

Early Christian and Byzantine

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

- Medieval art is studied according to geographic placement, styles, and traditions.
- There are frequent interconnections between religions, governments, and artistic influences that create a variety of approaches.
- Medieval art is chiefly concerned with religious expression and court life. There is a strong culture of endorsing scholarship.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Late Antiquity and Early Christian art are medieval art periods.
- There is no uniform medieval style. Some periods revive ancient classicism, others use geometric and natural designs.
- Medieval artists are influenced by contemporaries in other parts of Europe, as well as ancient traditions.
- Learning was centered on specific fields that were transmitted throughout Europe through trade, pilgrimage, and military activity.
- Medieval architecture is mostly religious.
- Medieval painting and sculpture avoids naturalistic depictions.
- At times medieval religions will reject images.

IDEAS AND CONCEPTS

1. The architectural features that early Christian architects took from Roman builders, and the new techniques they developed.
2. The roles played by the classical style of Greece and Rome in the development of Christian art.
3. The features of Early Christian Mosaics. The features and stylistic characteristics of Early Byzantine mosaics.
4. The evolution and characteristics of images of Christ.
5. The effects of Constantine's reign on Christianity.
6. The purpose of symbols in early Christian Art.
8. Christianity began as a prohibited and therefore underground religion. It's earliest works appear in the catacombs and on sarcophagi.
9. Christian images were inspired by the classical past but were also influenced by Constantinian artwork from the Late Roman Empire.
10. Christian buildings used both the axially planned Roman basilicas and the centrally planned Roman temple forms.
11. Other cultures flourished during the Late Antique worlds, such as the Early Jews, who generally prohibited a narrative artistic tradition, but occasionally figurative work appeared in such places as Dura Europos.
2. The effects of the iconoclasm on Byzantine Art.
3. The meaning of THEOTOKOS and who bears that title.
5. The patronage and construction techniques of San Vitale.
6. The Byzantine Empire was born out of the remains of the Roman Empire, and continued many elements of the Roman classical tradition, but in a Christian framework.
7. Byzantine painting specialized in mosaics, icons, and manuscript illumination.
8. Byzantine art had 2 traditions, one from the classical past and a more hieratic style that represented medieval art-often in the same work.
9. Byzantine architects invented the pendentive and squinch or buildings known for their mysterious and shadowy interiors

VOCABULARY

ambulatory	mausoleum	Belisarius	squinch
apse	narthex	Constantinople	theocrat
atrium	nave	encaustic	Theodosius I
catacomb	orans or orant	gallery	triptych
cathedra	parchment	hieratic	apse
codex	Ravenna	icon	gallery
crypt	Rotulus	iconoclasm	iconostasis
cubiculum	Rotunda	iconostasis	narthex
diptych	sarcophagus	Justinian	squinch
gallery	transept	Monophysite	exarch
Honorius	tufa	heresy	sakkos
Junius Bassus	vellum	narthex	
loculi	apse	pendentive	
loculus	Basil I	refectory	

RESOURCES

They Might Be Giants Music Video:

<https://youtu.be/vsQrKZcYtgg>

An introduction to Early Christian Art

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Odtoyhc6tEM>

A beginners Guide to Christian Art

<https://smarthistory.org/early-christianity-an-introduction/>

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JOURNAL

San Vitale (3.1, 1.3, 2.1)

Hagia Sophia (3.1, 3.5, 2.2)

CONTEXT

Christianity, in the first century CE, was founded by Jesus Christ, whose energetic preaching and mesmerizing message encouraged devoted followers like Saints Peter and Paul to spread the message of Christian faith and forgiveness across the Roman world through active missionary work. Influential books and letters, which today make up the New Testament, were powerful tools that fired the imagination of everyone from peasant to philosopher.

Literally an underground religion, Christianity had to hide in the corners of the Roman Empire to escape harsh persecutions, but the number of converts could no be denied, and gradually they became the majority. With Constantine's triumph at the Milvian Bridge in 312, came the Peace of the Church. Constantine granted restitution to Christians of state-confiscated property in the 313 Edict of Milan, which also granted religious toleration throughout the empire. Constantine also favored Christians for government positions and constructed a series of religious buildings honoring Christian sites. Christianity was well on its way of becoming a state religion, with Emperor Constantine's blessing.

After emerging from the shadows, Christians began to build churches of considerable merit to rival the accomplishments of pagan Rome. However, pagan beliefs were by no means eradicated by the stroke of a pen, and ironically paganism took it's turn as an underground religion in the late Antique period.

Early Christian Art used figures and images very symbolically. The earliest surviving works, that were made before Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion in 313 AD, were found on frescoed walls of catacombs outside Rome. A new acceptance of Christianity as a state religion created a need for new architecture. The T shaped plan of the Roman basilica became the basis of the new Christian church.

After the death of Constantine in 337, the Roman Empire was split into Eastern and Western Empires. The West went into a steady decline. Rome lost its power and was sacked by Germanic tribes. The Eastern Empire, with its capitol in Constantinople, gained great political strength. In 527, Justinian ascended the throne of the Eastern Roman or "Byzantine" Empire. He recaptured most of Southern Italy and established Ravenna on the east coast as a new center of power. Byzantine art stresses symbolism over naturalism as a means of communicating spiritual ideas.

In the early 8th century, a controversy disrupted the development of Byzantine culture for over 100 years as iconoclasts, who wanted to destroy religious images, fought those who felt it important to keep religious depictions.



WORKS OF ART

- Catacomb of Priscilla 200-400
- Santa Sabina 422-432
- Rebecca and Eliezer at the Well and Jacob wrestling the Angel from the Vienna Genesis early 6th cent
- *Anthemius of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus*, Hagia Sophia 532-537
- The Church of San Vitale, Ravenna 526-547
- Justinian and Attendants 526-547
- Virgin (Theotokos) and Child between Saints Theodore and George 6th or 7th cent.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Gardner's pages 231-283
- Complete homework packet
- Write journal
- Fill in flashcards

HOMEWORK DUE: _____