Baroque Study Guide

*In the 17th century, architectural design and figuration in painting and sculpture continued to be based on classical principles and formulas but with a pronounced interest in compositional complexity, dynamic movement, and theatricality.* There was *an increasing emphasis on time, narrative, heightened naturalism, and psychological or emotional impact.*

**Vocabulary**

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<th>Point of view</th>
<th>oil paint</th>
<th>etching</th>
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<td>impasto</td>
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**Baroque Period 1600-1750**

- This unit deals with a world that is growing more and more complex.
- Europe is now firmly divided into religious camps that will never rejoin one another.
- Yet, all of Europe is under the sway of a style rooted in naturalism that seeks drama.
- It is a chapter of contrasts as well as continuations.
- What some regard as the excessive decorativeness of Mannerism is replaced by a stout, bolder Baroque style, which gives way to another highly decorative impulse, the Rococo.

The common element throughout Baroque art was the sensitivity to and the absolute mastery of LIGHT in order to achieve maximum impact

**CATHOLIC VS PROTESTANT:**
In Catholic countries, like Flanders, religious art flourished, while in the Protestant lands of northern Europe, religious imagery was forbidden as a result art tended to be still life, portraits, landscapes and scenes from everyday life, genre scenes.

- In **Southern Europe**, there was an increase in the production of:
  - political propaganda
  - religious imagery
  - pageantry
- And an elaboration of
  - naturalism
  - dynamic compositions
  - bold color schemes
  - affective power of images and constructed spaces.
- In **Northern Europe**, the production of religious imagery declined; nonreligious genres flourished, such as
  - Landscape
  - still life
  - genre
  - history
  - portraiture
I. The Italian Baroque

- Baroque began in Rome.
- Italian baroque artists could expertly represent the human body from any angle, portray the most complex perspective and realistically reproduce almost anything.
- Italian Baroque art differs from Renaissance art with its emphasis on emotion rather than rationality, on dynamic rather than static compositions.
- The most striking difference between Italian Baroque and Renaissance painting was the use of light to dramatize a composition.

The Counter Reformation

The Counter-Reformation Church searched for authentic religious art with which to counter the threat of Protestantism, and for this task the artificial conventions of Mannerism, which had ruled art for almost a century, no longer seemed adequate.

Caravaggio

Caravaggio's novelty was a radical naturalism which combined close physical observation with a dramatic, even theatrical, approach to chiaroscuro, the use of light and shadow.

Artemisia Gentileschi

Follower of Caravaggio, First well known female artist, presented woman’s point of view

Bernini

Greatest sculptor of the Baroque period
Also an architect, painter, playwright, composer and theater designer.
More than any other artist, with his public fountains, religious art, and designs for St. Peter’s, he left his mark on the city of Rome.

Borromini

What Caravaggio did for painting Borromini did for architecture.
Just as Caravaggio’s figures seem to leap out at the viewer, Borromini’s undulating walls also to come life with dramatic light and shadow.

II Baroque Art in France

In the 17th century, France was the most powerful country in Europe.

George de la Tour

Use of candlelight, simplified compositions, unusual point of view

The Palaces

Versailles

- The Palace at Versailles is immense, with 700 rooms, 2,153 windows, and contains over 73,000 square yards of floor space, and is over ¼ mile long.
- The basic structure of the palace itself, as well as its gardens, is classical, with symmetry, order, and rational, harmonious division of space, including forms directly borrowed from ancient Greek temples.
- In choosing this style, Louis XIV, wanted to connect himself with the great Classical Age of Greece and Rome.
- Total environment of ostentatious luxury, designed to impress visitors with the splendor of both France and Louis himself.
- Prime example of the over-the-top excesses of the French nobility that led to the French Revolution.
- Center of the building, facing where the sun rose, was Louis bedroom and audience chamber.
Alhambra, Grenada, Spain, 14th Century

- Grenada was once the Moorish (Muslim) capital of Spain.
- It was built by the Nasrid Dynasty in 1354-1391 CE
- The Alhambra earned its name because of its reddish walls.
- Access was restricted to four main gates.
- The Nasrid rulers of Granada made water an integral part of the design of Alhambra

**Structures with three distinct purposes:**
- a residence for the ruler and close family
- the citadel, Alcazaba—barracks for the elite guard
- an area called medina, where court officials lived and worked.

- The Alhambra's most celebrated structures are the three original royal palaces.
  - The Comares Palace
  - The Palace of the Lions
  - The Partal Palace

- A large fourth palace was later begun by the Christian ruler, Carlos V.

The Forbidden City, Beijing, China. Ming Dynasty. 15th century

- Constructed after the expulsion of the Mongols in an attempt to return to the glory of the Han Dynasty.
- Main function was to separate the Emperor from the people in order to strengthen royal power.
- Rectangular in shape and laid out on three North/South axes
- World’s largest palace complex, covering 178 acres
- Order and Social Status are reinforced by the design of the palace
- Outer Court was the Public sphere—hall of Supreme Harmony
- Inner Court was the Private sphere—Palace of Tranquility and Longevity

III Baroque in Spain

- The Spanish kings who ruled throughout the 17th century, reigned over an increasingly weakening empire.
- However, the 17th century was a rich period for painting and literature, which sometimes concealed the country’s economic and political decline.
- It was a period of great rebellion, both the Portuguese and the Protestants in the northern Netherlands fought for independence from Spain.
- Furthermore, what had seemed to be an endless flow of gold and silver from the Americas diminished.
- Attempting to defend the Roman Catholic Church and their empire on all fronts, Spanish kings squandered their resources and finally went bankrupt in 1692.

Spanish Painting

17th century Spanish painting, profoundly influenced by Caravaggio, was characterized by an ecstatic religiosity combined with intense realism whose surface details emerge from the deep shadows of tenebrism.

Diego Velasquez

- Spain's most gifted painter was also one of the greatest artists of all time.
- A master of technique, highly individual in style,
- He was a master realist, and no painter has surpassed him in the ability to seize essential features and fix them on canvas with a few broad, sure strokes.
NEW SPAIN

- The advent of the Age of Exploration in the late 15th century resulted in the emergence of global commercial and cultural networks via transoceanic trade and colonization.
  - European ideas, forms, and practices began to be disseminated worldwide as a result of exploration, trade, conquest, and colonization.
- Information and objects from different parts of the world were gathered in European cultural centers.
  - Their influence is evident in
    - the contents of curiosity cabinets
    - advances in science and technology
    - consolidation of European political and economic power,
    - the development of modern conceptions of difference such as race and nationalism.

Art production in the Spanish viceroyalties in the Americas exhibited a hybridization of European and indigenous ideas, forms, and materials, with some African and Asian influences.

- Although much colonial art is religious, nonreligious subjects such as portraiture, allegory, genre, history, and decorative arts were central to Spanish viceregal societies.

Art production in the Spanish viceroyalties paralleled European art practices in terms of themes, materials, formal vocabulary, display, and reception.

- However, given the Spanish Catholic context in which this art production developed, Spanish colonial art of the early modern period corresponded more closely to that of southern Europe

IV Baroque Art Netherlands

Southern Netherlands/ Flanders/ Catholic

- The southern Netherlands, called Flanders and later Belgium, remained Catholic after the Reformation.
- This gave artists ample incentive to produce both secular and religious paintings.
- After nearly a century of conflict with their Spanish rulers, Flanders won independence in the early 17th century.

Peter Paul Rubens

- High energy was the secret to Rubens life and art.
- His work explodes with a flurry of brushstrokes.
- Worked primarily from life, unlike many of his contemporaries who worked from plaster casts.
- Rich, luscious colors
- Full bodied, sensuous nudes
- Warm, luminous flesh tones
Northern Netherlands/ Holland/ Protestant

- Although Holland shared its southern border with Flanders, culturally and politically the two countries could not have been more different.
- While the monarchy and the Church dominated Flanders, Holland was an independent, democratic Protestant country.
- Religious art was forbidden, and the usual sources of patronage, the Church and the monarchy no longer existed.
- The result was a democratizing of art in both subject matter and ownership.
- Artists were at the mercy of the marketplace, and had to create paintings that would appeal to the rising middle class.
- Luckily Holland’s prosperous middle class was very interested in purchasing and collecting art.
- Dutch artists produced highly detailed genre paintings, portraits, still lifes, landscapes, and interiors.

Rembrandt van Rijn

- During his lifetime, Rembrandt was an extremely successful portrait painter.
- Today his reputation rests principally on the introspective painting of his later years.
- During the first 20 years of his career, Rembrandt’s portraits were in great demand, he also painted biblical and historical scenes in the Baroque style.
- Later works, beginning w/ the Night Watch in 1642, reflect a marked change in his style.
- His beloved wife had died and he had already lost three children in infancy.
- A palette of rich reds and browns began to dominate his paintings, as did solitary figures and a pervasive theme of loneliness.
- He pushed the limits of chiaroscuro, using gradations of light and dark to convey mood, character and emotion.
- Master etcher

Jan Vermeer

- Dutch genre painter lived and worked in Delft, and created some of the most exquisite paintings in Western art. But little is known of his life and work.
- Of the 35 or 36 paintings generally attributed to him, most portray figures in interiors.
- All his works are admired for the sensitivity with which he rendered effects of light and color and for the poetic quality of his images.
- No painter, except for perhaps van Eyck or van der Weyden, was as skilled as Vermeer in his masterful use of light.
- Vermeer’s colors were brighter, purer, and glowed with an intensity unknown before.
- In addition to his expert handling of color and light, Vermeer was a master of perfectly balanced compositions.
- His handling of paint was also revolutionary, applying paint in dabs and dots so that the raised surface of the paint reflected more light.
- One critic described his paint surface as “crushed pearls melted together”
- He died bankrupt at the age of 43.