the state religion after Akhenaten's death.

IN CONTEXT

Below is yet another type of sculptural relief showing more of the unusual physical characteristics of Egyptian art, such as:

- Elongated face and head
- Pear-shaped body
- Large belly

These are all elements that were applied to members of the royal family, as well, including the pharaoh's wife and children.



House altar depicting Akhenaten, Nefertiti and three of their daughters

Finally, below you will see an image of the pharaoh Ramses II, who was characterized in the Bible as an antagonist to Moses. He reigned roughly 60 years after Akhenaten. You can see that, by this point, the features we saw in the original sculpture of Ahmenhotep III have returned. The erasure of the stylistic elements brought about by Akhenaten was another way of extinguishing his legacy.



Statue of Pharaoh Ramses II



TERMS TO KNOW

Style

The unique method and form used to make a work of art.

Period Style

2. Regional Style

Regional style includes the stylistic characteristics and subject matter associated with a particular region. This was an idea first proposed by art history critic Johann Winckelmann. Artworks created during a particular period can differ significantly in subject matter and physical characteristics. Regional style began to refer to a more specialized way of identifying works of art that had common themes, common subject matter, or a common style.

IN CONTEXT

Below are three examples of regional art.

Here are genre paintings of northern Europe:



The Peasant Dance by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

You can see the emphasis on material textures by northern Renaissance painters here:



Portrait of Sir Thomas More by Hans Holbein the Younger

Or, the iconographic subject matter favored by other northern European artists:



The Arnolfini Wedding by Jan van Eyck



TERM TO KNOW

Regional Style

Art with shared subject matter or physical characteristics that are unique to a specific region

3. Individual Style

Individual style refers to characteristics that are unique to a specific artist. It is the most specific categorization, where the artist's own interpretations of contemporary and regional subject matter really come through.



DID YOU KNOW

Connoisseurs of a particular artist have extensive knowledge of that artist's individual style.

IN CONTEXT

The next two images use a similar theme, referencing biblical stories, which was common in northern Europe.

First is a piece by Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder, depicting the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*. This is an example of a thematic preference.



The Fall of the Rebel Angels by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Let's compare it with this painting, below, *Hell*, by the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch. Bosch's work includes a number of fantasy elements that were unusual for the time. This is something really distinctive about his style.





Hell by Hieronymus Bosch

Notice above where the highlights include the large ears in the upper left quadrant of the picture, the figures that appear to be a hodgepodge of different body parts, and the pig dressed as a nun in the lower right-hand corner.

In contrast, take a look at the next image, a 20th century abstract painting by Mark Rothko. It is a more modern example of how an artist can still provide an original spin on a particular style and, at the same time, differentiate him-or herself from other artists while still remaining faithful to that style. Rothko was known for his large paintings, which featured bands of contrasting colors.



No. 14 by Mark Rothko



BIG IDEA

The analysis of style is a basic aspect of art history and helps art historians identify meaningful trends within works of art.



TERM TO KNOW

Individual Style

Art with subject matter and physical characteristics that are unique to a specific artist



SUMMARY

Over time, trends can be seen within works of art. It is essential to identify these trends when trying to define an artistic movement.

In this lesson, you learned about **period style**, which refers to shared visual characteristics that are unique to a period of time. Period style is heavily influenced by the geographical location where the artists live.

Regional style began to refer to a more specialized way of identifying works of art that had common themes, common subject matter, or a common style.

Finally, you learned about **individual style**, which refers to characteristics that are unique to a specific artist. It is the most specific categorization and within this type of style, an artist's interpretations are often evident.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Individual style

Art with subject matter and physical characteristics that are unique to a specific artist.

Period style

A type of art with shared visual characteristics that are unique to a specific period in time.

Regional style

Art with shared subject matter or physical characteristics that are unique to a specific region.

Style

The unique method and form used to make a work of art.