



Nineteenth Century European Art (3rd Edition)

By Petra ten-Doesschate Chu

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For one-semester courses in 19th-Century Art, and two-semester courses that cover the periods of 1760-1830 and 1830-1900. This essential survey of European art and visual culture in the nineteenth-century treats art forms within a broad historical framework to show the connections between visual cultural production and the political, social, and economic order of the time. Nineteenth-Century European Art was written to address a need in the market for a readable undergraduate textbook dealing with the period from 1760-1900. The new edition has been revised based in response to reviewer comments and criticisms, making it an even better and more readable book.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

From artists Goya to Monet and Friedrich to Munch, and From the French Revolution to the Industrial Revolution and beyond, author Petra ten-Doesschate Chu charts the fascinating story of nineteenth-century European art and the driving forces that shaped it. The notion of *Modernism* as the depiction of contemporary life comes to full flower in the nineteenth century, an idea heralded by the painter Gustave Courbet and championed by the Impressionists. Beginning with the painter Edouard Manet another notion of Modernism emerges—one that celebrates surface and texture, signaling a deliberate shift from art aimed at the imitation of nature, and in turn leading to the work of Cézanne and later to twentieth-century abstraction. These and other exciting developments in nineteenth-century European art did not abruptly appear in 1800, but were tied to specific historical events and cultural and artistic trends from about 1760, which the author cogently introduces in the first several chapters of the book.

Alongside the story of Modernism, the author discusses several supporting factors in the history of nineteenth-century European art—the changing relationship between artist and audience; the exposure of European artists to non-Western art due to expanding trade and travel; the impact of new technologies, such as the use of glass and iron in architecture; and changing attitudes about the depiction of nature as influenced by industrialization, ideas about so-called "primitive" cultures and "exotic" lands, and discoveries and developments in the natural sciences (e.g., Darwinism).

References to individual artists' lives enrich the student's understanding of the art, as do sidebars that focus on specific works, techniques, or historical circumstances. The student's appreciation of the period is further enhanced by the author's broad coverage of visual culture, including painting, sculpture, architecture, the decorative arts, and the burgeoning fields of photography and graphic design. A timeline, glossary, and extensive bibliography, listing not only books but also films related to the period, complete this major achievement.

About the Author

Petra ten-Doesschate Chu is a leading authority on nineteenth century art. She is a professor at Seton Hall University and the author of numerous articles and essays, as well as several books, including *French Realism and the Dutch Masters*, *Courbet in Perspective*, *The Letters of Gustave Courbet*, *The Popularization of Images* (with Gabriel P. Weisberg), *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture*, and *Twenty-First-Century Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Art* (with Laurinda S. Dixon). The recipient of several awards, such as a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, two National Endowment of the Humanities grants, and a Jane and Morgan Whitney Art History Fellowship, Chu is the past president of the Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art and the Co-Founder and Managing Editor of *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*.

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The Story of Nineteenth-Century Art

This book tells the story of nineteenth-century art. Like all "true" stories, it is manufactured from the raw material of historic facts. To develop a narrative, the storyteller, of necessity, will take a selective approach

to those facts, giving more weight to some than to others and leaving many out altogether. Of course, the choice of what to include or leave out is not just the storyteller's own. Time itself has already acted like a sieve, retaining certain elements while letting others slip into oblivion. Moreover, as the story has been told and retold, a certain consensus has developed as to what is essential and what is secondary; who are the stars and who are the extras; which events make up the story's turning points and which just keep it going. Even with these points of consensus, the story will continue to evolve over time as each generation brings new expectations to it.

Time Frame and Context

History, whether political or cultural, cannot be packaged neatly in century-long periods. Historic periodization follows its own rhythm, which rarely coincides with man-made calendars. Thus, to tell properly the story of nineteenth-century art, we must begin nearly forty years before 1800, during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. At that time, many thinkers in both Europe and America believed that the world was undergoing a tremendous ideological and cultural upheaval. In 1759 the French philosopher and mathematician Jean d'Alembert wrote:

A most remarkable change in our ideas is taking place, one of such rapidity that it seems to promise a greater change still to come. It will be for the future to decide the aim, the nature, and the limits of this revolution, the drawbacks and disadvantages of which posterity will be able to judge better than we can.

D'Alembert's sense of his own time was very acute: exactly twenty years after he wrote down his prophetic words, the French Revolution broke out, ending a monarchy that had lasted for nearly nine hundred years and setting in motion, first in France, then elsewhere in Europe, a slow but steady process of democratization. Three years earlier, in 1776, the American colonies had declared their independence from British imperial rule in a document so far reaching that to this day it contains the underlying principles of the political and moral organization of the free, democratic world.

While these political upheavals went on, the Industrial Revolution was also gaining momentum. In 1769 the British inventor James Watt patented the first efficient steam engine. Together with an unending stream of further inventions, it caused the mechanization of manufacturing, which led to a vast increase in the production of consumer goods. The unprecedented supply of commodities and the markets that needed to be developed to sell them encouraged the full flowering of capitalism.

From the early nineteenth century onwards, the steam engine also led to the development of steamboats and trains, which enabled a growing mobility of people and goods. Communications advanced through the improvement of the mail delivery system as well as the invention of the electric telegraph in the 1830s. It was important not only for sending personal messages but also for the rapid travel of news from one place to another. Nineteenth-century newspapers thus could report more immediately and accurately on events happening throughout the world.

The nineteenth century reaped both the blessings and the curses of the political, economic, and communications revolutions that had begun in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The gradual democratization of Europe was attended by continual political unrest. A major European-wide revolution marked the year 1848; smaller national or local uprisings occurred in various parts of Europe, throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century.

The Industrial Revolution, while improving the standard of living of an ever-growing middle class or "bourgeoisie," created an urban proletariat that lived in squalid poverty. Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), though fictional accounts, are among the more memorable books to address the problem of poverty, particularly as it manifested itself in London and Paris. But poverty

was not just an urban condition. Although agriculture was slowly modernized, the fate of most peasants barely improved over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In fact, some aspects of this modernization, notably agricultural capitalism (whereby the land is owned by an agricultural investor who cultivates it with the help of hired labor), actually created a rural underclass that was just as miserable as their urban counterparts.

By 1750 the outlines of the five continents were largely mapped, thanks to the great sea voyages of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet many of the inland parts of the world remained unexplored, at least by Western travelers. The American West, most of central Africa and Australia, and considerable parts of central Asia, were blank spaces on the eighteenth-century map. By the end of the nineteenth century, these territories had not only been mapped but many of them had been made accessible by roads or railways.

Increased mobility and communications helped several European nations to extend their grip over the rest of the world, leading to the colonization of substantial parts of Africa and South Asia. Although highly profitable for Europe, colonization seriously destabilized the world and set the stage for many of the political and economic problems that plague us even in the twenty-first century.

People's lives changed greatly during the period under discussion. Thanks to dramatic improvements in medical science, notably in the area of infant care, the world population nearly doubled, from about 800 million in 1750 to 1,550 million in 1900. In Europe during this time the population almost tripled, increasing from 140 to 390 million, and in Britain it increased more than five-fold, from 6 million in 1750 to 33 million in 1900. Moreover, due to better nutrition, men and women grew taller, notably in Europe and America where the average size increased by several centimeters.

Radical changes took place in people's daily living. In the eighteenth century candles and oil lamps were the only modes of illumination available, both inside the house and on the streets. By 1900 gas lighting was widely used and electrical light, though not common, was certainly an option for those who could afford it. In many homes, cast-iron stoves had replaced open fireplaces and the rich even had central (coal) heating. Nonetheless, as late as 1900 most homes were still sparsely heated and people wore heavy clothing, even in their parlors and bedrooms.

In 1750 a man's suit or woman's dress was entirely handmade, from the spinning of the yarn to the weaving of the cloth; and from the dyeing and printing of the fabric to the stitching of the seams and hems. Only the wealthy could afford a wardrobe of more than a few garments. Ordinary people usually had one or two outfits which they would wear for a lifetime and then, if they were not threadbare, would pass on to their children. In contrast, by 1900, men and women bought mass-produced clothes in department stores; fashions, especially for women, changed regularly (as our study of late nineteenth-century painting will clearly demonstrate). Clothes were worn for a few years, then discarded. Such "consumerism" was the result of the development of the mechanized production of cloth, as well as the invention of the sewing machine, both of which made it possible to mass-produce clothes at affordable prices.

In 1750 ordinary people had no input whatsoever into how and by whom they were governed. By 1900, in most Western European countries as well as the United States, adult males had the right to vote in national and local elections, without regard for their social and economic status. The social position of women, before 1750 in all respects inferior to that of men, slowly improved during the nineteenth century, largely through increased access to education. By 1900, however, women still lacked most of the rights and privileges of men. Despite a long and fierce struggle, women's suffrage was the exception rather than the rule, and women continued to be excluded from public office and many jobs.

In 1750 serfdom was a common condition of most peasants in eastern Europe, and remained so until 1861,

when it was officially abolished. Concurrently, in North America, slavery was an accepted practice; workers imported from Africa formed a cheap and reliable labor force in the Southern tobacco plantations. While objections were raised against slavery from the mid-eighteenth century, the number of slaves actually increased over the next hundred years, as tobacco was supplanted by cotton, which required an ever-larger supply of workers. By the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 some four million men, women, and children lived in slavery. Although they were granted freedom by the Thirteenth Constitutional Amendment of 1865, their social and economic condition, like that of the serfs in Russia, had not greatly improved by 1900.

Labeling

In history, the period under discussion is considered a part of the so-called modern period. Historians distinguish between early modern, beginning with the Renaissance in the sixteenth century and ending about 1750; and modern proper, which begins in the middle of the eighteenth century and ends with World War II. Early modern is associated with the birth of "modern" science, the beginnings of capitalism, and the ascent of the middle class. Modern proper is known for expanding technology and the mechanization of production processes, the triumph of capitalism and the middle class, and the rise of democracy. Yet perhaps the modern period's most important characteris...

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