



# ART

## A Brief History

Marilyn Stokstad

Michael W. Cothren

Sixth Edition

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**Marilyn Stokstad**

Judith Harris Murphy Distinguished Professor of Art History Emerita  
The University of Kansas

**Michael W. Cothren**

Scheuer Family Professor of Humanities  
Department of Art, Swarthmore College

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This new edition of *Art: A Brief History* is the result of a continuing collaboration of two scholar-teachers who share a common vision. In certain ways, we also share a common history. Neither of us expected to become a professor of art history. Marilyn Stokstad took her first art history course as a requirement of her studio arts program. Michael Cothren discovered the discipline almost by chance during a semester abroad in Provence when a painting instructor sent him on a field trip to learn from the formal intricacies of Romanesque sculpture. Perhaps as a result of the unexpected delight we found in these formative experiences, we share a conviction that first courses in the history of art should be filled with as much enjoyment as erudition; that they should foster an enthusiastic, as well as an educated, public for the visual arts. With this end firmly in mind, we will continue to create books intended to help students relish learning the essentials of a vast and complex field of study. For millennia human beings have embodied their most cherished ideas and values in visual and tangible form. We have learned that by engaging with these works from the past, we can enrich our lives in the present, especially because we are living in a present when images have become an increasingly important aspect of how we communicate with each other.

Like its predecessors, this new edition seeks to balance formal and iconographic analysis with contextual art history in order to craft interpretations that will engage with a diverse student population. Throughout the text, the visual arts are treated as part of a larger world, in which geography, politics, religion, economics, philosophy, social life, and the other fine arts were related components of a vibrant cultural landscape. This is a daunting agenda for a “Brief” book. But we believe it is essential. Art and architecture have played a central role in human history, and they continue to do so today. Our book will fulfill its purpose if it introduces a broad spectrum of students to some of the richest human achievements created through the centuries and across the globe, and if it inspires those students both to respect and to cherish their historical legacy in the visual arts. Perhaps it will convince some to dedicate themselves to assuring that our own age leaves a comparable artistic legacy, thereby continuing the ever-evolving history of art.

## So ... What’s New in This Edition?

We believe that even an established introductory art history text should continually respond to the changing needs of its audience—both students and educators. In this way the art it introduces is more likely to challenge and nourish its readers’ lives, both at the time of use and long into the future.

Our goal was to make this revised text an improvement over its earlier incarnations in sensitivity, readability, and accessibility without losing anything in comprehensiveness, in scholarly precision, or in its ability to engage the reader. As with past editions, thoughtful feedback from our many users and reviewers was critical in helping us meet this goal.

## ART HISTORY REIMAGINED WITH REVEL

One of the most exciting developments that took place during this revision was the development and design of REVEL, a new digital format that makes *Art: A Brief History* excitingly interactive. We believe that REVEL presents the same material found in the printed version in a dynamic design that actually functions more like a classroom than a textbook. We are sure that this will make art history more engaging to the current generation of college students.

## NEW LEARNING ARCHITECTURE

Throughout the text, we have rethought and expanded the learning architecture by coordinating the A-heads in the running text with both the learning objectives (“Learn About It”) and the assessment questions (“Think About It”). These tools are rooted in four key outcomes that have helped steer and shape our revision since they emphasize the fundamental reasons we teach and study art history:

1. Identifying the hallmarks of regional and period styles in relation to their technical, formal, and expressive character
2. Understanding the principal themes, subjects, and symbols in the art of a variety of cultures, periods, and locations
3. Probing the relationship of works of art to human history by exploring their cultural, economic, political, social, spiritual, moral, and intellectual contexts
4. Recognizing and applying the critical thinking, creative inquiry, and disciplined reasoning that stand behind art historical interpretation, as well as the vocabulary and concepts used to describe and characterize works of art with clarity and power.

## NEW SCHOLARSHIP, NEW IMAGES

Over the many years we have taught undergraduate beginners, we have always enjoyed sharing—both with our students and our fellow educators—the new discoveries and fresh interpretive perspectives that are constantly enriching the history of art. We relished the opportunity here to incorporate some of the latest thinking and most recent interpretations—whether this involved presenting a newly excavated example of a Han tomb model, including a more accurate reconstruction of the Akropolis, or featuring Raphael’s newly restored *Madonna of the Goldfinch* in a discussion of his earlier devotional paintings. Indeed, changes have been made on many levels—from the introduction to the glossary, and from captions to chapter introductions and conclusions. Every change aims to make the text more useful to the instructors and students in today’s art history classrooms.

## IN GRATITUDE

As its predecessors did, this Sixth Edition of *Art: A Brief History* benefited from the reflections and assessments of a distinguished team of scholars and educators. We are grateful to the following academic reviewers for their numerous insights and suggestions for improvement:

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## WHAT'S NEW

### Chapter by Chapter Revisions

Some of the key highlights of this new edition include the following:

#### Introduction

New images of flowers—a photograph of *Two Callas* by Imogen Cunningham and *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* painted by Georgia O'Keeffe—enrich the discussion of representational modes and present a productive opportunity for comparative analysis.

#### Chapter 1—Prehistoric Art in Europe

A new ground-level view of Stonehenge is coordinated with a better diagram of the whole site to clarify the presentation of this critical monument.

#### Chapter 2—Art of the Ancient Near East

The carved vessel from Warka is now illustrated with a double view showing two sides to enhance an understanding of the unfolding of the narrative, which is more fully explored in the text. A new Closer Look explores both sides of the Standard of Ur.

#### Chapter 3—Art of Ancient Egypt

A better image has been substituted for the Great Pyramids, and leader-line captions have been added to the reconstruction drawing.

#### Chapter 4—Early Asian Art

Better images were obtained to illustrate the lion capital of Ashokan pillar, the Gandhara Shakyamuni Buddha, the Mathura Buddha and attendants, Borobodur, Nanchan Temple, and the Great Wild Goose Pagoda. A more complex newly excavated example has been used to discuss Han tomb models.

#### Chapter 5—Art of Ancient Greece and the Aegean World

Better images were obtained to illustrate the *Riace Warriors*, the Parthenon, and the *Spear Bearer (Doryphoros)*. The discussion of Mycenaean dagger blades centers on a new, more representa-

tive example. Two critical reconstructions have been redrawn for greater clarity: the design scheme of a Cycladic figure, and a more accurate reconstruction of the Akropolis. Leader-line captions enrich the reconstruction drawings of Knossos and Mycenae. A new discussion of the temple from Aegina integrates the pediment sculpture with its architectural context.

#### Chapter 6—Etruscan and Roman Art

Several new and improved drawings have been substituted for the reconstructions of an Etruscan temple and the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine. A new figure of a detail has been added to the discussion of the Column of Trajan, and the Venice Tetrarchs now represent tetrarchic sculpture. The plan and reconstruction of the generic Roman house has been replaced with a plan of the House of the Vetii at Pompeii to create an integrated discussion of that house, including its architectural design as well as its wall paintings.

#### Chapter 7—Jewish, Early Christian, and Byzantine Art

Leader-line captions clarify the isometric drawing of Hagia Sophia. A plan has been added of the Hosios Lukas monastery complex, allowing an expanded discussion of the organization of monasteries within the text. Improved images illustrate the narthex mosaics of the Constantinopolitan monastic church of Christ in Chora.

#### Chapter 8—Islamic Art

We have reorganized the presentation of the monuments and works to clarify chronological relationships in the development of Islamic art. Better images illustrate the Dome of the Rock. To enrich the discussion of luxury arts, we have substituted Bihzad's "Yusuf Fleeing Zulayhka" for his "Turkish Bath." We have also added Sultan Muhammad's spectacular "Court of Gayumars," considered in its time as the greatest painting of the Persian narrative tradition.

#### Chapter 9—Later Asian Art

The chapter now features a woodblock print by Sharaku.

### **Chapter 10—Early Medieval and Romanesque Art**

The Art and Its Contexts box on Hildegard of Bingen now includes an illustration of one of her visions as well as her author portrait. Better images have been found for the figures of the Moissac portal and the Bayeux Embroidery.

### **Chapter 11—Gothic Art**

The interior of the abbey church of Saint-Denis, the Chartres Cathedral Royal Portal jamb statues, and the interior of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris are captured better in a series of new images.

### **Chapter 12—Early Renaissance Art**

There is a better image for the recently restored figure of Donatello's David. Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis in Ecstasy* has been added to incorporate Venice into the discussion of the early Italian Renaissance.

### **Chapter 13—Art of the High Renaissance and Reformation**

This chapter has a new opening focusing on Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*. Better images appear for the figures of Michelangelo's Vatican Pietà and Titian's *Pastoral Concert*. Raphael's newly restored *Madonna of the Goldfinch* has been used to discuss his early devotional paintings.

### **Chapter 14—Seventeenth-Century Art in Europe**

A new Closer Look focuses on Rubens and Snyder's *Prometheus Bound*. A painting of the Immaculate Conception by Murillo has been added to coordinate with the newly included painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Chapter 17.

### **Chapter 15—Art of the Americas**

Better images have been obtained for El Castillo and the chacmool at Chichén Itzá. A reconstruction drawing has been added to the presentation of the Templo Mayor. A new Closer Look focuses on the Maya relief of Shield Jaguar and Lady Xok. The chapter now includes a discussion of a Mimbres painted bowl.

### **Chapter 17—European and American Art, 1715–1840**

Fragonard's *The Swing*, Sebastian Salcedo's *Virgin of Guadalupe*, and Friedrich's *Abbey in an Oak Forest* have been added to this chapter.

### **Chapter 18—European and American Art, 1840–1910**

*The Life Line* now represents the work of Winslow Homer. A re-written Art and Its Contexts box on "Japonisme" highlights prints by Suzuki Harunobu and Mary Cassatt.

### **Chapter 19—Modern Art in Europe and the Americas, 1900–1945**

A glorious new color photograph captures Mary Colter's Lookout Studio at the Grand Canyon.

### **Chapter 20—Art since 1945**

A new Art and Its Contexts box on "Controversies over Public Funding of the Arts" includes an illustration of Chris Ofili's *The Holy Virgin Mary*. A new painting is used in the discussion of Mark Rothko, and Jean-Michel Basquiat's *Horn Players* has been added to the chapter.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND GRATITUDE

*Art: A Brief History* is a concise version of *Art History*, which was first published in 1995 by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. and Prentice Hall, Inc. Because this new edition builds on the revisions of previous editions of both *Art History* and *Art: A Brief History*, the work of many colleagues and friends who contributed to the original texts and their subsequent revisions is reflected here. We extend to them our long-term gratitude.

It was an absolute joy to work closely with two gifted and dedicated editors at Pearson, Sarah Touborg and Helen Ronan, in crafting a book that would incorporate effective pedagogical features into a shortened art historical narrative. We are continually bolstered by the warm and dedicated support of Marlene Gassler and Barbara Cappuccio in Pearson Project and Program Management. Cory Skidds and Victoria Engros facilitated our work in many ways. Much appreciation also goes to Maggie Moylan, Director of Product Marketing, and Wendy Albert, Executive Marketing Manager, as well as the entire Social Sciences and Arts team at Pearson. At Laurence King Publishing, Jodi Simpson, Kara Hattersley-Smith, Julia Ruxton, Evi Peroulaki, and Simon Walsh, along with designer Ian Hunt, oversaw the production of this new edition.

### **From Marilyn Stokstad:**

I extend my thanks to Frederick M. Asher, Claudia Brown, Patricia J. Graham, and Robert D. Mowry for their contributions and assistance with Asian art; Joy Sperling for Modern art; D. Fairchild Ruggles for Islamic art, Sara E. Orel and Carol S. Ivory for art of the Pacific Islands; Douglass Bailey for Prehistoric art; Claudia L. Brittenham for the indigenous art of the Americas; and Patricia J. Darish and David A. Binkley for African art.

Of course, my very special thanks go to my sister, Karen Leider, and my niece, Anna Leider.

### **From Michael Cothren:**

Words are barely adequate to express my gratitude to Marilyn Stokstad for welcoming me with such trust, enthusiasm, and warmth into the collaborative adventure of revising her path-breaking textbooks. Working alongside her—and our extraordinary editors Sarah Touborg and Helen Ronan—has been delightful and rewarding, enriching and challenging. I look forward to the continuing partnership.

I have been supported by a host of colleagues at Swarthmore College. Generations of students challenged me to hone my

pedagogical skills and steady my focus on what is at stake in telling the history of art. Special thanks to List Gallery Director Andrea Packard, who brought the work of Hiroyuki Hamada to campus and set in motion my connection with him that led ultimately to his inclusion here. My colleagues in the Art Department—especially Stacy Bomento, June Cianfrana, Randall Exon, Constance Cain Hungerford, Patricia Reilly, and Tomoko Sakomura—have answered all sorts of questions, shared innumerable insights on works in their areas of expertise, and offered unending encouragement and support. I am so lucky to work with them.

Many art historians have generously provided assistance, and I am especially grateful to Claudia Brown, Cary Liu, Elizabeth Marlowe, Thomas Morton, Mary Shepard, Donna Sadler, David Shapiro, and Jeffrey Chipps Smith. This revision of *Art: A Brief History* was supported by the earlier work of Fletcher Coleman, Andrew Finegold, and especially Moses Hanson-Harding, three extraordinary research assistants involved in recent revisions of *Art History*.

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If the arts are ultimately an expression of human faith and integrity as well as human thought and creativity, then writing and producing books that introduce new viewers to the wonders of art's history, and to the courage and visions of the artists and art historians that stand behind it—remains a noble undertaking. We feel honored to be a part of such a worthy project.

Marilyn Stokstad

Lawrence, KS

Michael W. Cothren

Philadelphia, PA, and Sedona, AZ

Spring 2014

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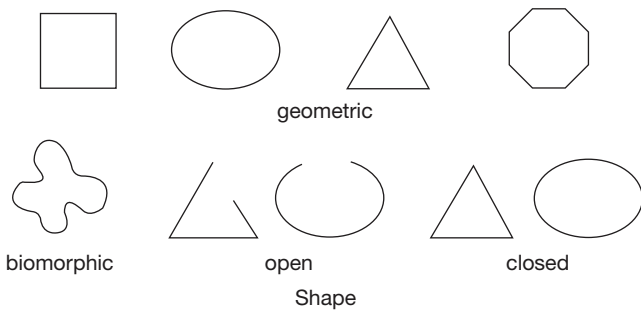
# STARTER KIT

Art history focuses on the visual arts—painting, drawing, sculpture, prints, photography, ceramics, metalwork, architecture, and more. This Starter Kit contains basic information and addresses concepts that underlie and support the study of art history. It provides a quick reference guide to the vocabulary used to classify and describe art objects. Understanding these terms is indispensable because you will encounter them again and again in reading, talking, and writing about art.

**Let us begin with the basic properties of art.** A work of art is a material object having both **form** and **content**. It is often described and categorized according to its *style* and *medium*.

## FORM

Referring to purely visual aspects of art and architecture, the term *form* encompasses qualities of line, shape, color, light, texture, space, mass, volume, and composition. These qualities are known as formal elements. When art historians use the term *formal*, they mean “relating to form.”



**Line** and **shape** are attributes of form. Line is an element—usually drawn or painted—the length of which is so much greater than the width that we perceive it as having only length. Line can be actual, as when the line is visible, or it can be implied, as when the movement of the viewer’s eyes over the surface of a work follows a path determined by the artist. Shape, on the other hand, is the two-dimensional, or flat, area defined by the borders of an enclosing *outline* or *contour*. Shape can be *geometric*, **biomorphic** (suggesting living things; sometimes called *organic*), *closed*, or *open*. The *outline* or *contour* of a three-dimensional object can also be perceived as line.

**Color** has several attributes. These include hue, value, and saturation.

Hue is what we think of when we hear the word *color*, and the terms are interchangeable. We perceive hues as the result of differing wavelengths of electromagnetic energy. The visible spectrum, which can be seen in a rainbow, runs from red through violet. When the ends of the spectrum are connected through the hue red-violet, the result may be diagrammed as a color wheel. The **primary hues** (numbered 1) are red,



yellow, and blue. They are known as primaries because all other colors are made by combining these hues. Orange, green, and violet result from the mixture of two primaries and are known as secondary hues (numbered 2). Intermediate hues, or tertiaries (numbered 3), result from the mixture of a primary and a secondary. **Complementary colors** are the two colors directly opposite one another on the color wheel, such as red and green. Red, orange, and yellow are regarded as warm colors and appear to advance toward us. Blue, green, and violet, which seem to recede, are called cool colors. Black and white are not considered colors but neutrals; in terms of light, black is understood as the absence of color and white as the mixture of all colors.

Value is the relative degree of lightness or darkness of a given color and is created by the amount of light reflected from an object’s surface. A dark green has a deeper value than a light green, for example. In black-and-white reproductions of colored objects, you see only value, and some artworks—for example, a drawing made with black ink—possess only value, not hue or saturation.



Value scale from white to black.



Value variation in red.

saturation, also sometimes referred to as *intensity*, is a color's quality of brightness or dullness. A color described as highly saturated looks vivid and pure; a hue of low saturation may or look a little muddy or grayed.



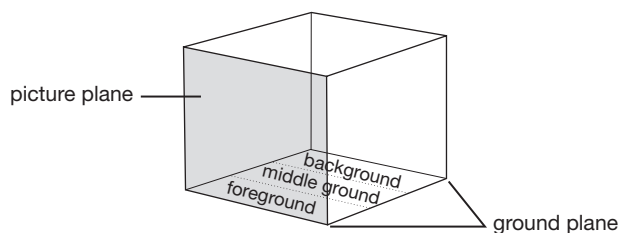
Intensity scale from bright to dull.

**Texture**, another **attribute** of form, is the tactile (or touch-perceived) quality of a surface. It is described by words such as *smooth*, *polished*, *rough*, *prickly*, *grainy*, or *oily*. Texture takes two forms: the texture of the actual surface of the work of art and the implied (illusionistically described) surface of objects represented in the work of art.

**Space** is what contains forms. It may be actual and three-dimensional, as it is with sculpture and architecture, or it may be fictional, represented illusionistically in two dimensions, as when artists represent recession into the distance on a flat surface—such as a wall or a canvas—by using various systems of **perspective**.

**Mass** and **volume** are properties of three-dimensional things. Mass is solid matter—whether sculpture or architecture—that takes up space. Volume is enclosed or defined space, and may be either solid or hollow. Like space, mass and volume may be illusionistically represented on a two-dimensional surface, as in a painting or a photograph.

**Composition** is the organization, or arrangement, of forms in a work of art. Shapes and colors may be repeated or varied, balanced symmetrically or asymmetrically; they may be stable or dynamic. The possibilities are nearly endless, and artistic choice depends both on the time and place where the work was created as well as on the objectives of individual artists. **pictorial depth** (spatial recession) is a specialized aspect of composition in which the three-dimensional world is represented on a flat surface, or **picture plane**. The area “behind” the picture plane is called the **picture space** and conventionally contains three “zones”: **foreground**, **middle ground**, and **background**.



Various techniques for conveying a sense of pictorial depth have been devised by artists in different cultures and at different times. A number of them are diagrammed here. In some European art, the use of various systems of **perspective** has sought to create highly convincing illusions of recession into space. At other times and in other cultures, indications of recession are actually suppressed or avoided to emphasize surface rather than space.

## CONTENT

*Content* includes subject matter, but not all works of art have subject matter. Many buildings, paintings, sculptures, and other art objects include no recognizable references to things in nature nor to any story or historical situation, focusing instead on lines, colors, masses, volumes, and other formal elements. However, all works of art—even those without recognizable subject matter—have content, or meaning, insofar as they seek to communicate ideas, convey feelings, or affirm the beliefs and values of their makers, their **patrons**, and usually the people who originally viewed or used them.

Content may derive from the social, political, religious, and economic contexts in which a work was created, the intention of the artist, and the reception of the work by beholders (the audience). Art historians, applying different methods of interpretation, often arrive at different conclusions regarding the content of a work of art, and single works of art can contain more than one meaning because they are occasionally directed at more than one audience.

The study of subject matter is called **iconography** (literally, “the writing of images”) and includes the identification of symbols—images that take on meaning through association, resemblance, or **convention**.

## STYLE

Expressed very broadly, *style* is the combination of form and composition that makes a work distinctive. **stylistic analysis** is one of art history's most developed practices, because it is how art historians recognize the work of an individual artist or the characteristic manner of groups of artists working in a particular time or place. Some of the most commonly used terms to discuss artistic styles include **period style**, **regional style**, **representational style**, **abstract style**, **linear style**, and **painterly style**.

**Period style** refers to the common traits detectable in works of art and architecture from a particular historical era. It is good practice not to use the words “style” and “period” interchangeably. Style is the sum of many influences and characteristics, including the period of its creation. An example of proper usage is “an American house from the Colonial period built in the Georgian style.”

**Regional style** refers to stylistic traits that persist in a geographic region. An art historian whose specialty is medieval art can recognize Spanish style through many successive medieval periods and can distinguish individual objects created in medieval Spain from other medieval objects that were created in, for example, Italy.

**Representational styles** are those that describe the appearance of recognizable subject matter in ways that make it seem lifelike.

**realism** and **naturalism** are terms that some people used interchangeably to characterize artists' attempts to represent the observable world in a manner that appears to describe its visual appearance accurately. When capitalized, **Realism** refers to a specific period style discussed in Chapter 18.

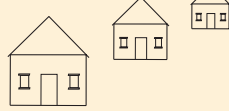


# TECHNIQUE | Pictorial Devices for Depicting Recession in Space



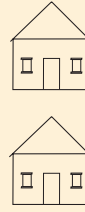
## overlapping

In overlapping, partially covered elements are meant to be seen as located behind those covering them.



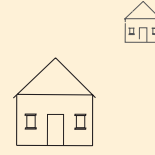
## diminution

In diminution of scale, successively smaller elements are perceived as being progressively farther away than the largest ones.



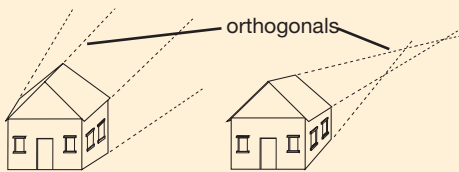
## vertical perspective

Vertical perspective stacks elements, with the higher ones intended to be perceived as deeper in space.



## atmospheric perspective

Through atmospheric perspective, objects in the far distance (often in bluish-gray hues) have less clarity than nearer objects. The sky becomes paler as it approaches the horizon.

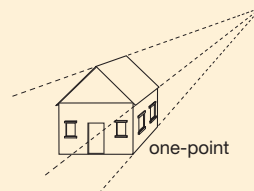


## divergent perspective

In divergent or reverse perspective, forms widen slightly and imaginary lines called orthogonals diverge as they recede in space.

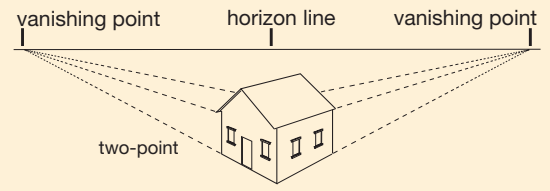
## intuitive perspective

Intuitive perspective takes the opposite approach from divergent perspective. Forms become narrower and orthogonals converge the farther they are from the viewer, approximating the optical experience of spatial recession.



## linear perspective

Linear perspective (also called scientific, mathematical, one-point, and Renaissance perspective) is a rationalization or standardization of intuitive perspective that was developed in fifteenth-century Italy. It uses mathematical formulas to construct images in which all elements are shaped by, or arranged along, orthogonals that converge in one or more vanishing points on a horizon line.



idealization strives to create images of physical perfection according to the prevailing values or tastes of a culture. The artist may work in a representational style and idealize it to capture an underlying value or expressive effect.

illusionism refers to a highly detailed style that seeks to create a convincing illusion of physical reality by describing its visual appearance meticulously.

**Abstract styles** depart from mimicking lifelike appearance to capture the essence of a form. An abstract artist may work from nature or from a memory image of nature's forms and colors, which are simplified, stylized, perfected, distorted, elaborated, or otherwise transformed to achieve a desired expressive effect.

nonrepresentational (or nonobjective) art is a term often used for works of art that do not aim to produce recognizable natural imagery.

expressionism refers to styles in which the artist exaggerates aspects of form to draw out the beholder's subjective response or to project the artist's own subjective feelings.

**Linear** describes both styles and techniques. In linear styles artists use line as the primary means of definition. But linear

paintings can also incorporate modeling—creating an illusion of three-dimensional substance through shading, usually executed so that brushstrokes nearly disappear.

**Painterly** describes a style of representation in which vigorous, evident brushstrokes dominate, and outlines, shadows, and highlights are brushed in freely.

## MEDIUM AND TECHNIQUE

*Medium* (plural, *media*) refers to the material or materials from which a work of art is made. Today, literally anything can be used to make a work of art, including not only traditional materials like paint, ink, and stone, but also rubbish, food, and the earth itself.

*Technique* is the process that transforms the medium into a work of art. Various techniques are explained throughout this book in Technique boxes. Two-dimensional media and techniques include painting, drawing, printing, and photography. Three-dimensional media and techniques are sculpture, architecture, and many small-scale arts (such as jewelry, containers, or vessels) in media such as ceramics, metal, or wood.

**Painting** includes wall painting and **fresco**, **illumination** (the decoration of books with paintings), **panel painting** (painting on wood panels), painting on canvas, and handscroll and **hanging scroll** painting. The paint in these examples is pigment mixed with a liquid vehicle, or binder. Some art historians also consider pictorial media such as **mosaic** and **stained glass**—where the pigment is arranged in solid form—also as a type of painting.

**Graphic arts** are those that involve the application of lines and strokes to a two-dimensional surface or support, most often paper. Drawing is a graphic art, as are the various forms of printmaking. Drawings may be sketches (quick visual notes, often made in preparation for larger drawings or paintings); studies (more carefully drawn analyses of details or entire compositions); **cartoons** (full-scale drawings made in preparation for work in another medium, such as fresco, stained glass, or **tapestry**); or complete artworks in themselves. Drawings can be made with ink, charcoal, crayon, or pencil. Prints, unlike drawings, are made in multiple copies. The various forms of printmaking include woodcut, the **intaglio** processes (**engraving**, **etching**, **drypoint**), and **lithography**.

**Photography** (literally, “light writing”) is a medium that involves the rendering of optical images on light-sensitive surfaces. Photographic images are typically recorded by a camera.

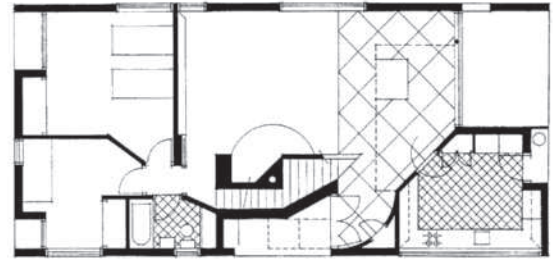
**Sculpture** is three-dimensional art that is carved, modeled, cast, or assembled. Carved sculpture is subtractive in the sense that the image is created by taking away material. Wood, stone, and ivory are common materials used to create carved sculptures. Modeled sculpture is considered additive, meaning that the object is built up from a material, such as clay, that is soft enough to be molded and shaped. Metal sculpture is usually cast or is assembled by welding or a similar means of permanent joining.

Sculpture is either free-standing (that is, surrounded by space) or in pictorial relief. **Relief sculpture** projects from the background surface of the same piece of material. **High-relief** sculpture projects far from its background; **low-relief** sculpture is only slightly raised; and **sunken relief**, found mainly in ancient Egyptian art, is carved into the surface, with the highest part of the relief being the flat surface.

**Ephemeral arts** include processions, ceremonies, or ritual dances (often with décor, costumes, or masks); **Performance Art**; **earthworks**; cinema and video art; and some forms of digital or computer art. All impose a temporal limitation—the artwork is viewable for a finite period of time and then disappears forever, is in a constant state of change, or must be replayed to be experienced again.

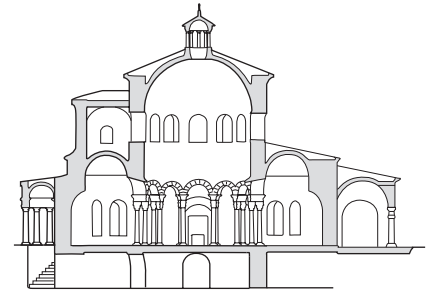
**Architecture** creates enclosures for human activity or habitation. It is three-dimensional, highly spatial, functional, and closely bound with developments in technology and materials. Since it is difficult to capture in a photograph, several types of schematic drawings are commonly used to enable the visualization of a building:

plans depict a structure’s masses and voids, presenting a view from above of the building’s footprint or as if it had been sliced horizontally at about waist height.



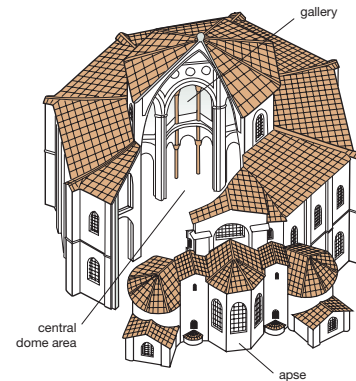
Plan: Philadelphia, Vanna Venturi House

sections reveal the interior of a building as if it had been cut vertically from top to bottom.

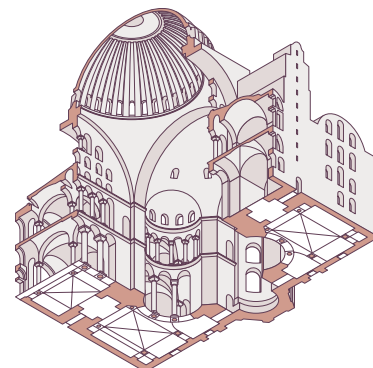


Section: Rome, Sta. Costanza

isometric drawings show buildings from oblique angles either seen from above (“bird’s-eye view”) to reveal their basic three-dimensional forms (often cut away so we can peek inside) or from below (“worm’s-eye view”) to represent the arrangement of interior spaces and the upward projection of structural elements.



Isometric cutaway from above: Ravenna, San Vitale



Isometric projection from below: Istanbul, Hagia Sophia



**INTRO-1 • GREAT SPHINX, FUNERARY COMPLEX OF KHAFRE, GIZA, EGYPT**

Old Kingdom, c. 2520–2494 BCE, Dynasty 4. Limestone, height approx. 65' (19.8 m).

# INTRODUCTION

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Intro.1** Consider the criteria used to identify and characterize works of art and their various modes of visual representation.
- Intro.2** Discover how to identify conventional subject matter and symbols (iconography) and situate the meaning of works of art within cultural contexts.

- Intro.3** Survey the various ways that artists and patrons have viewed themselves and have been viewed by the societies in which they lived and worked.
- Intro.4** Characterize the interpretive enterprise we call “art history.”

Crouching in front of the pyramids and carved from the living rock of the Giza plateau in Egypt, the **GREAT SPHINX** is one of the world’s best-known monuments (**fig. intro-1**). By placing the head of the ancient Egyptian king Khafre on the body of a huge lion, the sculptors joined human intelligence and animal strength in a single image to evoke the superhuman power of a ruler. For nearly 4,600 years, the Sphinx has defied encroaching desert sands and other assaults of nature; today it also must withstand the human-driven sprawl of greater Cairo and the impact of air pollution. In its majesty, it symbolizes mysterious wisdom and dreams of permanence, of immortality. But is such a monument a work of art? Does it matter that the people who carved the Sphinx—unlike today’s seemingly independent, individualistic, innovating artists—followed time-honored, formulaic conventions and the precise instructions of their **patrons**? Most people would answer, “Certainly, this is art. Human imagination conceived this amazing hybrid man-lion, and human skill gave material form to the concept behind it.” Does the human combination of imagination and skill constitute a work of art?

## What Is Art?

Answering this question was once easier than it is today. Most would agree that works of art demonstrate a combination of imagination, skill, training, and observation on the part of their human creators. They embody some of the most cherished beliefs of the culture that created them. If they appeal to our own taste for order and harmony, we may consider them beautiful. But now more than ever we realize that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, and that our aesthetic responses may be inconsistent with the responses of those in the past who created and originally saw the works. Whether acquired at home, in classrooms, in museums, at the movies, or on the Internet, our responses to art—as well as our judgments about what constitutes art—are learned behaviors, influenced by class, gender, race, geography, and economic status, as well as by education.

Today, the definition of art can also incorporate notions about artists and patrons, who shared responsibility for the works. It relies, too, on the responses of viewers—both those today and those who saw the works when they were new. The role of art history is to probe these factors. Who are these

artists and patrons? What were the ideas and expectations of the original viewers? Only after exploring such questions can we achieve a historical understanding and appreciation of those special artifacts we now consider works of art.

### **Modes of Representation**

Not all cultures value the same qualities in works of art. The ancient Greeks admired the work of artists who were especially skillful at capturing the visual appearance of the natural world, as illustrated in a famous story about a competition between rival Greek painters named Zeuxis and Parrhasios held in the late fifth century bce. Zeuxis painted a picture of grapes so detailed that birds flew down to peck at them. Then Parrhasios took his turn, and when Zeuxis asked his rival to remove the curtain hanging over the picture, Parrhasios gleefully pointed out that the curtain was his painting. Zeuxis agreed that Parrhasios had won the competition since he, Zeuxis, had fooled only birds, but Parrhasios had tricked an intelligent fellow artist.

In the seventeenth century, painters Adriaen van der Spelt (1630–1673) and Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) paid homage to the story of Parrhasios' curtain with their painting of blue satin drapery drawn aside to show a garland of flowers (FIG. intro 0–2).

More than a *tour-de-force* of *trompe l'oeil* painting (pictures that attempt to fool viewers into thinking what they are seeing is real, not a painted representation of the real), this work is an intellectual delight. The artists not only re-created Parrhasios' curtain illusion; they also included a reference to another Greek story that was popular in the fourth century bce, the tale of Pausias, who depicted in a painting the exquisite floral garlands made by a young woman, Glykera. This second story raises the question of who was the true artist—the painter who copied nature in his art or the garland-maker who made works of art out of nature. The seventeenth-century collectors who bought such **still lifes** (pictures of inanimate objects and fruits or flowers taken out of their natural contexts) knew those stories and appreciated the artists' **Classical** references as well as their skills in drawing and manipulating colors.

Even today some people think that lifelike descriptions of the visual appearance of the natural world (sometimes referred to as **naturalism** or **realism**) represent the highest accomplishment in art. Not everyone agrees. The first European artist to argue persuasively that precise observation alone produced “mere likeness,” not art, was the Italian master Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), who said that the painter who copied



**INTRO-2 • Adriaen van der Spelt and Frans van Mieris FLOWER PIECE WITH CURTAIN**  
1658. Oil on panel, 18¼" × 25¼" (46.5 × 64 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago. Wirt D. Walker Fund (1949.585).



**INTRO-3 • Imogen Cunningham TWO CALLAS**

1929. Gelatin-silver print, 12" × 9½" (30.4 × 24.1 cm).

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2014

Imogen Cunningham Trust.

the external forms of nature was acting only as a mirror. He believed that the true artist should engage in intellectual activity of a higher order and attempt to capture the inner life—the energy and power—rather than just the outward appearance of a subject.

Like Van der Spelt and Van Mieris, Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976) and Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986) created pictures of living plants. In her photograph **TWO CALLAS**, Cunningham used straightforward camera work to capture the forms and textures of her subject accurately, even if drained of its color (fig. intr o-3). But the artistic character of her photographic image depends not on the exacting detail recorded by the camera, but on the compositional choices and dramatic lighting controlled by the artist who used it. When Georgia O’Keeffe painted **JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT, NO. IV** (fig. intr o-4), she sought to capture the plant’s essence, not merely its appearance, by concentrating its organic energy within a painted detail, rather than by describing the way the plant actually looked as a complete entity. She sought a new **abstract** beauty, conveying in



**INTRO-4 • Georgia O’Keeffe JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT, NO. IV**

1930. Oil on canvas,

40" × 30" (101.6 × 76.2 cm). Alfred

Steiglitz Collection, Bequest of

Georgia O’Keeffe 1987.58.3. © 2015

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



**INTRO-5 • David Smith CUBI XVIII (left).** 1964. Stainless steel, 9' 8" (2.94 m). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. **CUBI XVII (center).** 1963. Stainless steel, 9' 2" (2.79 m). Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas. **CUBI XIX (right).** 1964. Stainless steel, 9' 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (2.88 m). Tate Gallery, London. Shown installed at Bolton Landing, New York, in 1965. Photo by David Smith.

paint the pure vigor of the flower's life force. We will encounter this move away from recording precise visual appearance and toward **abstraction** or **stylization**—in which artists transform recognizable natural subjects into patterns or make them conform to ideals—throughout the history of art. It is not unique to one time or place or culture.

Even further from the naturalistic mode of representation are the pure geometric creations of polished stainless steel made by David Smith (1906–1965). His **CUBI** (fig. intr o–5) are **nonrepresentational** (do not depict a recognizable natural subject). Stylized art like O'Keeffe's has both subject matter and content. Nonrepresentational art does not have subject matter, but it does have meaning, generated when the artist's intention and the viewer's interpretation interact. Some viewers may see the *Cubi* works as cubic plants sprung from the core of an unyielding earth, a reflection of a mechanistic society. For them, there is a reference here to nature, even if natural forms are not directly represented.

Because the meanings of works of art are complex, and can change over time, a central goal of art history is to explore the cultural factors that contributed to the production and initial reception of works of art—in other words to speculate on what they meant for the artists who made them and those who originally experienced them. But no art-historical explanation is definitive. The interpretation of works of art changes and develops through time as new evidence emerges and new approaches are established. Art history is a work continually in progress.

### ***“Real” and “Ideal” Bodies***

Ever since people first made what we call art, they have been fascinated with their own image and have used the human body to express ideas and ideals. Popular culture in the twenty-first century continues to be obsessed with notions of what constitutes a beautiful person. Today, the **MEDICI VENUS** (fig. intr o–6), with her plump arms and legs and sturdy body, would surely be expected to slim down. For generations, however, such a figure represented an ideal of female beauty. Such Classical figures inspired and guided artists and patrons from the fifteenth through the nineteenth century.

A very different notion of ideal beauty—also strictly regulated by **convention**—stands behind the stylized woman depicted in a **woodblock print** (fig. intr o–7) by Japanese artist Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806). Simplified shapes delineate the woman's garments and at the same time suggest the underlying form of her body. But the treatment of the rich textiles emphasizes surface pattern over bodily form, and the elaborate configuration of hair pins distracts us from the shape of her coiffure. Utamaro has rendered the decorative silks and carved pins meticulously, but only suggested the woman's face and hands with a few carefully chosen, sweeping lines.

A fifteenth-century **bronze** sculpture from India conforms to yet another ideal of female beauty, disquietingly distinct from those encountered thus far. Punitavati, a beautiful and generous woman who was deeply devoted to the Hindu god Shiva, was abandoned by her husband because she gave one of his



**INTRO-6 • MEDICI VENUS**

Roman copy of a 1st-century BCE Greek statue. Marble, height without base 5' (1.53 m). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

mangoes to a beggar. So Punitavati offered her beauty to Shiva, and the god accepted the offering, and by taking her loveliness away turned her into an emaciated, fanged hag (fig. intro-8). According to legend, Punitavati and her clanging cymbals provide the music for Shiva as he keeps the universe in motion by dancing the cosmic dance of destruction and creation (see fig. 9-4). The bronze sculpture, by depicting Punitavati's hideous appearance, seeks to evoke the spiritual beauty of her generosity and sacrifice.



**INTRO-7 •**

**Kitagawa Utamaro  
HANA-MURASAKI  
OF THE TAMAYA**

From the series *Array of Supreme Beauties of the Present Day*. Edo period, 1794.

Color woodblock print, 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" × 9<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (38.5 × 25.3 cm).

Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence. William Bridges Thayer Memorial (1928.7879).



**INTRO-8 • PUNITAVATI (KARAICKAL AMMAIYAR)**

A Shaiva saint, from Tamil Nadu, south India. Chola dynasty, c. 1050. Bronze, height 19<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (49.8 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust (33-533).





**INTRO-9 • Kiki Smith UNTITLED**

1990. Beeswax with microcrystalline wax figures on metal stands, female figure installed height 6' 1½" (1.87 m), male figure 6' 4<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (1.95 m). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. © Kiki Smith, courtesy Pace Gallery.

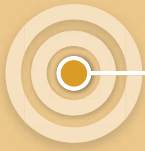
Sculptor Kiki Smith (b. 1954) uses the powerfully expressive subject of the human body not to engage with notions of ideal beauty—physical or spiritual—but to draw attention to the AIDS epidemic of the late twentieth century that claimed the life of her own sister. In her 1990 work **UNTITLED** (fig. intro-9), two life-size naked figures—made from flesh-colored painted beeswax—hang passively, but not quite lifelessly, side by side, a few inches above the ground. Milk drips from the woman's breasts and semen drips down the man's leg, as if both have lost control of bodily functions that were once a source of vitality and pleasure. Smith asks us to consider bodily control—both our own and the control that others exert on our body as we die—and suggests that relinquishing it may be as liberating as it is devastating.

## How Do We Find the Meaning of Art?

As we have just seen, underlying our assumptions about works of art—whether in the past or in the present—is the belief that art carries a message, that it can inform, challenge, and/or persuade viewers, as well as give them pleasure or embody cherished cultural norms. But what gives a work of art meaning and expressive power? How do we discover its significance for the culture in which it was made and first experienced? How does it become meaningful to us?

On their own, exceptional works of art can speak to us with enduring eloquence over great expanses of time, but we usually need to understand a work's subject matter or **iconography** (conventional subjects and symbols and the study of them) before its deeper intended meanings become clear. For example, in *Flower Piece with Curtain* (see fig. intro-2), the brilliant red and white tulip just to the left of the blue curtain was the most desirable and expensive flower in the seventeenth-century Netherlands; thus, it symbolizes wealth and power, not simply natural beauty. Yet insects creep out of it, and a butterfly—fragile and transitory—hovers above it. Consequently, these flowers also evoke the passage of time and the fleeting quality of human wealth and natural beauty. Once its subjects and symbols have been decoded, this painting becomes more than simply an exquisitely painted still life or a clever reference to an ancient Greek story. It begins to embody some of the central preoccupations of its cultural situation.

In "A Closer Look" (p. 7), the iconography of two other seventeenth-century still-life paintings—one by Chinese painter Zhu Da and the other by Netherlandish painter Clara Peeters—is identified and elucidated. To truly understand these works as bearers of cultural meaning, however, a deeper knowledge of the broader context and specific goals of artists and audiences is required. For example, the fact that Zhu Da became a painter is more about the political than the artistic



# A CLOSER LOOK

## Iconography

The study and identification of conventional themes, motifs, and symbols to elucidate the subject matter of works of art.

These grapes sit on an imported, Italian silver tazza, a luxury object that recurs in several of Peeters's other still lifes and may commemorate Netherlandish prosperity and trade.

An image of the artist herself appears on the reflective surface of this pewter tankard, one of the ways that she signed her paintings and promoted her career.

Luscious fruits and flowers celebrate the abundance of nature, but because these fruits of the earth will eventually fade, even rot, they could be moralizing references to the transience of earthly existence.

Detailed renderings of insects showcased Peeters's virtuosity as a painter, but they also may have symbolized the vulnerability of the worldly beauty of flowers and fruit to destruction and decay.



These coins, including one minted in 1608–1609, help focus the dating of this painting. The highlighting of money within a still life could reference the wealth of the owner—or it could subtly allude to the value the artist has crafted here in paint.

This knife—which appears in several of Peeters's still lifes—is of a type that is associated with wedding gifts.

**Clara Peeters. *Still Life with Fruit and Flowers*. c. 1612.**  
Oil on copper, 25½" × 35" (64 × 89 cm). Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Quince is an unusual subject in Chinese painting, but the fruit seems to have carried personal significance for Zhu Da. One of his friends was known as the Daoist of Quince Mountain, a site in Hunan Province that was also the subject of a work by one of his favorite authors, Tang dynasty poet Li Bai.

**Zhu Da (Bada Shanren). *Quince (Mugua)*. 1690.**  
Album leaf mounted as a hanging scroll; ink and colors on paper, 7⅞" × 5¾" (20 × 14.6 cm). Princeton University Art Museum.



The artist's signature reads "Bada Shanren painted this," using his favorite pseudonym in a formula and calligraphic style that the artist ceased using in 1695.

This red block is a seal with an inscription drawn from a Confucian text: "teaching is half of learning." This was imprinted on the work by the artist as an aspect of his signature, just as the reflection and inscribed knife identify Clara Peeters as the painter of her still life.

 View the Closer Look for Iconography on MyArtsLab

history of China. As a member of the imperial family of the Ming dynasty, his life of privilege was disrupted when the Ming were overthrown during the Manchu conquest of China in 1644. Fleeing for his life, he sought refuge in a Buddhist monastery, where he wrote poetry and painted. Almost 40 years later, Zhu Da abandoned his monastic life and developed a career as a professional painter. His paintings are at times saturated with veiled political commentary; at times they seek to meet the expectations of collectors so they will buy them; and in paintings like the one illustrated here, the artist seems to hark back to the contemplative, abstract, and spontaneous paintings associated with great Zen Buddhist masters, whose calligraphic pictures of isolated fruits seem almost like acts of devotion or detached contemplations on natural forms, rather than the works of a professional painter.

Clara Peeters's still life, on the other hand, is the work of an established and successful professional, specializing in portrayals of food and flowers, fruit and reflective objects. In this tradition, still lifes could be celebrations of the abundance of the natural world and the wealth of luxury objects available in the prosperous mercantile society of the Netherlands. They could also be moralizing, warning of the ephemeral meaning of those worldly possessions, even of life itself. But this painting has also been interpreted as a more personal statement. Because the type of knife that sits in the **foreground** near the edge of

the table was a popular wedding gift, and since it is inscribed with the artist's own name, some have suggested that this still life could have celebrated Peeters's marriage. Or the knife could simply be a witty way to sign her picture. It certainly could be not only personal but also participate in the broader cultural meaning of still-life paintings at the same time. Mixtures of private and public meanings have been proposed for Zhu Da's paintings as well. The picture of quince illustrated here has been seen as one in a series of allegorical "self-portraits" that extend across his career as a painter. Art historians frequently reveal multiple meanings when interpreting a single work of art; these usually represent complex cultural and personal situations.

### **Art and Ritual**

The paintings we have just examined were produced to be works of art. They were meant to be acquired and admired as such. But some works we now label as art were created for use in communal ritual as tools to establish ties to unseen powers, sometimes to connect the present with the past and the future. These special ritual objects—such as statues, masks, and vessels—may be valued as works of art by outsiders unaware of the circumstances and ceremonies that originally brought them to life, but that is not why they were made. Grasping their meaning requires us to understand the rituals that brought them to life.



### **INTRO-10 • CHALICE OF ABBOT SUGER**

From Abbey Church of Saint-Denis, France. Cup: Ptolemaic Egypt (2nd–1st century BCE) or Byzantine 11th century CE, sardonyx; mounts: France, 1137–1140 CE, silver gilt, adorned with filigree, semiprecious stones, pearls, glass insets, and opaque white glass with modern replacements, 7½" × 4¼" (19 × 10.8 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



**INTRO-11 • Olowe of Ise OFFERING BOWL**  
 Nigeria. c. 1925. Wood and pigment, height 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (63.7 cm). National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.  
 Bequest of William A. McCarty-Cooper (95-10-1).

Two offering bowls—a European chalice and an African cup—are cases in point.

The **CHALICE OF ABBOT SUGER** was created in the middle of the twelfth century for what remains for many the central ritual of the Christian faith (**fig. intr o-10**)—the ceremonial commemoration of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, known as Holy Communion, the Mass, or the **Eucharist**. For Roman Catholics, during this ritual reenactment at a consecrated **altar**, ordinary wine becomes the blood of Christ, while for Protestants, the wine remains symbolic of that blood. But in both rites, the chalice (a vessel for the sacramental wine) plays a central role. Abbot Suger, head of the French monastery dedicated to St. Denis near Paris, found an antique agate cup in the storage chests of the abbey. He directed his goldsmiths to add a foot, a rim, and handles, embellished with semiprecious stones and medallions, transforming a secular object of prestige and delight into a sacred chalice to be used at the altar of his church in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The **OFFERING BOWL** created for the Yoruba people of West Africa also served in rituals designed to communicate

with gods (**fig. intr o-11**). It once held the palm nuts offered at the beginning of ceremonies in which people call on the god Olodumare (or Olorun) to reveal their destiny. Created by master carver Olowe of Ise in about 1925, this sculpture appears to portray a woman with a child on her back holding an ornate, covered cup. Men and women underneath it help the woman support the bowl, and more women link arms in a ritual dance on the lid. The richly decorative and symbolic wood carving reminds us of all who sought to learn from Olodumare, the god of destiny, certainty, and order. But both Suger's chalice and Olowe's cup stand empty today. Encased in museum displays, these ritual vessels take on a new secular life, enshrined as precious works of art, serving a purpose very different from the original intention of their patrons and makers.

### **Art as Sociopolitical Commentary**

As sophisticated forms of human communication, the visual arts shape, and are shaped by, their sociopolitical context. Powerful rulers and governments have used artworks throughout history to promote their political interests, and independent-minded artists have used, and continue to use, their art to critique the powers that be. A recent work with a challenging critical message recalls how American citizens of Japanese ancestry were removed from their homes and confined in internment camps during World War II. Roger Shimomura (b. 1939) painted **DIARY** in 1978 to visualize his grandmother's account of the family's experience in one such camp in Idaho (**fig. intr o-12**). Shimomura has painted his grandmother in the close foreground, writing in her diary, while he (the toddler) and his mother stand farther back by an open door—not signifying freedom but opening onto a field bounded by barbed wire. In this commentary on discrimination and injustice, Shimomura cleverly refers to the traditional Japanese art of



**INTRO-12 • Roger Shimomura**  
**DIARY (MINIDOKA SERIES #3)**  
 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 4' 11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" × 6' 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" (1.52 × 1.83 m).  
 Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence.  
 Museum purchase: State funds (1979.51).