EXPRESSIONISM (1905-1920)

The goal of the Expressionists in France and Germany was to exaggerate form and color in order to express their feelings and evoke an emotional response from viewers.

The first examples of Expressionism appear right after color photography hit the public scene. Expressionist painters realized it wasn't enough to simply provide people with color images if they wanted to have something unique to offer that photography couldn't.

The Expressionists were inspired by artists like Van Gogh, who used color and form to reveal an inner reality. Photography can record what is external and, on the surface, but Post-Impressionists wanted to show the invisible, internal, and emotional experience of reality.

Fauvism (i.e., "wild beasts") - **Expressionism in France**

Henri Matisse *Woman with a Hat* 1905

The French Expressionists were called the "Fauves" by art critics. It was meant as an insult. The word Fauve means "wild beast." Fauvists, such as Henri Matisse, used "wild" colors and seemed to slop the paint on the canvas in a way that seemed wild, unrefined, and out of controlled to the critics.

Die Brücke (i.e., "the bridge") - Expressionism in Germany

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner *Street Dresden* 1908 (reworked 1919; dated on painting 1907)

Die Brücke was an Expressionist group in Germany. Like their French counterparts, the Fauvists, they broke from the traditional use of naturalistic color in order to create more emotionally expressive works.

With recent urbanization Kirchner felt that people were more surrounded by other people than ever before, but were more lonely than ever before. Kirchner used complimentary colors in their faces to heighten the anxiety in this painting about urban isolationism.

CUBISM (1905-1925)

While the Expressionists experimented with color, the Cubists experimented with space.

How would you show the top, bottom, inside, outside and every side of an object all at once? What if you wanted to show a complex mass from every angle in just one picture? This was the goal of the Cubists. Their solution was to break their subjects down into pieces and put all of those fragments side by side.

Analytic Cubism

Georges Braque *The Portuguese* 1911

Analytic Cubism came first. It tends to look complicated and even confusing. The shapes are often geometric, sharp, and angular. The colors are typically dull and dark with browns, blacks, grays, and greens dominating the palette.

Braque's approach to representing space in *The Portuguese* is not limited by traditional techniques such as overlapping, atmospheric, or linear perspective.

The person playing the guitar has been broken and scattered like pieces of broken glass in the composition. All of the fragments are placed side by side, sharing the space of the flat picture plane.
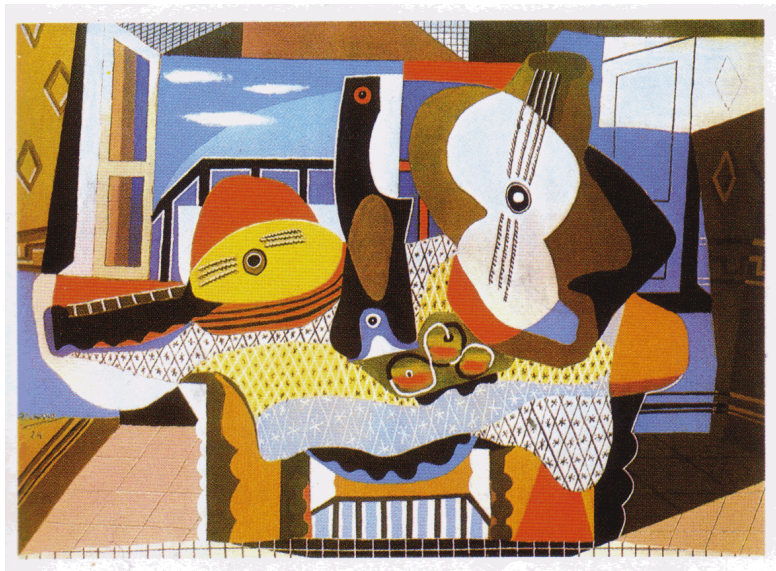
Synthetic Cubism

Synthetic Cubism came along later. In these works, the subject is more recognizable. Can you make out the two musical instruments on the table?

The scenes are broken down into larger, simplified components that are synthesized back together in compositions that includes more organic shapes and brighter colors.

With Synthetic Cubism,
. Braque and Picasso incorporated sheet music, wall paper, newspaper clippings, and other pre-made materials in their compositions.

Synthetic Cubism still has the goal of showing different vantage points simultaneously. It is almost like a person ran around the room taking photos and then put the photos into a collage.

To get an idea of the different vantage points, try to find the two different balcony positions/views in the example shown here.
- One view seems to be from inside the room, looking out at the balcony and sky.
- The other (near the bottom of the page) almost makes it look like we are standing on the balcony.

FUTURISM (1909-1912)

The Futurists in Italy felt like they had impossible shoes to fill. Everyone came to Italy to study and admire the art of the great Baroque masters, the artists of the Italian Renaissance and the ruins of ancient Rome.

The Futurists were frustrated because no one was interested in new artists and the artwork they were creating. For them, it was a little like being in the shadow of an older sibling. They hated that everyone worshiped artists and work from the past.

They were so frustrated that they wrote numerous manifestos in which they ranted and railed against tradition and called for the destruction of libraries and museums!

Ivo Pannaggi *Speeding Train* 1922

The artwork of the Italian Futurists celebrated motion, energy, and speed.

They were inspired by new technology and scientific theories. Most major cities were getting electricity for the first time, cars were new, movies were brand new, and science was advancing in many areas including nuclear physics.

Favorite subjects for Futurists were recent inventions, trains, cars, anything that moved fast, things that were loud, things that exploded, and anything that was of the now (not the past).

DADA (1912-1925)

Dada artists around the world were reacting to the chaos and widespread violence around the time of WWI. To them, the widespread violence, fear, and devastation seemed senseless. Their artwork reflected this lack of reason and was a way of stating: "My world no longer makes sense so I will create art that does not make sense."

It was like they were attempting to hold up a mirror to society to reflect how illogical and out of control things had become.
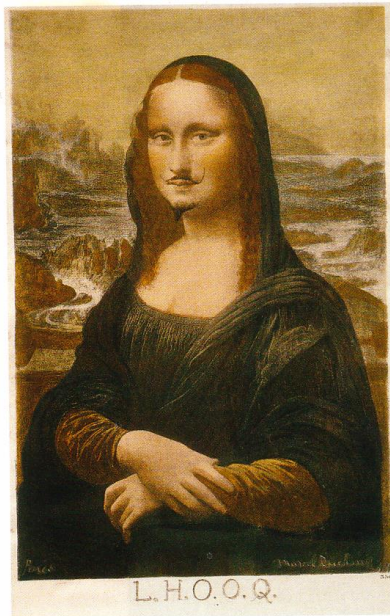
Marcel Duchamp *L.H.O.O.Q.* 1919

Marcel Duchamp drew a mustache and goatee on a cheap copy of the Mona Lisa as if to say, "no one else respects the rules or tradition so I don't have to either."

*Not only has he "defaced" the beloved masterpiece, he wrote letters below that, when pronounced quickly in French, is a pun on "Elle a chaud au cul," which loosely translates to "She has a hot ass."

People were outraged and offended by Dada artists lack of respect. Dada artist, on the other hand, pointed out that people needed to get their priorities straight. During World War I historical sites were destroyed and it didn't seem to many that even human life was respected.

Duchamp altered a cheap reproduction of an artwork. What he did was disrespectful but it pales in comparison to what had happened to people and even actual artworks during WWI.
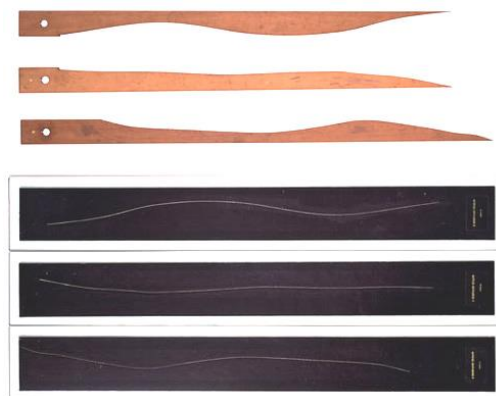
Marcel Duchamp *3 Standard Stoppages* 1913-14

In this *3 Standard Stoppages*, Duchamp created templates from 3 pieces of string he dropped on boards laid on the ground.

After fixing the strings just as they fell, he created "rulers" (i.e., measuring sticks) based on each string's length and curve.

Duchamp felt that the world was out of control, so "rulers" that were standardized, straight, with accurate and agreed upon consistent measurements did not fit the world we lived in anymore.

He thought these new "rulers" were more appropriate for the times since the only laws he observed still in place were the laws of chance and gravity.

Marcel Duchamp *In Advance of the Broken Arm* 1915 (shown here is a 1945 copy of lost original)

The Dada movement also included "Found Objects" also called "Ready-Mades."

Artists, such as Duchamp, bought things that were made in factories and displayed the objects as art. This type of sculpture was the ultimate rebellion against artistic tradition and the belief that art must be a hand crafted, one-of-a-kind originals.

Surrealism (1925-1950)

The Surrealists were also reacting to WWI, as well as the events leading up to and during WWII.

These artists found themselves powerless against the global violence and likened their experiences to a nightmare.

Their interest in dreams and the subconscious drives were further inspired by the newly translated writings of the psychologist Sigmund Freud.

Salvador Dalí *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)* 1936

Some Surrealist images show a twisted reality. The scenes in these Surrealist paintings walk the line between fantasy and normalcy. They seem like what you would see in a nightmare, based on reality but warped.

Frequently, Surrealist artworks reflected themes of repressed sexual and violent desires that were inspired by Freud's theories about the subconscious mind.

Joan Miro *The Harlequin's Carnival* 1924-25

Miro's automatic drawings and paintings are examples of another form of Surrealism. These works were unplanned, spontaneous creations designed to tap into the subconscious mind. By letting go of his rational thought and mental control, Miro attempted to record his subconscious stream of thought.

This technique of automatism was also used in automatic writing. Both are based on psychological techniques designed to allow subconscious thoughts to come out uncensored.