

**TITLE:** Les Demoiselles d'Avignon **LOCATION:** France **DATE:** 1907 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Pablo Picasso **PERIOD/STYLE:** Cubism **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Oil on Canvas

**FORM:**

Picasso radically compressed the space of his canvas and replaced sensual eroticism with a kind of aggressively crude pornography. His space is interior, closed, and almost claustrophobic. The women fill the entire space and seem trapped within it. No longer set in a classical past, Picasso's image is clearly of our time. Their bodies did not conform to the conventions of beauty that had previously dictated images of nude women. The women at the center are standing straight with their arms positioned immodestly. Despite the immense abstraction of the painting, the women appear confrontational (similar to Manet's Olympia).

**FUNCTION:**

This piece functions as a departure from and disruption of the Western pictorial tradition. Originally it was to be an allegory, with a man seated amid fruit and women was to have been Vice, while another man entering on the left was to have been Virtue. Later, under the new influences of modernity, the original plan was abandoned and the picture developed in a new direction by blending the figures, the background drapery and the still life into an abstract design.

**CONTENT:**

Here are five prostitutes from an actual brothel, located on a street named Avignon in the red-light district in Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia in northern Spain—a street, by the way, which Picasso had frequented. Gone is the traditional Renaissance concept of an orderly, constructed and unified pictorial space mirroring the world. In its place are the rudimentary beginnings of a new approach to representing the world, as a dynamic interplay of time and space. The faces of three women are primitive masks, the other two radically simplified by the combination of profile and frontal views.

**CONTEXT:**

By 1907, when this painting was produced, Picasso had begun to collect African masks. Matisse and Derain had a longer standing interest in such art, but Picasso said that it was only after wandering into the Palais du Trocadero, Paris's ethnographic museum, that he understood the value of such art. Remember, France was a major colonial power in Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Much African art was ripped from its original geographic and artistic context and sold in Paris. Although Picasso would eventually become more sophisticated regarding the original uses and meaning of the non-Western art that he collected, in 1907 his interest was largely based on what he perceived as its alien and aggressive qualities. What Picasso and other Europeans misunderstood about African art was its sophistication. Entrenched racial biases meant Europeans downgraded anything African as "primitive" and believed the masks' abstracted features were the result of lack of ability. In fact, all African masks and sculptures are the products of long established cultures that have their own sophisticated and complex modes of thought.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Picasso's confrontation with Cézanne's great achievement at the posthumous retrospective mounted in Paris a year after the artist's death in 1907 was a very influential moment in Picasso's career. He was forced to deal with the implications of Cézanne's art, and he and Matisse were both pushed toward a more avant garde style. Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre* of 1906 was one of the first of many attempts by Matisse to answer Cézanne's challenge, and Picasso being the competitive young artists that he was, had to respond with *Les Demoiselles de Avignon*. One of several historical sources that Picasso pillaged is archaic art, demonstrated very clearly by the left-most figure of the painting, who stands stiffly on legs that look awkwardly locked at the knee. Picasso has recently seen an exhibition of archaic (an ancient pre-classical style) Iberian (from Iberia—the land mass that makes up Spain and Portugal) sculpture at the Louvre. He was also inspired by the primitivism of Gauguin's Tahitian paintings.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

While Picasso clearly aims to "out do" Matisse, to take over as the most radical artist in Paris, he also acknowledges his debts. Compare the woman standing in the center of Picasso's composition to the woman who stands with elbows raised at the extreme left of Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre*, like a scholar citing a borrowed quotation, Picasso footnotes. Picasso's representation of 3D space and his modernist conviction that a painting is a 2D design on the surface of a stretched canvas is a tension between representation and abstraction. He broke the figures into more ambiguous planes suggesting a combination of views, as if the observer sees the figures from more than one place in space at once.

**INTERPRETATION:**

William Rubin, once the senior curator of the department of painting and sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, and a leading Picasso scholar, has written extensively about this painting. He has suggested that while the painting is clearly about desire (Picasso's own), it is also an expression of his fear. To critics, it wasn't art. When it was put on display for the first time in 1916, it was widely banned as immoral as well...even after André Salmon, the poet who organized the exhibition, changed the title of the work. Picasso had originally titled the work *Le Bordel d'Avignon* (The Brothel of Avignon), leaving no doubt as to exactly the type of women he was painting. It is a summary of the Avant Garde Paris School of painting at the turn of the century.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Picasso was christened: Pablo Diego Jose Francisca de Paula Juan Nepomuceno Maria de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santisima Trinidad Clito Ruiz y Picasso. Called the first truly 20th century painting, it effectively ended the nearly 500 year reign of Renaissance-ruled western art.

**TITLE:** The Steerage      **LOCATION:** New York      **DATE:** 1907 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Alfred Stieglitz      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Photo secession      **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Photogravure

**FORM:**

A round hat; the funnel leaning left, the stairway leaning right; the white drawbridge, its railing made the chain; white suspenders crossed on the back of a man below; circular iron machinery; a mast that cut into the sky, completing a triangle.”, “I stood spellbound, I saw shapes related to one another picture of shapes, and underlying it, a new vision that held me; simple people; the feeling of the ship, ocean, sky’ a sense of release that I was away from the mob called rich.”

**FUNCTION:**

This work was planned for publication in “Camera Work”. His career’s mission to elevate photography to the status of fine art by engaging the same dialogues around abstraction that preoccupied European avant-garde painters: Steiglitz wished to “hold the moment, to record something so completely that those who see it would relive an equivalent of what he expressed.

**CONTENT:**

This photo depicts the poorest passengers on a ship traveling from the US to Europe in 1907 on the USS Keiser Wilhelm II. Some may have been people turned away from entrance to the US, more likely artisans whose visas had expired and were returning home. “I saw shapes related to one another--a picture of shapes, and underlying it, a new vision that held me; simple people; the feeling of ship, ocean, sky; a sense of release that I was away from the mob called rich.”

**CONTEXT:**

Steiglitz took a sea voyage to Europe with his family in 1907. Traveling first class he rapidly grew bored with the company of the prosperous passengers in his section of the ship. He walked as far forward on the first-class level as he could, when the rail around the opening onto the lower deck brought him up short. This level was for the steerage passengers whom the government sent back to Europe after refusing them entrance into the United States. Alfred Stieglitz was no photojournalist. In fact, photojournalists in the decades prior to this photograph trained their camera on the slums and the harsh living environments of immigrants who lived there. While immigrants make up the content of the photograph, Stieglitz was a formalist. He was interested in the play of forms, light, and shadow, and somewhat less concerned with morose masses crammed on the steerage.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Steiglitz was influenced by experimental European painting like Picasso’s cubist drawings. This work has a cubist like arrangement of shapes and tonal values. Steiglitz believed in making only “straight, unmanipulated” photographs.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Steiglitz photographed the world as he saw it, arranged little and allowed people and events to make their own compositions. He was interested in compositional possibilities of diagonals and lines acting as framing elements.

**INTERPRETATION:**

This photograph represents divisions in society. Steiglitz is often criticized for overlooking the subjects of his photograph in this essay, which has become the account by which the photograph is discussed in our histories. But in his account for The Steerage, Steiglitz also calls attention to one of the contradictions of photography: its ability to provide more than just an abstract interpretation, too. The Steerage is not only about the “significant form” of shapes, forms and textures, but it also conveys a message about its subjects, immigrants who were rejected at Ellis Island, or who were returning to their old country to see relatives and perhaps to encourage others to return to the United States with them.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

From 1908-1917 Alfred Steiglitz’s gallery 291, was the most progressive gallery in the US, showcasing photographs as works of art beside avant-garde European paintings and modern American works. The steerage is the part of the ship reserved for passengers with the cheapest tickets.

**TITLE:** The Portuguese      **LOCATION:** France      **DATE:** 1911 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Georges Braque      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Analytic Cubism      **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Oil on Canvas

**FORM:**

Color was purposely confined to neutral tones of gray brown olive, or ochre because the emphasis was on design and texture, while unity was found in the picture itself rather than in the objects represented. The construction of large intersecting plans suggests the forms of a man and a guitar, smaller shapes inter-penetrate and hover in the large planes. Light and dark passages suggest both chiaroscuro modeling and transparent planes that enable viewers to see through one level to another. Numerous planes intersect and congregate at the center of the canvas to form barely perceptible triangular human figure, which is alternately constructed from and dissolved into the background.

**FUNCTION:**

To reassess the notion that painting should reproduce the appearance of reality. Now the very reality of appearances was being questioned. To cubists, the most basic reality involved consolidating optical vignettes instead of reproducing fixed images with photographic accuracy.

**CONTENT:**

This is not a portrait of a Portuguese musician but rather an exploration of shapes. The only realistic elements are the stenciled letters and numbers; perhaps they suggest a dance hall poster behind the guitarist; a café atmosphere. The subject is a Portuguese musician whom the artist recalled seeing years earlier in a bar in Marseilles. Braque dissected the man and his instrument and placed the resulting forms in dynamic interaction with the space around them. The letters and numbers lie flat on the painted canvas surface yet the shading and shapes of other forms seem to flow behind and underneath them pushing the letters and numbers forward into the viewing space. The constantly shifting imagery makes it impossible to arrive at any definitive or final reading of the composition. This heightens the tension between representation and abstraction.

**CONTEXT:**

The theory of Analytic cubism reached the peak of its expression in 1911 in works like this. The term “Cubism” like so many others, was coined by a hostile critic. In this case the critic was responding to the predominance of geometrical forms in the works of Picasso and Braque. Cubism is a limited term in that it does not adequately describe the appearance of Cubist paintings, and it minimized the intensity with which the Cubist artists analyzed their subject matter. It ignores their most significant contribution--a new treatment of pictorial space that hinged upon the rendering of objects from multiple and radically different views.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

This painting is an example of analytic cubism. Cubism represented a radical turning point in the history of art, nothing less than a dismissal of the pictorial illusionism that had dominated Western art since the Renaissance. The Cubist rejection of accepted artistic practice illustrates both the period's avant garde critique of pictorial convention and the artist's dwindling faith in a safe, concrete Newtonian world in the face of the physics of Einstein and others. Braque had tried his hand at Impressionism and the short-lived movement of Fauvism, but upon collaborating with Picasso, he found his niche in Cubism. Initially, Cubism was an insult coined by critics who said the images these artists painted were just little cubes. Braque was a quintessential avant-garde artist. He ushered a new movement onto the artistic scene that literally shattered convention. Other artists like Marcel Duchamp and Diego Rivera would later follow in Braque's footsteps by painting in the Cubist style.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Picasso and Braque, as the inventors of cubism, undertook a new definition of pictorial space in which objects were represented simultaneously from many visual angles, in wholes or in parts, opaque and transparent. The art of cubists undertook to move inside as well as outside an object, below and above it, in and around it. Instead of trying to create the illusion of depth, they built their pictures on the straight lines of the triangle and the T square by which they defined the planes of their surfaces.

**INTERPRETATION:**

Painters who saw the Cezanne retrospective in 1907 were struck by the pictorial architecture. In the catalogue, they noted a quotation from a letter in which Cezanne remarked that natural objects can be reduced to the forms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone. Art, they reasoned, is not an imitation of nature in the usual sense but an imposition upon nature of geometrical forms derived from the human mind. As a result, cubist painting became a play of planes and angles on a flat surface.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

**TITLE:** Goldfish **LOCATION:** France **DATE:** 1912 CE

**ARTIST:** Henri Matisse **PERIOD/STYLE:** French Expressionism/Fauve **PATRON:**

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Oil on Canvas

**FORM:**

This is a still life painting with violent contrasts of color. The paint is applied so thinly that in some places the white of the canvas shows through. The brushwork is energetic and painterly. It may have been influenced by the decorative quality of Asian art. It has broad patches of color which anticipate the Color Field paintings of the later century.

**FUNCTION:**

This painting is an illustration of some of the major themes in Matisse's painting: his use of complementary colors, his quest for an idyllic paradise, his appeal for contemplative relaxation for the viewer and his complex construction of pictorial space.

**CONTENT:**

Goldfish, Henri Matisse's painting from 1912, portrays four orange goldfish swimming around in a cylindrical vase. The opening of the vase is an off-kilter oval, just as the plate is an off-kilter circle; the table doesn't sit flat; the water in the fish bowl doesn't have a reflective surface. In a view consistent with other Europeans who visited North Africa, Matisse admired the Moroccans' lifestyle, which appeared to him to be relaxed and contemplative. For Matisse, the goldfish came to symbolize this tranquil state of mind and, at the same time, became evocative of a paradise lost, a subject—unlike goldfish—frequently represented in art.

**CONTEXT:**

Goldfish were introduced to Europe from East Asia in the 17th century. From around 1912, goldfish became a recurring subject in the work of Henri Matisse. They appear in no less than nine of his paintings, as well as in his drawings and prints. Goldfish, 1912 belongs to a series that Matisse produced between spring and early summer 1912. However, unlike the others, the focus here centers on the fish themselves. To keep evolving, he drew from African and Asian decorative arts. His repeated return to the goldfish was rooted in a trip he took to Tangier, Morocco, in 1912. There, Matisse painted a number of the little orange guys after having been inspired by the way they were prized as objects of contemplation in Morocco. He introduced them into his paintings as a result, perhaps wanting to trigger a similar meditative state in his viewers. After his Moroccan getaway, Matisse was obsessed with goldfish.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Expressionism looked within to a world of emotional and psychological states rather than without to a fluid world of fleeting light and shadow as with impressionism. Fauvism is an art movement that debuted in 1905 at Salon d'Automne in Paris. It was so named because a critic, Louis Vauxcelles, thought that the paintings looked as if they were created by "Wild Beasts". Fauvism was inspired by painters like Gauguin and Van Gogh, whose work was exhibited in Paris around this time. Fauves stressed a painterly surface with broad flat areas of violently contrasting color. Figure modeling and color harmonies were suppressed so that expressive effects could be maximized. The fauve painter depicted objects in simplified and schematized fashion and flattened out the forms.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Matisse wrote "Notes of a Painter" for a Parisian journal called La Grande Revue and discussed the importance of the expressive qualities of color. He said "I cannot copy nature in a servile way. I am forced to interpret nature and submit it to the spirit of the picture. From the relationship I have found in all tones there must result a living harmony of colors, a harmony analogous to that of a musical composition.", and "The chief function of color should be to serve expression as well as possible." Matisse constructed this original juxtaposition of viewpoints and spatial ambiguity by observing Paul Cézanne's still-life paintings. Cézanne described art as "a harmony parallel to nature". And it is clear here that although Matisse was attentive to nature, he did not imitate it but used his image of it to reassemble his own pictorial reality. Although this can be confusing for the viewer, Matisse's masterful use of color and pattern successfully holds everything together.

**INTERPRETATION:**

The goldfish should be understood as a kind of shorthand for paradise in Matisse's painting. The mere name "gold-fish" defines these creatures as ideal inhabitants of an idyllic golden age, which it is fair to say Matisse was seeking when he travelled to North Africa. It is also likely that Matisse, who by 1912 was already familiar with the art of Islamic cultures, was interested in the meaning of gardens, water and vegetation in Islamic art—as well as symbolizing the beauty of divine creation, these were evocations of paradise.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

"Donatello in a cage of wild beasts" commented a critic when he saw the paintings of Matisse and others grouped around a Renaissance like statue. Matisse dreamed of an "art of balance, of purity and serenity devoid of depressing subject matter."

**TITLE:**Improvisation 28 (second version) **LOCATION:** Russian artist in Germany **DATE:** 1912 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Vassily Kandinsky **PERIOD/STYLE:** The Blue Rider, German Expressionism **PATRON:**

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Oil on canvas

**FORM:**

Representational objects are suggested rather than depicted. The black line that crosses from the bottom left hand corner and ascends almost in the shape of a mountain into the right hand corner is an abstract reference to a horse's back. Kandinsky explored the motif of a horse-and-rider throughout his career, often in a more recognizable form, in woodcuts, temperas, and oils.

**FUNCTION:**

So get a response from the audience similar to how they would react to an abstract musical composition like a concerto, sonata or symphony. Kandinsky's aim was to charge form and color with purely spiritual meaning by eliminating all resemblance to the physical world.

**CONTENT:**

The title is derived from musical compositions. It features a link between color and sound (synesthesia). Improvisation 28 (second version) was inspired by "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," an apocalyptic Biblical account with a reference to a horseman. Color and line like musical notes, free from representation.

**CONTEXT:**

The Blue Rider formed in Munich in 1911. This group so named because of an affection the founders had for horses and the color blue, began to forsake representational art and move toward abstraction. Highly intellectual and filled with theories of artistic representation, artists like Kandinsky saw abstraction as a way of conceiving the natural world in terms that went beyond representation. He wrote an essay called "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" which outlined his theories on color and form for the modern movement.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Kandinsky was one of the rare few who experienced a confusion of the senses called synesthesia. For Kandinsky, color was combined with music. When he painted, he heard music; colors even had their own notes. This kind of relationship between color, music, and art was as spiritual to the artist as it seems fantastic to us. He was the first to abandon any reference to recognizable reality in his work. He came by this revolutionary discovery by accident. Around 1910, when he returned at twilight to his studio he recalled, "I was suddenly confronted by a picture of indescribable and incandescent loveliness. Bewildered, I stopped, staring at it. The painting lacked all subject, depicted no identifiable object and was entirely composed of bright color patches. Finally I approached closer and, only then, recognized it for what it was--my own painting, standing on its side on the easel."

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

By eliminating objects and figures, dissolving material forms, and improvising according to his moods, Kandinsky reached the frontiers of nonobjective art and set the stage for the abstract expressionism of the 1940's and 1950's in which painting is "liberated" from nature. Kandinsky stated that their content is "what the spectator lives or feels while under the effect of the form and color combinations of the picture." In his own words, he strove to reproduce on his canvasses the "choir of colors which nature has so painfully thrust unto my very soul." He also believed that a painting should be "an exact replica of some inner emotion." Works that required an "evenly sustained pitch of inner emotional uplift sometimes lasting for days," he called "compositions". Spontaneous shorter works, sketches, and watercolors that "do not last the span of a longer creative period" he termed "improvisations".

**INTERPRETATION:**

Kandinsky's elimination of recognizable forms from his canvasses grew in part from his interest in theosophy. (a religious and philosophical belief system incorporating a wide range of tenets from Buddhism and mysticism to the occult), but also reflected his interest in science. Kandinsky read and understood the latest scientific theories by Einstein and Planck that shattered the existing faith in the objective reality of matter and in so doing, paved the way for a new model of the universe. These ideas constituted a changed view of physical nature and contributed to the growing interest in abstraction as opposed to naturalism.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

"...sight must be related not only to taste but also to all the other senses, color is the keyboard, the eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano with its many strings."

**TITLE:** Self Portrait as a Soldier      **LOCATION:** Germany      **DATE:** 1915 C.E.

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**ARTIST:** Ernst Ludwig Kirchner      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Die Brücke      **PATRON:**

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**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Oil on canvas

**FORM:**

Kirchner was well known for his wrenching distortions of form, ragged outlines and agitated brushstrokes. Ernest Ludwig Kirchner, founder of the German expressionist group Die Brücke, painted this self-portrait one year after the start of WWI. It pictures the artist himself in uniform. A nude figure with strong, angular features and a garish yellow complexion stands in the background.

**FUNCTION:**

"My goal was always to express emotion and experience with large and simple forms and clear colors." His series of street scenes and cabaret dancers display the brutal angularity linked with Expressionism. After WWI his style became even more frenzied and morbid until, haunted by the rise of Nazism, he committed suicide.

**CONTENT:**

Kirchner was an unwilling volunteer driver in artillery in WWI, rather than be drafted unto the infantry. He was declared unfit for service because of lung problems, weakness and a mental breakdown. He painted this image during his recuperation. He paints himself with a drawn face, loss of a right hand indicates that he has an inability to paint, and a nude model which represents what he used to paint, but no longer. It has a nightmarish quality, colors are non-representational, but symbolic and jarring. The tilted perspective moves the subject closer to the picture plane. The artist has dark almond-shaped slits for eyes, a characteristic common to German Expressionism; his own facial qualities are exaggerated and angular. The two most telling elements in this self-portrait are the canvases in the background, one painted in crimson and blue, the other in a green and pink, and the artist's arm with a stump for a hand.

**CONTEXT:**

Inspired by the Fauve movement in Paris, a group of German artists in Dresden gathered around Kirchner and formed Die Brücke, The Bridge, in 1905, so named because they saw themselves as a bridge from traditional to modern painting. Nietzsche's book, Thus Spoke Zarathustra uses the bridge as a metaphor for the connection between the barbarism of the past and the modernity of the future. The Brücke artists considered themselves the inheritors of this idea, and created art that looked to the past and the future at once. They emphasized the same Fauve ideals expressed in violent juxtapositions of color, which so purposely roused the ire of critics and the public. Kirchner's life was plagued by drug abuse, alcoholism and paralysis. The bridge metaphor came from Nietzsche. The past was barbarism, the future was modernity.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Kirchner had a deep appreciation for German medieval art, and modeled himself after medieval craft guilds whose members lived together and practiced all the arts equally. Another important influence on the Die Brücke artists was so-called "primitive" art (art and ritual objects from ancient cultures or nonwestern societies, particularly in Africa and Central Asia). This art was perceived to be more honest and direct, more natural than work produced by artists from industrialized Western European nations. There was also interest in the so-called "folk art" of Europe, particularly the art and craft found among rural populations. It is important to note that Germany remained a major colonial power in Africa through the First World War. There is, therefore, a complex hierarchy that frames this cultural appropriation.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Kirchner created a woodcut to make a statement about his lofty goals: *"With faith in progress and in a new generation of creators and spectators we call together all youth. As youth, we carry the future and want to create for ourselves freedom of life and of movement against the long established older forces, Everyone who reproduces that which drives him to creation with directness and authenticity belongs to us."* Die Brücke painters were interested in art that appeared primitive or folk. Kirchner focused on the detrimental effects of industrialization, such as the alienation of individuals in cities, which he felt fostered a mechanized and impersonal society. The tensions leading to WWI further intensified the discomfort and anxiety of the German Expressionists.

**INTERPRETATION:**

The amputated hand is a metaphor for the damage done to his art career. This anxiety is symbolized in his lost hand, one of the tools of his trade as an artist. While he had not actually lost his hand at war, the painting registers the fears that he might have. He was worried about the conflict, but he was more worried that, afterward, he wouldn't be able to return to his normal life. The physical and psychological effects on soldiers and others were profound, not to mention the fact that the death toll was high. Kirchner's fictitiously mutilated hand, then, symbolized the upheavals of the era and the dread the artist felt because of the war

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Adolf Hitler persecuted artists who painted in a style that he considered outside of the Aryan ideal soon after he became Chancellor of Germany in 1933. The Degenerate Art (Entartete Kunst) exhibition of 1937 was a grand spectacle that the Nazis organized to mock the modernist art they hated. This was a humiliating time for Kirchner. At least thirty-two of his works were exhibited in the Degenerate Art exhibition. In addition, more than 600 of his works were removed from public collections. He committed suicide in 1938.

**TITLE:** Fountain (second version)    **LOCATION:** Paris    **DATE:** 1950 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Marcel Duchamp or Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven or Louise Norton    **PERIOD/STYLE:** Dada    **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Readymade glazed sanitary china with black paint.

**FORM:**

Dada, a nonsense word that literally means “hobby horse”, is a term directed at a movement in Zurich, Cologne, Berlin, Paris and New York from 1916-1925. Disillusioned by the useless slaughter of WWI, the Dadaists rejected conventional methods of representation and the conventional manner in which they were exhibited. Oil and canvas were abandoned. Dada accepts the dominance of the artistic concept over the execution.

**FUNCTION:**

Originally this piece functioned as a urinal. The Dadaists believed that Enlightenment reasoning had been responsible for the insane spectacle of collective homicide and global devastation that was WWI., and they concluded that the only route to salvation was through political anarchy, the irrational, and the intuitive. Thus an element of absurdity is a cornerstone of Dada, and this piece functioned as a challenge to the Art world. The function of Dada work was to reject all norms and conventions, including the very notion of art. To violate aesthetics, offend audiences, and destroy values.

**CONTENT:**

A readymade porcelain urinal presented on its back, signed “R.Mutt” and dated 1917. This is a found object, a urinal, that Duchamp deemed to be a work of art. This readymade was free from any consideration of either good or bad taste., qualities shaped by society that Duchamp and the other Dada artists found aesthetically bankrupt. Duchamp took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view. His idea was to get away from the visual, or as he called them “retinal”. considerations to achieve purely intellectual, or “cerebral” considerations. The point was not to see a urinal in a new way but to think of a urinal in a new way.

**CONTEXT:**

Duchamp submitted the artwork to an exhibition staged by the Independent Society of Artists (ISA) in New York City, but the work didn’t pass muster because it flew in the face of any and all art conventions, primarily the idea that the artist was a creator. The ISA also had no idea Duchamp was behind the work, which of course took them by surprise since he was on the organization’s board. The newly established ISA claimed to promote art that was non-traditional and non-academic, two aspects of which Duchamp was a big fan. He was even part of the Dada movement, which championed non-traditional forms of art that didn’t readily make sense. Despite the fact that it communicated the anti-establishment values that the ISA championed, Fountain was just too much for ISA to stomach, and it was outright rejected. Duchamp resigned from the board in protest and the sculpture was instead exhibited at the gallery of Alfred Stieglitz, famed photographer and husband to Georgia O’Keeffe.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

The “art” of this “artwork” lay in the artist’s choice of object, which had the effect of conferring the status of art on it and forcing viewers to see the object in new light. *“Dada knows everything, Dada spits on everything. Dada says “knowthing”, Dada has no fixed ideas. Dada does not catch flies. Dada is bitterness laughing at everything that has been accomplished...sanctified...Dada is never right...No more painters, no more writers, no more religions no more royalists, no more airplanes, no more urinary passages...like everything in life, Dada is useless, everything happens in a completely idiotic way..we are incapable of treating seriously any subject whatsoever, let alone this subject; ourselves.”*

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Duchamp entered this “fountain” to a 1917 exhibition at the Society of Independent Artists, New York, under the name of a fictitious artist called Richard Mutt. *If the Fountain was Baroness Elsa’s work, then the pseudonym it used proves to be a pun. America had just entered the First World War, and Elsa was angry about both the rise in anti-German sentiment and the paucity of the New York art world’s response to the conflict. The urinal was signed “R. Mutt 1917”, and to a German eye “R. Mutt” suggests armut, meaning poverty or, in the context of the exhibition, intellectual poverty.* Duchamp claimed it was a pun on the Mutt and Jeff comic and the R Mott Iron works. The exhibition aimed to display every work of art that was submitted, so by sending them the urinal Duchamp was challenging them to agree that it was a work of art. This they declined to do. What happened to it is unclear but it seems likely that it was thrown away. Duchamp resigned from the board in protest, and Fountain’s rejection overshadowed the rest of the exhibition.

**INTERPRETATION:**

**Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven** “One of my female friends who had adopted the pseudonym Richard Mutt sent me a porcelain urinal as a sculpture; since there was nothing indecent about it, there was no reason to reject it.” As he was already submitting the urinal under an assumed name, there does not seem to be a reason why he would lie to his sister about a “female friend”. The strongest candidate to be this friend was Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. She was in Philadelphia at the time, and contemporary newspaper reports claimed that “Richard Mutt” was from Philadelphia.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Seventeen copies of Fountain were made. In 2004, a poll of 500 art experts voted Duchamp’s Fountain the most influential modern artwork of the 20th century. Two performance artists have peed in it since 1993. Louise Norton, who contributed an essay to (the art and Dada journal) The Blind Man discussing Fountain may have been the young woman and collaborator that originally submitted the “Fountain” to the Independents. Duchamp dressed in drag and called himself Rose Selavy. He gave up art to become a chess master. He later married Matisses’ daughter, “Teeny”.

**TITLE:** Memorial Sheet for Karl Liebknecht **LOCATION:** Germany **DATE:** 1919-1920 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Kathe Kollwitz **PERIOD/STYLE:** Post War German Expressionism **PATRON:**

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Woodcut.

**FORM:**

Human grief dominates this woodcut which is illustrated in stark black and white. The wood block could be saturated with a thick layer of black ink, producing intense shadow-like effects that hung over the figures in the image like death. The imprecise nature of the carving produced the exaggerated features of the people in the image. Overall, the heavy use of black emphasized the darkness of mourning—especially when juxtaposed against the only predominantly white area in the image, the shrouded body.

**FUNCTION:**

In the political turmoil after the First World War, many artists turned to making prints instead of paintings. The ability to produce multiple copies of the same image made printmaking an ideal medium for spreading political statements.

**CONTENT:**

Kollwitz work features themes of war and poverty. She also focuses on the image of women grieving over their dead children since she lost her own son in WWI. In the image, a mass of people hovers in grief over Liebknecht's lifeless body. One figure rests a large fist on his chest. Another figure, on the far right, holds his hand to his face in anguish. At the center of it all stands a mother and infant who lean down toward Liebknecht with the rest of the crowd.

**CONTEXT:**

Liebknecht was one of the founding members of the Spartacus League in Berlin which became the German Communist Party. In 1919 Liebknecht was shot to death during a Communist uprising in Berlin called the Spartacus Revolt (named for the slave who led a revolt against the Romans in 73 BCE). The German Communist Party (KDP) had grown out of the Spartacist Movement fomented by Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Counting on the working class for support, the KDP looked to Russia, which had only recently gone through its own revolution, as a template for reform in Germany. Kollwitz complete this work in the aftermath of WWI, when the theme of death was, understandably, on everyone's mind. The thick forms, strong contrasts, and exaggerated features that she used to create the image were already attributes of German expressionism, and these attributes lent themselves to the heaviness of grief.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Working in a variety of techniques including woodcut, lithography, and etchings, Kollwitz explored a range of issues from the overtly political to the deeply personal. Her graphic style and use of the woodblock had their source in 19th century Germany. She was also inspired by Munch and Klimt, yet she pursued an independent course, devoting her art to themes of inhumanity and injustice. To articulate her social and ethical concerns, she adopted an intensely expressive, naturalistic style that is unrelenting in its bleakness as her choice of subjects. Gaunt mothers and exploited workers provided much of Kollwitz's thematic focus, but her most eloquent statements were reserved for war.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Kathe Kollwitz focused on pacifist subjects and the suffering of the poor. Like the later German Expressionist Max Beckman, she was Expressionist in technique but concerned more with social protest than inner exploration. A master printmaker in etchings lithographs, and woodcuts, Kollwitz used stark forms and harsh lines to express the tragic loss in war's aftermath. She embraced the raw effect of woodblock printing to create pieces works that have cast off the subtlety and finesse of her earlier work in etching and lithography. Kollwitz' felt that her protest against the horrors of war was best communicated in the rough edges and stark black and white that woodblock prints afforded.

**INTERPRETATION:**

The image thus portrayed workers (the proletariat) mourning his loss. Memorial Sheet of Karl Liebknecht is in the style of a lamentation, a traditional motif in Christian art depicting the followers of Christ mourning over his dead body, casting Liebknecht as the Christ figure. The iconography would have been easily recognizable by the masses who were the artist's intended audience.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

**TITLE:** Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow **LOCATION:** Holland **DATE:** 1930 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Piet Mondrian **PERIOD/STYLE:** Non objective Abstraction and DeStijl and Neoplasticism **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Oil on Canvas.

**FORM:**

Black lines of varying widths against white backgrounds, relieved occasionally by a primary color “climax” (red, yellow or blue) in as pure a state as possible. Mondrian composed this painting as a harmony of contrasts that signify both balance and the tension of dynamic forces. Mondrian eradicates the entire notion of illusionistic depth predicated on a figure in front of a background. He achieves a harmonious tension by his asymmetrical placement of primary colors that balance the blocks of white paint.

**FUNCTION:**

To reveal the underlying eternal structure of existence. His goal was to create a precise, mechanical order, lacking in the natural world. To create an art of harmony and order, qualities missing from the war torn world. Mondrian and other modernists wanted to move painting beyond naturalistic depiction to focus instead on the material properties of paint and its unique ability to express ideas abstractly using formal elements such as line and color.

**CONTENT:**

Squares or rectangles painted in flat primary colors, separated by black lines of varying widths. Totally non-objective and abstract. Piet Mondrian loved straight lines and primary colors. Out of that love, he created a whole philosophy called neoplasticism, which was based on only using those elements in abstract painting. For him, this new way of making art held the possibility of “aesthetic purity.” He scoffed at painting that actually replicated the world, believing that representational forms were too literal; they didn’t do justice to thoughts or concepts. Only primary colors, from which all other colors derive, and geometric shapes, the basic building blocks of structure, were good enough for Mondrian.

**CONTEXT:**

DeStijl, a movement symbolized by the Dutch painter Mondrian, reached its height between 1917 and the 1930’s. At its purest, DeStijl paintings are completely abstract; even the titles make no reference too nature. They are painted on a white background and use black lines to shape the rectangular spaces. Only 3 primary colors are used; red, yellow and blue, and they are painted without modulation. Lines can only be placed perpendicularly.--diagonals are forbidden. Destijl artists believed in the birth of the new age in the wake of WWI. They tried to create a utopian aesthetic that was a balance between individual and universal values, when the machine would assure ease of living. They declared “There is an old and a new consciousness of time. The old is connected with the individual. The new is connected with the universal.” During WWI, Mondrian stayed in Laren, a village with a thriving art community near Amsterdam. He lived near M.H.J. Schoenmaeker, a prominent Theosophist who used terms such as “New Plastic” to promote his ideas on spiritual evolution and the unification of the real and the ideal, the physical and immaterial. In Theosophy, lines, shapes, and colors symbolized the unity of spiritual and natural forces.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

In previous centuries, a picture was a reflection, in one way or another, of the outside world. In 20th century abstraction, artists free themselves from the representational convention. Natural appearances play little part in their designs, which reduce a landscape to a system of geometrical shapes patterns, lines, angles, and swirls of color. Their imagination and invention are concentrated on pictorial mechanics and the arrangement of patterns shapes, textures, and colors. From the semi abstract cubist art, in which objects are still discernible, abstraction moves toward nonobjectivism, in which a work of art has no meaning outside itself, and the picture becomes its own self defining referent. Mondrian painted landscapes and quiet interior scenes in the tradition of his native Holland, and his later style, though completely abstract, owes much to the cool geometrical precision of his great predecessor Vermeer.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Mondrian delighted in the crisscross patterns of the city streets, architects blueprints, gaunt steel skeletons of skyscrapers under construction, and simple faces of buildings of the international architectural style. All references to the “primitive animal nature of man” should be rigidly excluded in order to reveal “true human nature” through an art of “balance, unity, and stability.” He strove to realize this dream by using “only a single neutral form: the rectangular area in varying dimensions.” Neoplasticism went by another name, de Stijl, Dutch for “the style,” and consisted of a group of artists and architects all over Europe, all making work in the same vein. Theo van Doesberg was one of the forerunners of the movement. As proof that not everything during WWI was about death and destruction, he ran a publication that detailed the movement’s philosophy in the years before and after the war. He continually inspired Mondrian throughout his career.

**INTERPRETATION:**

In the early years of the century , physicists were at work formulating a fundamental new view of the universe, which resulted in the concepts pf space time and relativity. In the arts, meanwhile, new ways of seeing and listening were also being worked out. In Mondrian’s opinion, a work of art should be constructed, and he approached a canvas with all the objectivity of a draftsman making a blueprint. The result of this pictorial engineering is the series of pure, 2D studies of space for which he is best known. His visual patterns have a repose that is based on precise balance of horizontal and vertical elements, and they appear clean to the point of being antiseptic. Neoplasticism: The New “pure plastic art” and attempt to create “universal beauty and the “aesthetic expression of oneself.”

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

“The word ART no longer means anything to us. In it’s place we demand the construction of our environment in accordance with creative laws based upon a fixed principle. These laws, following those of economics, technique, sanitation, etc., are leading to a new plastic unity.” Don’t be confused by Mondrian’s use of the term “plastic.” He uses it to refer to the plastic arts—media such as sculpture, that molds three-dimensional form, or, in Mondrian’s case, painting on canvas.

**TITLE:** Villa Savoye **LOCATION:** Poissy-Sur- Seine, France **DATE:** 1929 C.E

**ARTIST:** Le Corbusier **PERIOD/STYLE:** International Style **PATRON:** Pierre and Emilie Savoye.

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Steel and Reinforced concrete.

**FORM:**

Boxlike horizontal quality, and abstraction of a house. The main part of the house is lifted off the ground by narrow pilotis--thin freestanding posts. There is a turning circle on the bottom floor that functions as a carport so that family members can enter the house directly from their car. All of the space is utilized including the roof which features a patio. There is no historical ornamentation. The whirle on the exterior is symbolic of the modern cleanliness, new simplicity and healthy living.

**FUNCTION:**

A three bedroom villa with servants quarters for Pierre and Emilie Savoye. The house is meant to be humankind's assertion on nature.

**CONTENT:**

The building was designed to be a functional living space with a partially confined ground floor containing a 3 car garage, bedrooms and a bathroom, utility rooms and today a gift shop for visitors. The house features an open concept plan with thin columns holding up the main living area and roof garden. It has strip windows wrapping the exterior of the building providing illumination and views. The rooftop patio is accessed via a ramp that is protected by a wind break.

**CONTEXT:**

LeCorbusier's dictum that a house should be a "machine for living" sums up the International Style from the 1920's to the 1950's. Greatly influenced by the streamlined qualities of the Bauhaus, the International Style celebrates the clean spacious white lines of a building's facade. The internal structure is a skeleton system which holds the building up from within and allows great planes of glass to wrap around the walls using ferro-concrete construction. A key characteristic is the lack of architectural ornament and an avoidance of sculpture and painting applied to exterior surfaces.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

The building incorporates several changes of direction and spiral staircases. Spaces and masses interpenetrate so fluidly that inside and outside spaces intermingle. Reinforced concrete was surprisingly malleable, enabling the architect to create livable sculptures, or homes that were effectively works of art. Le Corbusier's five points of the International Style of Architecture were: Use of pillars instead of walls on the ground floor, A ground plan that could have multiple uses because it didn't need load bearing walls, A building that was free of structural concerns, Ribbon windows, and Terrace gardens. Johnson and Hitchcock defined the International Style as a building that was purely functional, down to each room and shape, and Villa Savoye was the shining pillar of this hyper-functional style.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Le Corbusier maintained that the basic physical and psychological needs of a human being are sun, space, and vegetation combined with controlled temperature, good ventilation and insulation against harmful and undesirable noise.

**INTERPRETATION:**

Le Corbusier thought of houses as machines for living, containers for families and extensions of public services. Architecture for him was the masterly and magnificent play of masses brought together in the light. Cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders, pyramids, e said, are the great primary forms that reveal themselves in sun and shadow. He raised his structures on piers to assert the "independence of things human."

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Le Corbusier's real name is Charles-Edouard Jeanneret. In 1940, at the beginning of WWII, the Savoyes smartly hit the road and never looked back. The house fell into disrepair for many years and was slated for total destruction in the early 1960s, until the government added it to its list of historical buildings and it was protected from demolition. Corbusier was still alive at the time, and the building wasn't all that old. Nonetheless, it became the first modern building to enter the ranks of historical preservation.

**TITLE:** Illustration from the Results of the First Five-Year Plan **LOCATION:** Russia **DATE:** 1932 C.E

**ARTIST:** Varvara Stepanova **PERIOD/STYLE:** Constructivism/Socialist Realism **PATRON:**

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** photomontage.

**FORM:**

This was a double page spread in a book. In this photomontage, Vladimir Lenin, revolutionary leader of the Bolshevik cause, orates over an eager audience. The silhouette of a red transmission tower is just to the left of him, a sign of industrial progress. The wires of the tower connect him to the speakers at the far left, which broadcast his message to the hordes of people below. Red was a powerful symbol for the USSR and the Bolshevik Army, of which countless working class volunteers made up.

**FUNCTION:**

This was graphic art in the service of political and propaganda purposes. This rousing depiction of Lenin and the regime is an example of communist propaganda at its most artistic. It's a photomontage, which became a popular art form after Lenin declared that photography could be used as a tool for the revolution. Layering photography, graphic design, typography, magazine images, and text, photomontage could communicate broadly—to both literate and illiterate audiences. The purpose of the magazine was to show countries such as France and Great Britain that the USSR was also a leading force in the global market and economy. By choosing to include images rather than just articles, the public would be able to see with their own eyes the accomplishments achieved under Stalin.

**CONTENT:**

Red dominates the color of the Communist Soviet Union. The CCCP is a Russian abbreviation for the Soviet Union. A large portrait of Lenin dominates, although deceased, his image is used to stimulate patriotism. This photomontage is an ideological image intended to help establish, through its visual evidence, the great success of the Plan.

**CONTEXT:**

The Five Year Plan was the soviet practice of increasing agricultural and industrial output in five years; launched in 1928 and considered complete in 1932. There was an emphasis on the growth of heavy industry rather than consumer goods. Huge increases in electrical output. Constructivists experimented with new architectural materials and assembled them in a way devoid of historical reference. Beginning in 1914, Stepanova and others saw the new Russia as an idealistic center removed from historic reference and decoration. Influenced by the cubists, Constructivists designed buildings with no precise facades. Emphasis was placed on the dramatic use of the materials used to create the project.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Stepanova was one of the main figures in the Russian avant-garde movement. Stepanova's work was influenced by cubism and futurism. Although Stepanova worked hand in hand with the Soviet government, her work shows great personal creativity. By using vibrant color, and striking images in a dynamic composition, she pioneered photomontage and revolutionized the way we now understand photography. Stepanova's photomontages are an important reminder of how an artist can blur the line between aesthetic passion and ideology.

Socialist Realism was a style of art found especially in the Soviet Union, China, other communist nations from the 1930s until the 1980s. Its images of happy, healthy, and productive workers celebrated labor's role in making the state strong. It used bright colors and bold, easily understood graphics and was often used as propaganda.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

She commonly mis-matched the scale of photographic elements to create a sense of dynamism in her images. Despite the flat, paper format, different elements are visually activated and can even seem to 'pop out.' Several clear artistic oppositions are visible in The Results of the First Five-Year Plan. For example, there is a sharp contrast between the black and white photographs and the red elements, such as the electric tower, the number 5, and the triangle in the foreground. Our eyes are attracted to these oppositions and by the contrast between the indistinct masses and the individual portrait of Lenin, as an implicit reference to the Soviet political system. As the term photomontage suggests, images are combined and manipulated to express the message the artist wants to convey. This image celebrating of the results of the First Five-Year Plan is the artist's interpretation of events, under the strict supervision of Party ideologues.

**INTERPRETATION:**

The creation of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) was thought to be a watershed moment by many in Russia. Artists and the intelligentsia of the time saw it as a bold step forward for a people who had suffered with extreme poverty under an inept monarchy for far too long. Stepanova considered herself a constructivist and part of a larger artistic movement that united Soviet artists under a shared set of graphic design principles. As a contributor to a publication titled USSR under Construction, Stepanova was particularly invested in promoting the USSR through visual and written propaganda. While Soviet art and propaganda was all about suggesting progress, things went downhill after Lenin's death in 1924 when Stalin became a totalitarian dictator. His rule led to the deaths of millions of Russian peasants who'd lost their land to the state.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

**TITLE:** Object (Le Dejeuner en fourre) **LOCATION:** Swiss artist in Paris **DATE:** 1936 C.E.

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**ARTIST:** Meret Oppenheim **PERIOD/STYLE:** Surrealism **PATRON:**

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**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Fur-covered Cup, saucer, and spoon.

**FORM:**

Object takes on an anthropomorphic quality, animated by the quirky combination of fur, exclusive to living organisms, with a stationary manufactured object. Further, the sculptor captures the surrealist flair for alchemical, seemingly magical or mystical transformation. It incorporates a sensuality and eroticism that are also components of Surrealist art. This gives the work erotic overtones.

**FUNCTION:**

Oppenheim's Object was created at a moment when sculpted objects and assemblages had become prominent features of Surrealist art practice. In 1937, British art critic Herbert Read emphasized that all Surrealist objects were representative of an idea and Salvador Dalí described some of them as "objects with symbolic function."

**CONTENT:**

A combination of unlike objects: fur covered teacup, saucer, and spoon. It is known as an assemblage. Combines the element of domesticity (tea set) with the primordial element of fur. Similar to a number of other artists at the time, Oppenheim was also exploring gender conventions in her work as well as the limits and possibilities of creating art from found objects.

**CONTEXT:**

This fur lined cup was inspired by a conversation with Picasso. After admiring a bracelet that Oppenheim had made from a piece of brass covered with fur, Picasso noted that anything might be covered with fur. André Breton, who curated the collection, changed the title to *Le Déjeuner en fourrure* (Luncheon in Fur), which was a reference to Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (which features a naked woman dining in a natural setting with a pair of clothed men) and the erotic novel *Venus in Furs*. This lent the piece a sexual air that was not necessarily intended by Oppenheim, who had wanted the work to remain more open to interpretation.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

It was selected by the Surrealist show in New York as the quintessential work of art. Over the years its fame has only increased.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Oppenheim was wearing a brass bracelet covered in fur when Picasso and Maar, who were admiring it, proclaimed, "Almost anything can be covered in fur!" As Oppenheim's tea grew cold, she jokingly asked the waiter for "more fur." Inspiration struck—Oppenheim is said to have gone straight from the café to a store where she purchased the cup, saucer, and spoon used in this piece.

**INTERPRETATION:**

The art historian Whitney Chadwick has described it as linked to the Surrealist's love of alchemical transformation by turning cool, smooth ceramic and metal into something warm and bristly, while many scholars have noted the fetishistic qualities of the fur-lined set—as the fur imbues these functional, hand-held objects with sexual connotations. With Oppenheim's elegant creation, how we understand those visceral memories, how we create metaphors and symbols out of this act of tactile extension, is entirely open to interpretation by each individual, which is, in many ways, the whole point of Surrealism itself.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

disquiet: lack of peace or tranquility (anxiety)

**TITLE:** The Two Fridas      **LOCATION:** Mexico      **DATE:** 1939 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Frida Kahlo      **PERIOD/STYLE:** "Surrealism" or Symbolist      **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Oil on canvas.

**FORM:**

A juxtaposition of two self portraits. Her two hearts are twined together by veins that are cut by scissors at one end and lead to a portrait of her husband, artist Diego Rivera, at the other. This was painted at the time of their divorce. The two figures are framed by a barren landscape with a wildly active sky in the background.

**FUNCTION:**

Although each of her images presents a consistent, iconic likeness of the artist, collectively they give expression to something much more profound, an exploration of identity that encompasses gender, nationality, class, politics, and the artist's own physical experience in her body.

**CONTENT:**

The vein acts as an umbilical cord, symbolically associating Rivera as a husband and son. The blood on her lap suggests many abortions and miscarriages, also surgeries related to her polio and back injury. Kahlo is dressed as a Mexican peasant, the stiffness and provincial quality of Mexican folk art serves as a direct inspiration for the artist. The two Fridas clasp hands tightly. This bond is echoed by the vein that unites them. Where one is weakened by an exposed heart, the other is strong; where one still pines for her lost love—as underscored by the vein feeding Rivera's miniature portrait—the other clamps down on that figurative and literal tie with a hemostat.

**CONTEXT:**

Frida's father was of German descent, and her mother was a mestiza (a woman of both indigenous and Spanish heritage). This painting speaks to the two sides of herself: the German and the Mexican. Though Frida related more closely with her Mexican roots, it's clear that she was grappling with the different aspects of her mixed identity. When she painted this in 1939, she was also going through a divorce with bombastic muralist Diego Rivera, which might help explain why her heart is bleeding out. They would remarry one year later, but as anyone can imagine, 1939 was a rough year for the painter. She gives us a clue about the physical and emotional storm of that time period in the turbulent background. It appears that it is that side of Frida that is most closely drawn to Diego. While Tehuana Frida may draw lifeblood from Rivera, the fact that the flow ceases in the hands of Victorian Frida shows the painter torn between two sides of herself, which alternately embrace and reject Diego.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

While André Breton called Frida a fellow Surrealist, she was quick to respond that it was not dreams she portrayed. She portrayed her own nightmarish reality.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

This image was created in 1939 when she was devastated and depressed by her divorce from Diego. Her mental anguish and turmoil resulted in some of her finest painting. It was displayed in Mexico City in the International Surrealism Exhibition, and again in NY at the Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art Exhibit. "I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best."

**INTERPRETATION:**

The Two Fridas incorporates Kahlo's commentary on the struggle facing Mexicans in the early 20th century in defining their national cultural identity. The Frida on the right (representing indigenous culture) appears in a Tehuana dress, the traditional costume of Zapotec women from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, whereas the Frida on the left (representing imperialist forces) wears a European style white lace dress. The heart, depicted here in such dramatic fashion, was an important symbol in the art of the Aztecs, whom Mexican nationalists idealized as the last independent rulers of their land.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Kahlo's work often graphically exposes human anatomy, a topic she knew well after a childhood bout with polio deformed her right leg and a bus accident left her disabled and unable to bear children when she was eighteen years old. She would endure 32 operations as a result of this accident.

**TITLE:** Fallingwater      **LOCATION:** Pennsylvania U.S      **DATE:** 1936-1939 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Frank Lloyd Wright      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Organic Modernist Architecture, Prairie School of Architecture      **PATRON:** Edgar J. Kauffman

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** reinforced concrete, sandstone, steel, and glass.

**FORM:**

An expressive combination of reinforced concrete material, cantilevered construction and a dramatic site. The house comes close to realizing Wright's ideal of a structure growing organically out of its site. Perched on a rocky hillside over a small waterfall, the house, nicknamed "Falling Water" has become an icon of modernist architectural style. Wright's naturalistic style integrates his building with its site. In the Kauffman house, reinforced concrete and stone walls complement the sturdy rock of the Pennsylvania countryside.

**FUNCTION:**

A private home (vacation house) for the Kauffman family, Edgar, Liliane, and their son Edgar Jr. (Department Store magnate)

**CONTENT:**

The main focus of Falling Water is one large room opening out into the terraces and porches. The horizontal planes of these porches, in turn, are balanced by the vertical volumes of the fireplace. The local stone used in this chimney mass is related both in color and texture to the natural rock of the river bank. The cantilevering here allows the several stories the independence to develop their own fluid floor plans. As on the outside, the inside radiates around the central core, with advancing and receding areas promoting what Wright called the "Freedom of Interior and exterior occupation." The floor and walls are built from natural stone found on the site.

**CONTEXT:**

Frank Lloyd Wright was the most famous of the Prairie School of architecture. They rejected the idea that buildings should be done in historic styles of architecture, however, they insisted that they should be in harmony with their site. Wright employed complex irregular forms that seemed to reflect the abstract shapes of contemporary painting; rectangles, triangles, squares, and circles. Stylized botanical shapes were particularly prized. Rather than situating the structure with a view of the 30 foot waterfall, Wright built it directly above the waterfall.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Ferroconcrete- Cement reinforced by embedding wire mesh or iron rods in it. Cantilever- The extension of a slab or beam horizontally into space beyond its supporting post. Made possible by the invention of ferroconcrete. Wright focused on the relationships of masses and voids, the arrangement of windows and doors, the colors and grains of wood and the textures of stone. Through his masterly interrelations, space for living and working comes to life and breathes. His organic architecture was based on the unity of site, structure and decoration. A house, he thought, should express warmth, protection, and seclusion. Interior space, moreover, should not confine but expand without interruption from the inside to the outside so as to bring people closer to nature. Wright was known to have an organic philosophy for architecture, believing that the design of a building should reflect a harmony between the natural and the man-made. Wright took inspiration from Japanese architecture, which emphasizes many of the same elements.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Wright wanted to find a way to incorporate the structure fully into its site in order to ensure a fluid, dynamic exchange between the interior of the house and the natural environment outside. To take advantage of the location, he designed a series of terraces that extend on three levels from a central core structure. The contrast in textures among concrete, painted metal and natural stones in the house's terraces and walls enliven its shape as does Wright's use of full length strip windows to create a stunning interweaving of interior and exterior shapes. *"No house should ever be on any hill or on anything. It should be of the hill, belonging to it, so hill and house should live together and each be happier for the other."*

**INTERPRETATION:**

Mies van de Rohe wrote in 1940: "The dynamic impulse from Wright's work invigorated a whole generation. His influence was strongly felt even when it was not actually visible. Fallingwater has been lauded by many over the years, perhaps most notably by the American Institute of Architects which, in 1991, named the house the best all-time work of American architecture. According to Franklin Toker, Fallingwater's most important contribution to Modern Architecture is surely the "acceptance of Modern architecture itself."

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Seeking a hideaway where he and his mistress could live, Wright built a residence and studio in 1911 in Spring Green, Wisconsin. While the architect dubbed his estate Taliesin, in honor of the Welsh bard, the press branded it the "Love Cottage" and "Castle of Love." <https://www.history.com/news/the-massacre-at-frank-lloyd-wrights-love-cottage>

**TITLE:** The Migration of the Negro, **LOCATION:** New York **DATE:** 1940-1941 C.E  
Panel No. 49

**ARTIST:** Jacob Lawrence **PERIOD/STYLE:** Harlem renaissance **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Casein Tempera on Hardboard.

**FORM:**

An overall color unity in the series unites each painting. Forms hover in large spaces, made of flat simple shapes, unmodulated color and little individuality to each figure keeps the angular forms together as a collective experience. Each panel has rhythmic arrangements of flat, bold and strongly colored shapes. His style drew equally from his interest in the push-pull effect of Cubist space and his memories of the patterns made by the colored scatter rugs brightening the floors of his childhood homes.

**FUNCTION:**

It was first and foremost meant to convey a strong and unambiguous message about the prevalence of segregation in the aftermath of emancipation, as well as the economic shifts that triggered migration from south to north. For Lawrence, the issue of race, and racial relations, loomed large throughout *The Migration of the Negro*.

**CONTENT:**

This is a series of sixty paintings that depict the migrations of African Americans from the rural south to the urban north after WWI. It contains the collective African American experience. They all include explanatory text. With this piece, the caption read, "They also found discrimination in the North although it was much different from that which they had known in the South." This panel features a blatantly segregated dining room with a barrier running down the room's center separating the whites on the left from the African Americans on the right.

**CONTEXT:**

In the early 20th century African-Americans moved in great numbers to a New York City neighborhood called Harlem. This immigration, and its subsequent infusion of talent, created a deep cultural center that reached its fullest expression in painting, theater, music, wit, and photography. The movement began after WWI around 1919, and reached its peak in the 1920's and early 30s, but its influence extended well into the 20th century. The movement's general themes which extended across the arts, include racial pride, civil rights, and the influence of slavery on modern culture. This painting features a scene involving a public restaurant in the North; where segregation is emphasized with the yellow poles that zigzag through the center of the panel.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Lawrence was inspired by the politically oriented art of Goya, Daumier and Orozco and by the many writers of the Harlem renaissance whom he met, including Aaron Douglas. His style employs primitive elements of simplification, stylization, bright coloration, and minimal tonal changes. Despite angular distortions, his forms are easily readable and remain within a storytelling context. Lawrence was among the first black artists to be accepted in the white world. His paintings are thought to represent most consistently the black experience in America.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Lawrence uses tempera paint which harkens back to Italian masters of the 14th and 15th centuries. His plan was to depict the history of the Great African American migration northward in 8 sections. Causes of the Migration, Stimulation of the migration, the Spread of the Migration, The Efforts to Check the Migration, Public Opinion regarding the Migration, The Effects of the Migration on the South, The Effects of the Migration on Various Parts of the North, The Effects of the Migration on the Negro.

**INTERPRETATION:**

The Migration series was created in the spirit of the West African storyteller, who preserved and passed down knowledge of past events, both legendary and factual. Lawrence envisioned his images as vehicles through which future generations would learn about the men, women, and children whose lives were forever changed during the "Great Migration." Lawrence's series with its bold compositions and simplified forms, tells a timeless story of struggle and the search for equality that speaks to the shared history of all Americans.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Lawrence was only 24 when he painted this series.

**TITLE:** The Jungle      **LOCATION:** Cuba      **DATE:** 1943 C.E.

**ARTIST:** Wilfredo Lam      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Surrealism      **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Gouache on paper mounted on canvas.

**FORM:**

The Jungle takes us right back into the thick of abstraction with its lush, but claustrophobic, sea of green, blue, purple, and orange arms, legs, feet, masks, sugar cane, and fruit. The long legs in this artwork create strong, vertical lines that are echoed by the stripes of royal blue color in the background. In the mass of color and legs, it's difficult to see where one shape begins and another ends. Without fully formed bodies, the legs instead turn into sugar cane stalks, which turn back into legs in an endless and uncanny representation of a jungle that has, according to the painter, not only sprouted appendages, but also come alive.

**FUNCTION:**

Intended to communicate a "psychic state". With this in mind, he created an opus, The Jungle that could describe the hybrid Afro-Cuban experience. With the dream-like quality of the painting and the nod to primitivism, Lam's interpretation of Cuba was tinted by nostalgia. Still, he wasn't trying to escape reality with his abstract interpretation of Cuba. He strove to depict a country amidst turmoil—especially in the years leading up to Cuban Revolution.

**CONTENT:**

Lam's ethnic and cultural heritage included the African Diaspora in Cuba and when he returned to the island in the 1940's he became reengaged with the concerns of its Afro-Cuban community. There are 4 female figures in a row across the canvas. Difficult to make out, they seem interwoven among tall stalks of sugarcane, and their unnaturally long, straight limbs blend in with the similarly shaped plants. Lam's composite creatures inhabit a tropical jungle of sugarcane and tobacco plants. Two of them have a horse's tail. The figure at the right holds a scissor as if she and not the artist, is the one responsible for dismembering herself and her companions.

**CONTEXT:**

This work addresses the history of slavery in Colonial Cuba. In 1940s Cuba, sugarcane was big business, requiring the toil of thousands of laborers similar to the cotton industry in the American South before the Civil War. The reality of laboring Cubans was in sharp contrast to how foreigners perceived the island nation, namely as a playground. Lam's painting remains an unusual Cuban landscape compared to the tourism posters that depicted the country as a destination for Americans seeking beachside resorts. While northern visitors enjoyed a permissive resort experience, U.S. corporations ran their businesses, including sugar production. Though Cuba gained independence from Spain at the end of nineteenth century, the United States maintained the right to intervene in Cuba's affairs, which destabilized politics on the island for decades.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Lam was inspired by Cuba's mixture of Hispanic and African cultures. He was influenced by African sculpture, cubist works and surrealist paintings. Lam was influenced by Picasso and many other avantgarde artists and critics that he was introduced to while in Paris. The crescent shaped faces suggest African masks. Also inspired by Santería, the Cuban religion that is a blend of African ritual and Catholicism the Jungle depicts four hybrid figures with long legs, prominent buttocks, and heads that resemble African masks. The figures are meant to suggest sugarcane, which are grown in fields, not jungles. During the inter-war period in Paris, Lam befriended the Surrealists, whose influence is evident in The Jungle. Surrealists aimed to release the unconscious mind—suppressed, they believed, by the rational—in order to achieve another reality. In art, the juxtaposition of irrational images reveal a "super-reality," or "sur-reality." In Lam's work, an other-worldly atmosphere emerges from the constant shifting taking place among the figures; they are at once human, animal, organic, and mystical.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

His mature work shows the influence of Cubism and Surrealism. Key elements within his artistic practice were: Lam's consciousness of Cuba's socio-economic realities; his artistic formation in Europe under the influence of Surrealism; and his re-acquaintance with Afro-Caribbean culture. This remarkable collision resulted in the artist's most notable work, The Jungle.

**INTERPRETATION:**

Lam's interest in the traditional African religions practiced in the Caribbean, Santería in Cuba and Vodun in Haiti, for example, is suggested in the rightmost figure, which appears to be a woman-horse hybrid, a form characteristic of spiritual entities. The artist has depicted a primordial vision of mythic forces. Even the painting's title adds to the visionary qualities of his subject. To call it the Jungle suggests a search for some primitive culture. However the plants Lam has included in his painting are sugarcane and tobacco, which are domesticated crops, not wild plants. Crops that were introduced by colonial powers, and used in a slave driven economy.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Cuban by birth, Lam was the son of a Chinese immigrant father and a mother of African-Cuban descent. *"I refused to paint cha-cha-cha. I wanted with all my heart to paint the drama of my country, but by thoroughly expressing the negro spirit. In this way I could act as a Trojan horse that would spew forth hallucinating figures with the power to surprise, to disturb the dreams of the exploiters. I knew I was running the risk of not being understood either by the man in the street or by the others. But a true picture has the power to set the imagination to work, even if it takes time."*

**TITLE:** Dream of A Sunday Afternoon **LOCATION:** Mexico City **DATE:** 1947-1948 C.E.  
at Alameda Park

**ARTIST:** Diego Rivera **PERIOD/STYLE:** Mexican Muralist **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Fresco

**FORM:**

50 foot long and 13 feet high. Originally painted in the lobby of the Hotel Del Prado. “Didactic painting”- intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive. Horror vacui

**FUNCTION:**

Diego Rivera sought to create a national Mexican style focusing on Mexico’s history and also incorporating a popular, generally accessible aesthetic in keeping with the socialist spirit of the Mexican Revolution.

**CONTENT:**

Beginning on the left, Hernán Cortez, the first Spanish conquistador in the New World, is seen amongst the flames along with other religious figures. Panning over slightly, Antonio López de Santa Anna, President of Mexico after Independence from Spain in 1821, makes an appearance. Just to the right of the lady wearing red is José Martí, a national hero in Cuba. The boy wearing striped socks is Rivera, and he holds the hand of La Catrina, a figure of death in Mexican lore. His wife, Frida Kahlo, stands behind him. She rests one hand on her husband-as-a-boy’s shoulder and holds the familiar Eastern symbol of the Yin and Yang in her other hand, symbolizing the fact that Kahlo and Rivera were interdependent parts of a whole, despite their tumultuous relationship. The man wearing a bowler hat and holding a cane is the famed Mexican printmaker, José Guadalupe Posada, and the controversial dictator, Porfirio Díaz, dons his feather hat above the crowd. Lastly, toward the right side of the mural, a number of indigenous laborers can be seen, referencing contemporary struggles for labor equality.

**CONTEXT:**

A major revival of Mexican art took place in the 20s and 30s by artists whose training was in the age-old tradition of fresco painting. Using large murals that all could see and appreciate, the Mexican muralists usually promoted a political or social message. They have an unmistakable meaning rendered in easy to read format, usually of theme such as labor and struggle of the working classes and of the socialist agenda. Mixing memory with historical and fictional figures, Rivera’s mural unfolds like a story, and the story at hand is essentially the history of Mexico. This piece features three episodes of Mexican history: Conquest and colonization of Mexico by the Spanish. The Porfirio Diaz dictatorship, and the revolution of 1910.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Rivera’s work stands in sharp contrast to the growing interest in abstraction on the part of many early 20th century painters and sculptors. He wrote that the “subject is to the painter what the rails are to a locomotive. He cannot do without it.”. Diego Rivera was a key figure in producing another dimension of modernism in art that crossed the U.S. and Mexico border. With a foot in multiple countries, Rivera brought together many art forms just like Lam. He paired indigenismo with the old European fresco style to create a hybrid art form. He also became a promoter of hemispheric modernism, a style that was not anchored to one country, Mexico, but that criss-crossed many borders to create a style suitable for, well, the entire hemisphere. Indigenismo was a popular movement for artists and intellectuals in Mexico City during the first half of the 20th century. Many movements at this time in Latin America sought non-European aesthetics because Europe came to represent the ills of colonialism. While he experimented widely in many different movements, Rivera eventually popularized indigenismo in Mexico after the Mexican Revolution of 1910

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Rivera was one of the “tres grandes,” or three greats, of Mexican muralism in the first half of the 20th century. He was a proponent of indigenismo (indigenism), a movement that derived influence from a pre-Columbian aesthetic and preferred not to depict art in a European art style. Elements of Rivera’s indigenismo can be seen in the molding of the stout forms and stylized clothing of Dream of a Sunday Afternoon. Indigenismo was a popular movement for artists and intellectuals in Mexico City during the first half of the 20th century. Many movements at this time in Latin America sought non-European aesthetics because Europe came to represent the ills of colonialism. While he experimented widely in many different movements, Rivera eventually popularized indigenismo in Mexico after the Mexican Revolution of 1910

**INTERPRETATION:**

Stepping away from the center, if one reads the mural like a text, a chronology emerges: the left side of the composition highlights the conquest and colonization of Mexico, the fight for independence and the revolution occupy the majority of the central space, and modern achievements fill the right. The artist reminds the viewer that the struggles and glory of four centuries of Mexican history are due to the participation of Mexicans from all strata of society.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

After the 1985 earthquake that destabilized the hotel it was moved to Alameda Park built on the grounds of an Aztec marketplace.