



# RELIGIOUS AWARENESS IN ART FROM PREHISTORY TO TODAY

**A Course in Art Appreciation**  
**Lectures by Dr. Francis J. GREENE, Art Historian**

*The Museum of Biblical Art, New York City, December 5, 2007*

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the New Millennium

**Genuard:** Good evening, and welcome to our lecture on “The 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the New Millennium” the fourth and final in a series by Dr. Francis Greene. The title of the series is “Religious Awareness in Art from Prehistory to Today” and reflects the idea that art is not separate from the larger drama of human history, but it reflects the broader human quest for meaning, and as such is intrinsically linked with religiosity. As it happens, the idea for this series was inspired by a seminal work of Msgr. Luigi Giussani’s, entitled *Religious Awareness in Modern Man*, which was first published in English a few years ago in the international theological magazine *Communio*. In this book, Fr. Giussani, whom some of you may know as the founder of the Communion and Liberation movement in the Catholic Church, offered a very lucid discussion on the religious trajectory of Western civilization. We thought it would be interesting to ask a distinguished art historian like Prof. Greene to illustrate how the developments described by Giussani are reflected in the world of artistic creation.

As you, at this point know, Dr. Francis J. Greene has taught at St. Francis College since September 1968, serves as Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages, Fine Arts, and International Cultural Studies where he holds the rank of Professor. Dr. Greene was one of the co-founders of the College Honors Program, served as its first Director and continues to serve on the Honors Council and to teach Honors program seminars. Dr. Greene was chosen as Outstanding Professor in New York State for 1999-2000 by the Carnegie Foundation for Excellence in Teaching. He is a frequent presenter at academic conferences throughout the United States and has published extensively in journals such as *The French Review*, *The Modern Languages Journal*, *Measure*, and *Symploke*. Most recently, Dr. Greene co-edited a book entitled *Perspectives on 9/11*, published by Praeger. He wrote an essay for the editor on the proposed memorial for the site of the former World Trade Center. Let’s welcome Dr. Greene.

**Greene:** Good evening everyone and welcome to our fourth evening in this series. This evening we focus on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries and we’re going to take a very selective overview because we’re at that period where art really explodes in terms of the number of movements. Up to this point a movement in art might be 200 years for the Renaissance, 150 years for the Baroque, 4,000 years for Ancient Egypt, and now we begin to have a movement every ten years, or 15 years, often reacting to the movement before it. So the number of examples we have to choose from really explodes, and it’s going to be a very selective and personal overview.

But we need to begin in the late 1700s with something that art does not create, but art does reflect, and that’s the Enlightenment. Here we have Voltaire, poor Voltaire who’s blamed for so much, as is the Enlightenment. Voltaire was a good man in many ways. He was not an Atheist. He was a Deist in the classical sense of the word, believed in a God, and in some ways he is simplified by saying that the god of the Deists is the God who made the world, but like a watchmaker who made a nice watch, he put it on the table and sort of walked away, and lost interest in it. So he did believe in God, but struggled, as so many do, with the issue of God’s providence

in view of human suffering and even natural disasters. The Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 devastated him, and he wrote several works to try to deal with it. So he was serious about grappling with God's existence, God's goodness, and human suffering even through natural disasters. We see this in *Candide* and in other works. And the ambiguous ending of *Candide*, the conclusion "We should cultivate our garden," can be taken several ways, one of which is roll up our sleeves and alleviate human suffering, and another, we really can't resolve this so we best keep busy. He was an absolute opponent of persecution and injustice and hypocrisy, be it in government or in the Church. And as we all know if you've read him he had a razor pen and a razor tongue. But among the ideas that he sowed the seeds of, along with many others, including many of the positive philosophers, Barkley, Locke, Hume and others, was this idea that faith and reason belong in different camps. And again, we're simplifying a very complex movement. So the Enlightenment is often in an evening like this remembered for that, but let us before, as we said a few good words for Voltaire, indeed much that would recommend him, but also for the Enlightenment. They tried to bring light and reason into a world that they often thought was irrational. But this seed was planted that the world of faith is separate from the world of reason. And that they really don't go together. Voltaire himself would begin to use the word "superstition" for faith. And so you're beginning to have not only a separation but an opposition between faith and reason.

The Enlightenment begins to sow this idea that the real of what can be felt, what can be seen, what can be touched, what can be measured and counted and everything else isn't. And so what have in the Enlightenment—do you remember the *logos* and the Ancient Greeks? The *logos* was reason. And because they have that belief in reason, that Hellenistic Greek culture was able to understand the coming of this Man who is the *Logos*, is the Word and reason. There was a culture prepared that could accept the idea of the Christ as the one who was the Word of God, *Logos*, and reason. The Enlightenment begins to break them apart, and the *logos*, whether it be Christ or God or the spiritual is here, and reason is there, and the twain do not meet, and soon they are in opposition.

Now the seeds are only sown, but it's a wedge that enters into thinking and the wedge grows even to this very day. At first this opposition between faith and reason would seem mainly to affect science. Well, science could be in conflict with some with reason, but today we see it goes much further, and I would suggest that the split, the wedge between faith and reason grows to this very day, and so we have this division that faith and reason are not only separate, but the are opposed.

People speak as if all of Western civilization went right downhill as soon as we have the Enlightenment, and that's not true at all. Think of all the great religious art of the 1800s and 1900s that has been created and continues to be, but there is a wedge. Art doesn't create it, but it may reflect it. What we're going to do tonight is look at canonical works of art that would be presented in any standard survey course of art history, and we're going to see what they say about this issue which is human beings' religious awareness as revealed by art over the centuries, but we do have to be aware of this event of the Enlightenment.

I want to read from Pope Benedict, and I want to quote again from his Regensburg Address speaking about the effects to this day of this split between faith and reason, between the spiritual and the rational, as if they had nothing to do with each other.

Only the kind of certainty resulting from the interplay of mathematical and empirical elements can be considered scientific. Anything that would claim to be science must be measured against this criterion...By its very nature this method excludes the question of God, making it appear an unscientific or pre-scientific question. Consequently, we are faced with a reduction of the radius of science and reason,...then it is man himself who ends up being reduced, for the specifically human questions about our origin and destiny, the

questions raised by religion and ethics, then have no place within the purview of collective reason as defined by "science", so understood, and must thus be relegated to the realm of the subjective.

And then in the speech, the Pope issues a call for "broadening our concept of reason and its application." A call for "reason and faith [to] come together in a new way if we overcome the self-imposed limitation of reason to the empirical and once more disclose reason's vast horizons." And finally, he issues a call for "the courage to engage the whole breath or reason, and not the denial of its grandeur."

Well, as we begin to look at the art, and I'm going to begin just after Voltaire, late 1700s, I do want to point out that we're not going to just look at religious work. They're being created right down to this day. We're going to look at canonical art that I would present to any group of students or scholars who would say, "Speak to us about the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century."

I want to reinforce, because we're going to see some disturbing trends—we look around our society and not everything leaves us peaceful—but there is enormous religious art that is produced after the Enlightenment, and I had to write it down just to read, just to give a sense, because we're not going to look at all of it. In the United States alone we know that in America we experienced one of the greatest religious revivals in the history of the world particularly in the Protestant denominations, but not uniquely. In England we saw the resurgence of Catholic culture, not only because Catholicism was fully legalized in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but Catholics received not only the right to vote, but to hold public office with the result that as you know in England was this enormous massive church-building program of both Protestant and Catholic churches which marked the gothic revival. There was the Oxford movement in England, both intellectual and artistic, the rediscovery of the Catholic tradition in which we saw Episcopalians trying to recapture what they had lost and which they thought the Catholic Church still had in terms of liturgy and art. The period of Cardinal Newman, and the incredible period in the late part of the century of the religious pre-Raphaelite painters. In France, considered so anti-clerical, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century what was known as the Great Catholic Renaissance right from the beginning of the 1900s up to World War II of novelists, poets and thinkers—Péguy, Claudel, Francois Mauriac, Bernanos, just to name a few.

And in the United States, if we think about it, throughout our city, our state and our nation, almost all of the great synagogues, Protestant and Catholic churches that we could visit were built during this period of the 1800s and the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century long after the Enlightenment. One of the interesting things is while we always look to Europe, we could go right from here and walk into any Episcopal, Baptist, Roman Catholic Church, any synagogue built in America in the 1800s and right up to World War II and even after and see art and sculpture and painting and architectural design that would rival anything that had been done during the periods we've been looking at. I tell my students, "Just walk in and look at them." Sometimes churches whose architects names are lost from only 70 years ago, nobody knows who built them, and they could rival anything that we've seen so far. I say this because so often once we look at Voltaire and the Enlightenment, we feel it's all downhill from there. Well, our architecture, our painting and our sculpture tell us that this is not the case; however, we're going to see a very interesting period in art and we're just going to look at some of the examples and see what they tell us.

I want to begin almost immediately after Voltaire, 1793, in France. So many of our examples are going to be French because now the lead in art has shifted to France as a result of many political reasons. Jacques-Louis David, painter of the neoclassical movement in 1793 paints this extraordinary painting entitled *The Death of Marat*. You are a witness to a murder scene. If this were today it would be *The Daily News* photographer coming in before the coroner got there to take the photo. Marat was murdered in his bathtub. It's a wonderful

painting, very, very powerful. It's the beginning of a theme we're going to see—the politician as savior. It's after the revolution. Louis XVI has been executed as well as Marie Antoinette, and David is a rabid, rabid pro-revolutionary as was Marat. Marat contributed to the revolution by writing. You see he died with his pen in his hand. He wrote pamphlets to stir people up, and his contribution was stirring up and keeping the revolution going because by 1793 some people were getting very discouraged. The king was gone and a group of we might say “thugs” took over and it was worse for many already than the king who had been in place because the toppled the leader without having anything to put in its place. And we know that politicians called that period “the terror” because everybody was on the enemy's list, and if I didn't like you, I just handed in your name; there was no trial; you just disappeared.



Well, in any event, Marat kept the revolution going. You probably know this historic story. He used to soak in his tub because he had a skin condition, and he would see people. He set a desk up and he would work and receive people. One day a woman by the name of Charlotte Corday, who had been very much in favor of the king, sent him a note asking to see him. He would help people, get them apartments, find them rent, and when she came in, having sent this note, she pulled out a knife and killed him in his bathtub, so this is an actual murder. This pro-revolutionary was murdered by a royalist, Charlotte Corday, who, by the way (he was on the second floor) was caught as she tried to escape and was, in the end, guillotined.

So Marat paints this painting in 1793 to honor his friend. It's been cleaned up a bit. I don't think when you first came on the body he would look quite as neat as this. But he did bleed to death in his bathtub, and this is what we see, *The Death of Marat*. Of course he dies holding the pen he wrote and the treacherous letter from her. He had set up a little orange crate as his desk, and the reason he has this turban on is he had developed the skin condition by cooling his heels in a royalist prison. He had been arrested when the king was alive, and in the damp prison developed this skin condition that nobody could cure so he soaked in oatmeal. And this is what we see him murdered in.

It's a very powerful painting, but do we see what's happening here? All the iconography is the iconography we saw in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. But now the savior is a politician. The other-worldly light that comes down upon Marat, the turban, which actually covered the scales on his head from the skin disease, becomes sort of a halo. His arm falls gently; his tub becomes his coffin; his orange crate becomes a tombstone to which the dedicated David says, "To Marat from David." We have a very spiritual light for this political martyr, and the iconography—he is a Christ figure. The innocent one offered up, sacrificed for the people. Do you see Caravaggio's *Deposition of Christ* where the arm and the garment fall down? And there is a definite Christological reference as the arm and the drapery fall down because this is the political Jesus Christ. This is the one who will bring us salvation, the political leader who will save mankind. But not just Christ in the *Deposition* by Caravaggio, but even the arm of Christ falls in the arms of his mother, so we have a new appropriation of religious iconography, but salvation is to be found in the political domain.



These painting are not anti-religious. They are not meant to be against the Church or against God or against Christ. But the artist's attentions and the society's attention are not focused on the Higher Power. Salvation is to be found in Marat and in his type. There isn't one painting that I'm going to show you tonight that I know of where the artist had an agenda that was against religion or belief, but the focus has begun to shift. Here is our Christ. As Albert Camus once said of someone else, "This is the only Christ we deserve." It's interesting. He didn't say it of that painting.

As you know, in French history "the terror" got so bad that eventually something had to be done, and into the vacuum stepped Napoleon. What's really fascinating is that Marat, by the David who painted Marat who was such a rabid revolutionary, becomes the official painter of Napoleon. It's a little hard to explain if you had been so much against the royalty, but one thing about David, he was like a cat. He landed always on his feet and managed to make the shift. It's very ironic; now he's the official painter of Napoleon when he had been the great painter of the revolution. By the way, David wrote it to the execution of Louis XVI when the group voted should he be deported or executed? David voted for his execution.

Well now Napoleon's in power, and I'm going to show you this enormous painting. It resides in the Louvre Museum. It is the coronation of the emperor Napoleon now done by David who has managed to suddenly—of course David would explain it this way: Napoleon didn't have royal blood. He may have been an emperor, but it wasn't royalty, so David didn't feel any pangs of conscience.

Before photography, this is the most perfect recording of the Coronation of Napoleon on December 4, 1808 in Notre Dame Cathedral. And by the way, we can name every single person in the painting. It's an official recording. But what we see which is interesting is, and I'm going to show you with a detail, Napoleon crowning himself because there's no one on earth worthy to crown him. He is the new Julius Caesar wearing the Roman type of crown. And although the painting was to be the Coronation of Napoleon, even David will not show that. He knows it's not good to show Napoleon putting a crown on his own head, so he shows him putting the crown on his wife Josephine, but it's still called *The Coronation of Napoleon* and excessive as David might have been, he realized that would be a bit much. And we see Pope Pius VII who had more or less really been forced to come there because even in an age where the papacy was very strongly involved with royalty, they did not normally attend coronations. And there he is. What's fascinating is that this is Notre Dame Cathedral, and in order to create the idea of a new Ancient Rome, all of the gothic arches have been covered by a stage set in

wood that makes it Roman. They literally built a wooden set that blocked out all the columns, the pointed arches, so that it looked like a Roman setting. It was all stage setting, painted and then all torn away. The political savior—the Coronation of Napoleon. And here we see Napoleon already having been crowned, putting the crown on his wife Josephine. And the leader of Christianity, the second Peter, we hardly can find in the painting. Everything is focused on Napoleon. It's interesting that David captures the look of the loneliness and desolation in the face of the pope who clearly would rather be anywhere else but there. But you see, he's relegated to the side. Look at the size of it! A history painting. The political leader as savior in the cathedral, the pope an attendant to the coronation.



A painter known as Baron Gros paints Napoleon when he goes on an expedition, as you know the Napoleonic forces went in and captured modern-day Jerusalem and northern Israel, and this is in the town of Jaffa which today, as you know, is Joppa, just outside of Tel Aviv. Napoleon visited his troops and there was what they called a pest house, a plague hospital, because plague broke out and Napoleon visited the troops, but you see what he's

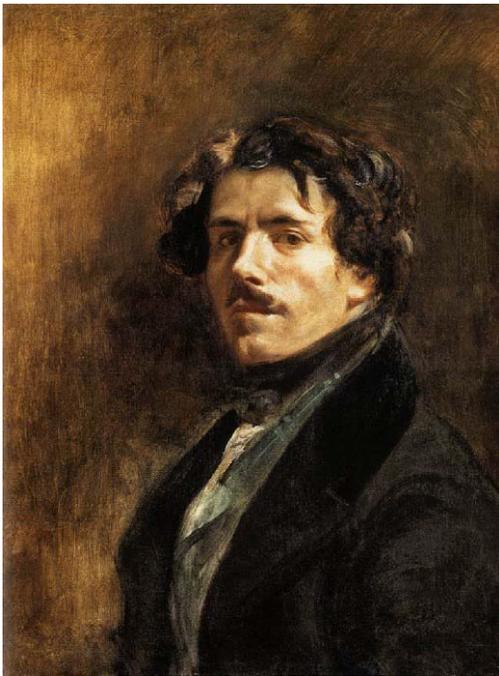
doing here? Napoleon is touching the sores of the plague victims to heal them, as if he were Jesus. And so this victim raising his arms, and of course with the plague you get these terrible sores in the armpit, and he's

touching the victim very courageously, while his attendant is covered because of the smell of the sores; he can't even bear the odor. Not only does Napoleon not recoil, but like Jesus he brings healing. This is political propaganda at its very best. But again, it is the leader as savior who now, in a sense, iconographically replaces Christ as the healer and touches him as if he were the savior.

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, the student of David who depicts Napoleon on his imperial throne with a light that is certainly not of this world. And whether we're looking at God or a god, this is certainly not a man to be trifled with. And by the way, all of this paraphernalia is in Paris and about 15 years ago it all came to the MET, the throne, every piece of it, and they displayed it and they put the painting next to it. They didn't want to use a dummy. So all of these items were preserved. But I think we see one trend that begins to develop, salvation in the political domain. The world can be saved, (and the contrary position is not that we should not be involved in the world), but the savior is the political leader, and when you have a figure like that, you're not looking for a force beyond that. What more would one need? That's Ingres.



A second trend develops—the artist as the prophet, as the one who sees above and beyond everyone else. We see these in some of the self-portraits. This is



Delacroix's self-portrait, romantic painter.

Can you see the sense, (I hate to say it), of superiority? He sees beyond what the viewer sees. This is not an easygoing man. And by the way, Delacroix was a devout Roman Catholic, but the sense of his self as the seer who sees—the cult of the artist. Wonderful figure! He's painting himself. Or Courbet, the leader of the Romantic Movement, who said that he thought he was the most beautiful creature that God had put on earth, and a particular gift to women. And I think his self-portrait shows it. The cult of self.

Now what's interesting is that already in these brief years, we're only in the 1820s and 1830s, we've had neoclassicism, which was reacted against by romanticism, which was reacted against by realism, so something else happens. Not only that we have an art movement every 10 to 15 years, but art begins to become about art. The principle subject of art begins to become art. So the neoclassicists are in power, the romantics want to attack the neoclassicists, offend their sensibilities. Paintings are done which are done simply to offend all the rules of neoclassicists. Géricault first, but he falls off a horse and dies,

and so Delacroix takes his place. And you belong to a school. Are you a neoclassicist or are you a romantic? And each one has a leader. So the young Géricault fell off a horse and died; Delacroix becomes the leader—*le chef*, as the French say. And we start calling them "schools." Not places where you're taught a lot, but the romantic and the realist react to each other. And once that begins, you can see the cult of the artist. Who is the leader? And art becomes art. And we're going to see this continue more and more.

If art is about art, not only will movements begin to attack each other, but paintings will be attacked because what has to be taken on now are not the ills of society, but painting. Remember we saw this beautiful *Venus of Urbino*, a wonderful example of the ideal female Renaissance nude by Titian? Well, in mid-century, Manet, the great realist painter, paints his painting *Olympia*. He's painting *Olympia* in the 1860s. This painting is a direct

attack upon the Greek ideal of the ideal female nude, like the *Venus d'Milo*, and on all the Renaissance paintings of the ideal nude such as the *Venus of Urbino*. Why?

First of all, she is looking out at you directly, which is absolutely forbidden; she's engaging you. She is obviously a prostitute. She is attended by an African servant, and the dog of fidelity is replaced



by a black cat in heat—promiscuity itself. And everything about the painting is an attack on traditional and classical art, its norms and its form. Very interesting, and it's a lot of fun, but you see now that the focus of the artist is on art. And so I am going to undo that entire Western tradition. Although these are talented artists, Manet outlines (which is a no-no for a painter) the form. He doesn't soften the edges with spumotto. If this were given in an art class you'd get a D- or an F and your teacher would say, "You've got to learn how to remove the black lines and soften the edges." Look at what you can do, if we go back, do you see there are no lines? They just disappear. And that softening, but it's done deliberately because it's going to be anti-classical. If that's what classical is. And of course the sheets are in the best tradition of Greco-Roman drapery, so what will have are dirty, modern sheets. Now they're really not dirty. It's a new way of showing shadows, a deliberately anti-classical way of shadowing, but it makes them all look sort of dirty and used. And of course she is the prototype. The name Olympia in French literature was always a name used for heroines who were prostitutes. And she is the prototype for what became *La Dame aux camellias*, the woman who loved camellias, which becomes *La Traviata*. So all of this conflates in this painting, but first of all, it's to shock.

Artists also increasingly must shock to get attention. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in the 1980s, Robert Hughes wrote that wonderful book, *The Shock of the New*. What are we going to do that's new? I've got something new every year—the new product, the new approach. Well this is the new nude, but it's not only shocking, but it's an attack on all of Western artistic culture. There's a wonderful book called *The Painting of Modern Life* by T.J. Clark, if you're interested in Manet. Manet is the most complex, in my opinion, of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, not only realists, but painters. I don't agree with everything T.J. Clark has ever said or written, but he shows that Manet was the first to say, we have to be modern. But what is it to be modern? Well, if this is traditional, this is modern. The painter of modern life. We want to be modern. We want to be with it. And we're beginning to undo Western culture. Well, you say, it's only in the world of art. We're undoing the great traditions of the West. Very powerful painting.

Let's look at another Manet painting entitled *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian*, also based on an historical fact. Very embarrassing for the French, by the way. To paint this was to humiliate your government. The French along with the coalition of Europeans put in Mexico a puppet emperor from Austria, Maximilian. Think about that—Mexico with an Austrian emperor put in by a coalition of Europeans. Well, it was a disaster, but it served their purposes. But the Mexicans rose up in 1868 and executed him. When that was happening, everybody in Europe took a walk; they washed their hands of Maximilian and let him be executed. What France should have done was said, "We put you in; we'll get you out and clean this up." They all just looked the other way and let him be executed as if they had nothing to do with it. Well here we see the historical execution, this Austrian who was hapless, to say the least, in terms of his ability to administrate, in a sombrero! He looks idiotic and it's meant to be that way. Do you notice that there's a crowd watching this execution? The first modern painting of death, so factual. Look at him. He looks somewhat ridiculous, standing there. He is indeed pulling back with his oversized hat on an Austrian head with an audience watching as if they were watching a performance of some sort, and the soldiers mechanically killing him along with several others. It is an historical event. Whether it looked like that or not, that we don't know. *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian*—Where's the grandeur? Where's the drama?



He's not only showing a modern view of death, (a disturbing view), but also he's taking on another great painting by Goya, *The Executions of May 4, 1808*, where back in Madrid when Napoleon had control of Spain, there was an uprising on the third of May against the French forces, and a group was rounded up and executed

on the fourth of May to keep the populous of Madrid under control. This is a history painting also. The sight of this, if you know Madrid, you know the royal palace and the cathedral's across from it right there. That's where they say the execution took place and there's a plaque right in the space between the cathedral and the royal palace. A group of people were rounded up and executed. Napoleon's warning them, if you rise up again, this is what will happen. And in this wonderful painting by Goya, there are many already dead attended by a Franciscan monk who's praying for them. And this individual about to be executed, it looks as though he understands he's about to die. His gesture is one of terror or surrender or whatever, but this is what one would think a death might look like. There is drama as opposed to the absolute lack of anything in the *Maximilian*.



By the way, a Christ figure, light for his innocence and in the pose of Jesus Christ because he was indeed a citizen rounded up, executed and Goya wants to say that he's an innocent victim of an occupying force. It was a nighttime execution, very rare. They didn't want to wait till the morning. They brought a lantern in. We'll keep him tonight so people will know in the morning, you are not going to rise up again. We see the dead and the waiting-to-die, covering their faces in fear and trembling, a priest interceding for them, and finally, the executioners in a position which indicates they realize they are taking human life. This is a moment of import. Do you see the tension in them?

Now look at what Manet paints. The casualness of the executioners, an audience watching as if it were nothing, and even the victim standing there sort of like that. It's as if it's stripped of the depth of its meaning, which strips life of its meaning. And at the same time he's taking on a great painting. It's very, very disturbing. Perhaps most disturbing of all, the casualness as the emperor is shot of the soldier who's refilling his gun for the next round without even looking up. The sheer mechanism of execution and of death.

Finally, Manet's painting of the *Dead Matador* which had been part of a larger painting that showed the arena and the bull, and he cuts this part out—very rare—and he exhibits it as a painting. It's deeply disturbing because he looks as though he's asleep. So what's the difference between death and sleep? Where's the grandeur? Don't we think death is a moment of import? He's lying there as if he's asleep. And you might think he's taking a nap except for the little trickle of dried blood. He's dead. There is something very disturbing in Manet, that those moments which we think are important moments seem to be like anything else, like taking a nap. We expect more of death. Is that all there is? A song in the 1960s, Peggy Lee, *Is That All There Is?* Manet.



Well, you know, he was a realist, and then the impressionists come along. And the impressionists would claim that they were the ultimate realists. There couldn't be anything more different than Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* than what we're looking at. But you probably know that many people say, "Oh, this is the beginning of modern art." No it isn't. If you were to ask Monet, "Who are you?" He would say, "I'm a disciple of Courbet and Manet because I have the ultimate realism—the eye recording what the retina sees." They are the ultimate realists. That was their view. You probably know that in order to do these paintings, Monet studied the retina and the eye to such a degree that he knew more than the average doctor. And that's why these paintings work because in an impressionist painting, the isn't a single line; it's all broken brush stroke, placed dabs of paint, smaller than your thumbnail, placed knowing how your eye will combine with them. Every artist does and under drawing. There is no under drawing. It is thousands of thousands of dabs of paint placed which you see the cathedral because we know it's the science of the eye and how it would combine it.

Now impressionism produces some of the most beautiful paintings you will ever see. This is one of my favorite, the Rouen Cathedral, the French city of Rouen, medieval cathedral, which Monet painted 32 times and they're all different because it's a different time of light—in the morning and throughout the day. And what he's really

painting is not the cathedral, but the light and atmosphere, and so that's why you could paint it 32 times. If he were painting the building, he'd paint it maybe twice, but not 32 times. And I think dawn is the most beautiful, that first touch of golden light on the tower, but still the shadows, and we're reminded that buildings take on the color of the atmosphere. We look in the morning at the skyline, and suddenly all the buildings are gold for five minutes, and if you didn't know you were in New York, you'd think they were all painted gold. And then, ten minutes later, they're back to gray again. And impressionists take all of that beauty, absolute beauty.

These were all good people, good Christians. Monet had a big family. There's nothing anti-religious in any of this, but their interest is somewhere else. His interest is in recording what the eye sees, and by the way in impressionist painting there are no ideas, there are no stories, there are no lessons, just beauty. Some people dismiss it—it's nothing really. Well, just beauty, isn't that enough? What I want to point out about movements like this, because we can begin to say—Oh, what a secular world! By the way, the first impressionist painting was 1871, the 1880s, the 1890s. This is a series he does in the 1890s. Although his interest is to record what the eye sees, the result is such incredible beauty that for me, this is a profound spiritual experience. One cannot be in front of a fine impressionist painting and not be moved by the beauty of nature because the artist has captured



it.

So we begin to see something else—Beauty with a capital “B” will not be contained by the limitations of the artist’s scope. Monet’s goal is not religious, nor any of his contemporaries, it’s to record what he sees. But because he is a faithful eye, the beauty is almost unbearable. These are, in my opinion, works of great spiritual power because he has put us in touch with Beauty, and Beauty, the good, the true

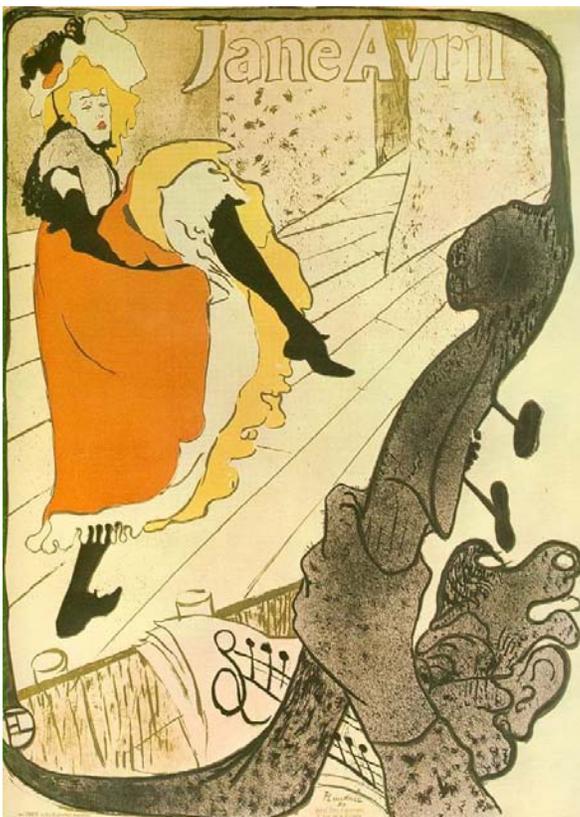
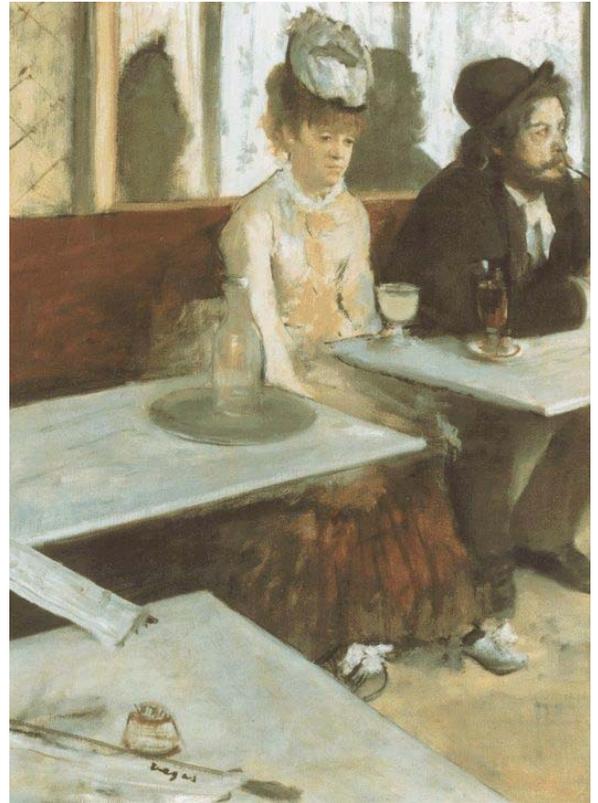
and the beautiful, are all attributes of the Divine. Beauty will not be contained by a society whose interest may be elsewhere; it explodes forth, and I would say to you that I am in the presence of beautiful religious art. It cannot be denied. And I will have before it a religious experience because Beauty cannot be contained. We’re going to see this again and again and again.

Maybe we used to look for the image of Christ in the iconography and the Bible story, but the Divine and the spiritual will break through in different ways, sometimes in spite of the artist. And certainly I’d say the impressionists are a superb example. Whether it’s Renoir’s, *Moulin De La Galette*, a beautiful Sunday afternoon

at that outdoor café, the sun filtering through the trees; we see the people coming together in dappled light. It can be people; it can be nature. It's a beautiful experience of God's beauty.

By the way, one critic said of Monet, "Monet is only an eye, but what an eye!" That's all that need to be said, and yet all the impressionists were different—Degas with his ballerinas and Mary Cassatt with her mother and child themes. Each one had a direction. But even Degas and the other impressionists so loved beauty that they began to capture another aspect of modern life, a certain loneliness. We remember Degas with the ballerinas. He's doing indoors what Monet did outdoors—the beauty of the ballerinas, the lighting, the effect of the theatre, the chiffon, and so forth. He uses the same broken brush stroke.

This painting of *The Absinthe Drinker*, it's a typical café scene. We begin to see in the impressionists, middle class life, public entertainment for the first time, cafes, night clubs, these new things that middle class people could go to, concerts, and so forth. So we see a café, and Degas just captures, although he loves this life, the incredible loneliness of these two people sitting next to each other. And the fact that she at least is absolutely inebriated—one of the first paintings of alcoholism. We know that with absinthe people become innocently addicted to it, it was powerfully addictive. But we begin to see also, even in a place like a café, an incredible isolation and loneliness, even from painters whose specialty is beauty.



Toulouse-Lautrec, who was handicapped and deformed, from a wealthy family, his parents were ashamed of him; they didn't know what to do with him. So he had the tragedy of not having to work for a living. If they had been poor, he might have been better off. He dabbles in art and alcohol, and you know it's a very tragic life. He would have loved to have married, but what woman would have him? He finds his life in the cafes, in the nightclubs, where he can sit ringside and watch and be with people. He sketches and draws, and often on brown paper. And people would ask him, "Oh, would you do my portrait?" And he lives. At night he lives in the cafes because he's at home there. His friends are the prostitutes, the high-class courtesans who work there. They're marginalized and so is he. And that's his world. And he loves Jane Avril, the most famous nightclub performer of the late 1800s who was famous for the Can-Can, just about as naughty a dance as anyone could imagine in those days, showing stocking like that was absolutely forbidden; it was quite shocking. And on brown paper and pastels he draws her. And we see couples in the back meeting, sometimes for the first time. And he really loves that world. But he also sketches her going home, and when the show is over for her, do you see how alone and lonely and sad Jane Avril is? We get these

glimpses of modern life if artists want to show modern life. Now, he adored her. He is just recording what he sees—Paris’s most famous Can-Can dancer who goes home alone, and already as she leaves the theatre, sadness, the show is over, life stops.

And this oil painting of another scene of the Moulin Rouge of people over-dressed, wearing too much make up, trying so hard to have a good time, but they look so shallow and unhappy. What’s interesting is he adores this world; he’s not trying to be a social critic, but he just records faithfully. Aren’t they trying to have a good time? But are they?

The painter everyone knows and everyone loves, Vincent Van Gogh. Van Gogh started something really quite new in the history of art. He was the first painter ever whose paintings have only one purpose—to express what he feels. That had never been done before. It leads to what we call “expressionism.” He didn’t have a term for



it. Do you remember *The Last Judgment* by Michelangelo? His assignment was to paint the Last Judgment based on the Bible, but his feelings slipped through, do you remember Mary recoiling? Oh he had a beautiful Apollo Christ, but a Christ who was casting people down. Mary turns away. What happened to this Renaissance optimism? We can only suspect that in his 60s and nearing his death, (He really had a long way to go, but he didn’t know this.) he was dealing with his own judgment facing God, and he appeared not to be too comfortable, and we believe in that *Last Judgment* we get a glimpse of a man

struggling with the judgment. But the point of the painting was to show the Biblical last judgment. Something slipped through.

Artists received commissions. Our friend David was the official portrait painter of Louis XVI, whom he despised. Little did the king know what it was going to lead to. You received the commission and you did it whether you felt or whether you didn’t. Van Gogh is the first for whom the painting has no point except what he felt. That’s unique. And you know what that opens up then. Modern art that’s totally about “me.” Well, of course. Could Leonardo have painted *The Madonna of the Rocks* without faith? I don’t believe so. But the point of the painting is not his faith; it’s to show Mary in the garden with Jesus. And so we begin this introspection, which is a good thing in many ways. I will paint what I feel. The famous *Bedroom at Arles*. And accomplished artist, he makes the bed too big. It’s out of proportion. The colors are wild—mustard yellow with red because the point of this painting is viewer. This is my room. I love my room, but you know something? Most of all I

love my bed. It's almost embarrassing it's so personal. And I tell my students that when you look at one of Van Gogh's paintings you come as close as you ever will to hearing someone's confession because it's all out there. He is not childish, but he's child-like. The defense is that we early give up and we protect ourselves, we start to close in, he never allowed himself to; he's completely open. He says, "I have a spot that I love and it's my bed; may I show it to you?" And we would be embarrassed. And I say to my students, "Excuse me while you're laughing; do you have a favorite spot in the house—a corner, a chair or a place you go to that you love? Well, of course you do, but you wouldn't tell anybody in the cafeteria because they'll laugh at you. But he will tell you. And everything he celebrates, we do." And I remind them of this: When it's over and they're burying us, it will be those simple things that will have mattered, not the money, not the reputation, but did we enjoy those simple, simple pleasures that Van Gogh celebrates? We're in the presence of something very sacred, I think. The sharing of life's simplest pleasures, and you know he was a man who was crushed, yet he was irrepressibly positive for the most part. He wanted to be a minister and was early discouraged from going into it. He fell in love with a woman but she was a prostitute who would have nothing to do with him. He tried to start an artists' colony in the South of France and made the mistake of teaming up with the wrong person. Everything failed, but he constantly came back. And a believer in God, sort of a Pantheistic God, he was filled with optimism until the end when he could bear the pain no longer and he shot himself. But most of it is absolutely positive.

The important turning point in art is the self, but for him to celebrate the most beautiful and simple things, and much of it, to celebrate the glory of God. He had wanted to be a minister, he was a believer, and he saw in nature—you know the energy in pastel and thick paint; you can feel the electricity. And I think of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Nature is charged with the glory of God." You feel the electricity in the paint.

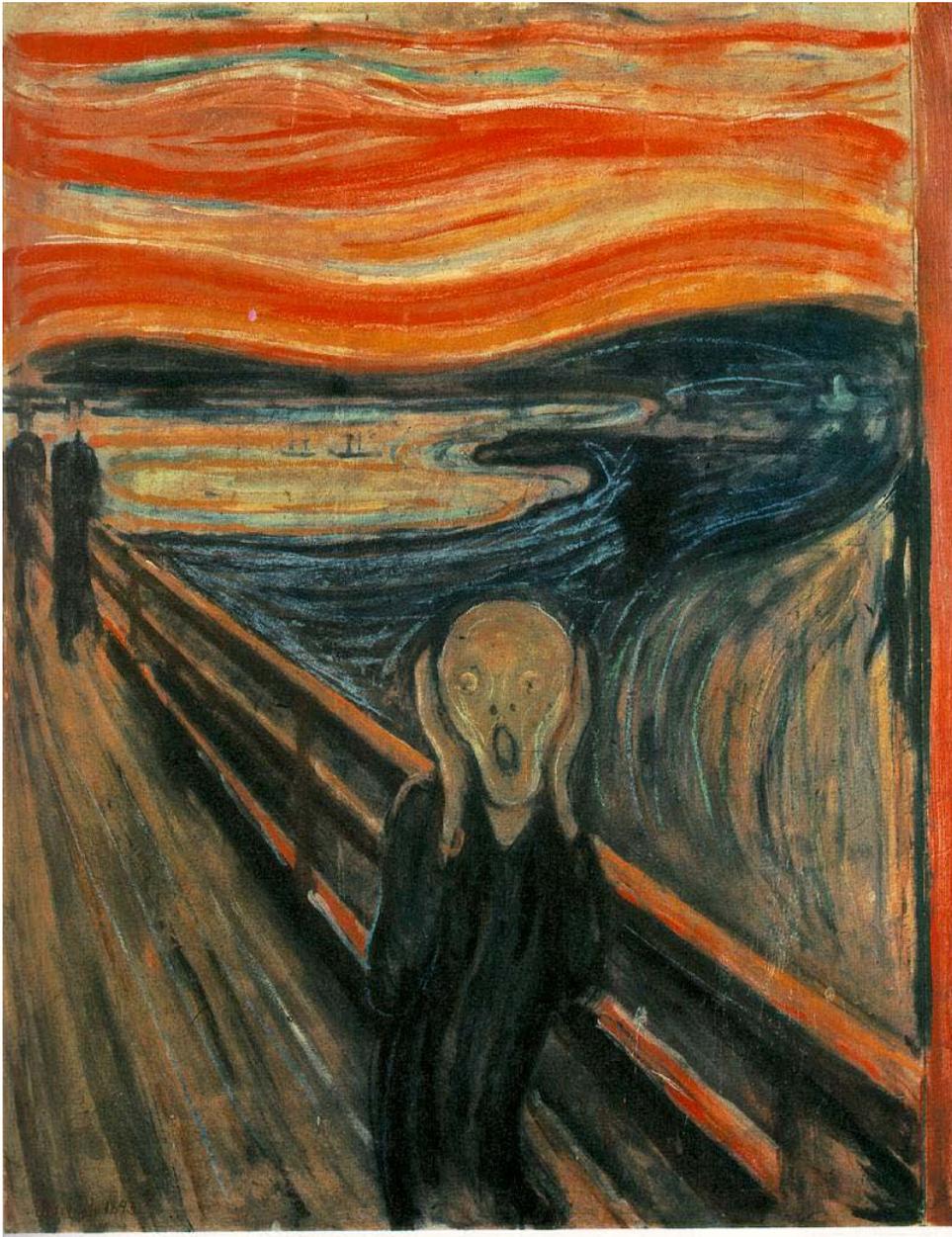


So these are deeply religious paintings though we don't have the traditional iconography. We have to be very sensitive. The beauty breaks through. Well in his case he's happy to because he wants to celebrate that. And one of his most important and beautiful paintings is *The Sower* which also is a commentary on Millay's *Sower*. He is a realist painter who celebrates the farm, and not to mock it, but Van Gogh picks up on *The Sower*. On the

farm there wasn't too much lower of a position that the person who threw the seed, but do you see his dignity and what it's bringing forth, and the rising sun? Even in my slide you can feel the electricity, so there's the power of God through the image and yet there's nothing overtly religious.

We are also at a point where paint is becoming more and more important. We're getting to the point where the paint, the tactile quality is so important that we can no longer study it from a book or whatever. You can study

*The Death of Marat* just as well from a book as from the painting to some degree, but no longer because also, more and more, the paint is extremely important.



Well, this then leads to many artists who will paint primarily to express what they feel. Edvard Munch is one of the first who, in 1893, paints this iconic painting that everybody knows, and because everybody knows it, it's hard really to look at it, called *The Cry* or *The Scream*. And we all know it in many versions, but because it's so common, we have to take a look at it with new eyes. Of course it's very abstract and the sky and the waves reflect. You feel from the line and the color this person who is at the end of his or her rope and can't take it anymore—*The Scream*. Just can't take it. And I like to ask students, "Have you ever felt like that?" They say "Yes, before your exams." I say "Good." We all have those days, and if anyone hasn't, congratulations, you have a charmed life to this point because we all have days when we just can't take it anymore. And this person, this primal scream comes out which we feel; we can't hear it; you can't have

sound in a painting, so we feel it in the waves and the sky and the color, and the agitation. It echoes through all of creation, this primal scream. My students are very conservative; they like traditional art. I say, "See how abstraction works? By simplifying the face, it's male or female, young or old, and quite a range of ethnic possibilities, rather than having a very specific face, and then it's that person's story. It's you. It's me. It's everyone." Also a little bit skull-like. A little bit like a skeleton, like death. Are those two people on the left coming after the person? Are they closing in? Or have they passed him or her by and it's isolation? It's

ambiguous. It's not clear. Are you so alone they don't care, or are they coming for you? But it's at the end of the road, and it's not accidental that it's on a bridge. It's a wonderful painting of what Van Gogh began—the painting of expression of feeling.

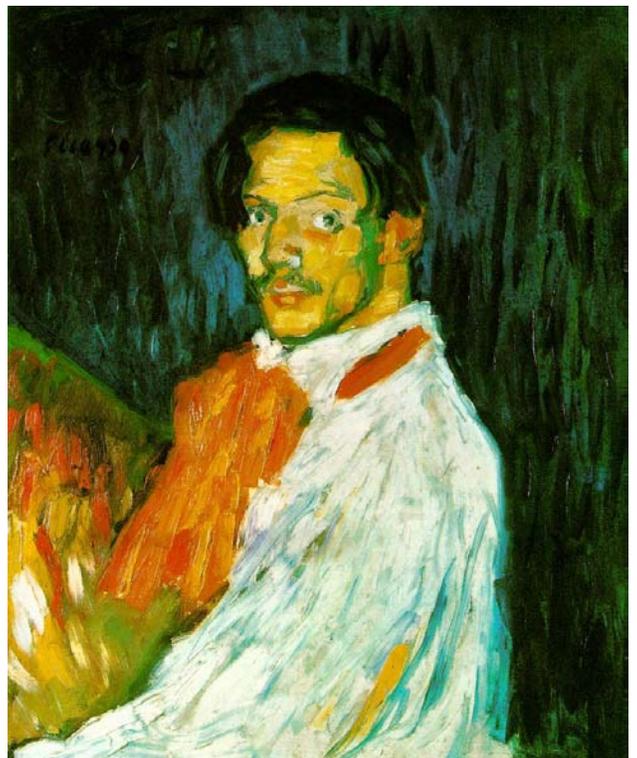
Now if you know Munch he had, talk about a tragic life! He had reason to paint this. An extraordinarily tragic



life, but I think this is a profoundly religious painting because this is an aspect of the human condition. This is what religious experience struggles with, not only on the days when we feel this, but for all those people for whom every morning is like this. You and I have a bad day or a bad week, and there are people who every single day live "The Scream." So again, I think art, by looking inward, deals with things that are very religious, fundamental to the human condition and which need some strength from somewhere else to deal with. Edvard Munch, *The Scream*.

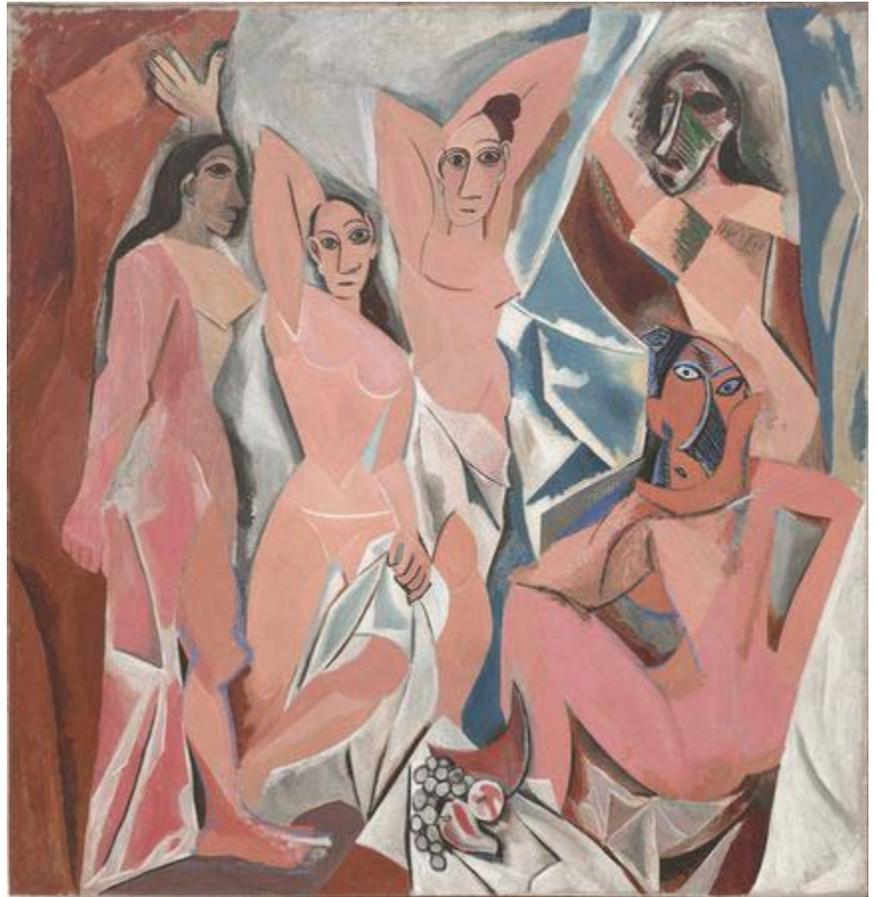
He did another painting which I love very much called *Johan Street*. And what we have is, and this is so typically Munch, a street scene in a small city in Norway. Look at these faces. Look at the alienation and the isolation, even though they're in a crowd; they're all people on the street. I see this every day on the subway. Do you notice how we're picking up often loneliness, isolation, people together but isolated. Art never ever created any of the ideas that we've analyzed in this series, but it's the faithful mirror of them all. Art is the faithful mirror of the age. And we're seeing some things we didn't see previous to 1800.

We come to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Pablo Picasso paints himself as a young man. Do you see that same sense; it's almost like a Renaissance figure, of self-assurance holding his palette, hand here? This is the artist as the figure. His father was a minor painter and the story is told that when he was 16 he said to his father, "I'm going to be the first great painter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century." This may be apocryphal, but he became the first great painter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the first internationally known one. And we know that he was certainly a man of will. So there may be more truth than falsity to the story. I get a sense of that in this self-portrait when he was quite young: I will be the first great painter of



the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. You see again it's this idea, not I want to paint and express such, but rather I want to be famous; I want to be an artist. And of course he leads to it with others the creation of that first great movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Cubism.

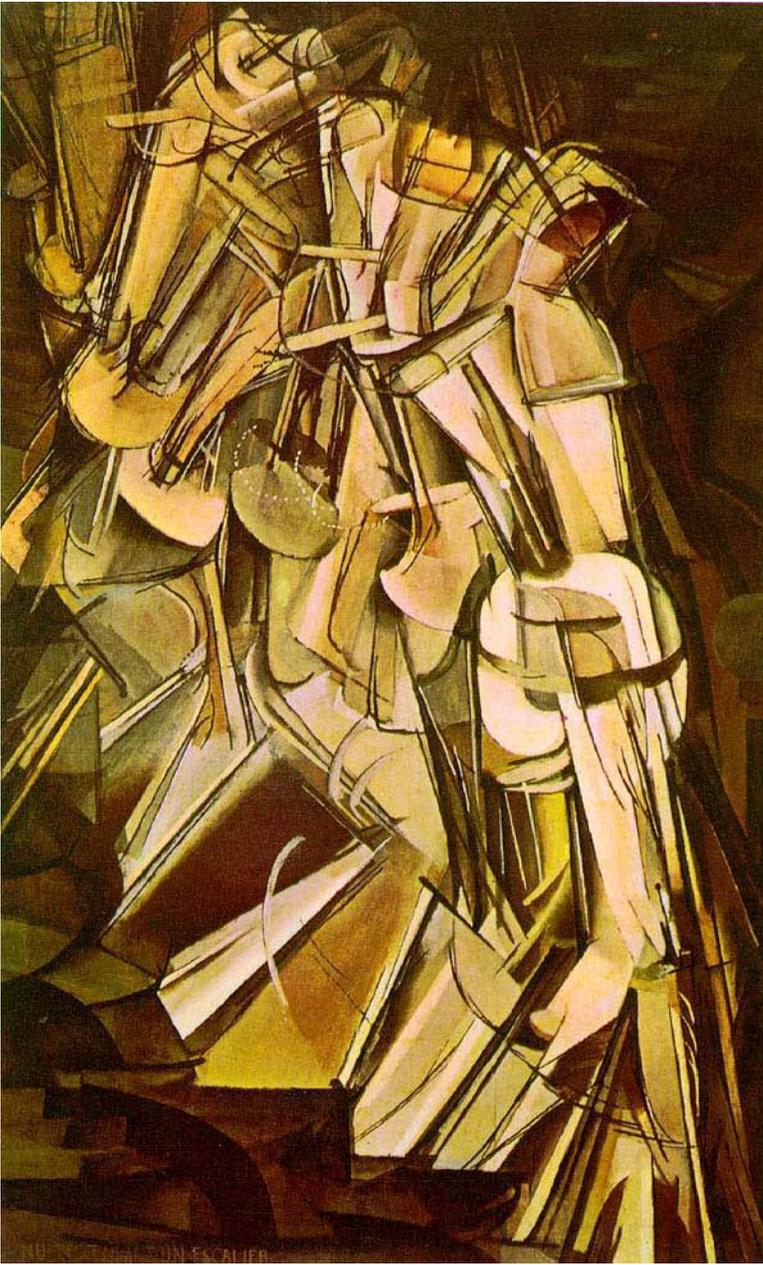
Now here we have some interesting things happening. Cubism is a great movement and it may sound as though I'm going to denigrate it, but I'm not. But we have to do something new, and this is what happens even more in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; it's got to be something new; it can't be something we've seen before; it's the shock of the new. And it is the shock. And so in this painting, 1907, which he intends to start the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and it begins his career, he is going to meet Western culture on the grounds where it began with the female nude of the *Venus d'Milo*, with the female nude in the Renaissance of the *Venus of Urbino*, and this time five nudes with the Cubist vision, open form; it's very fascinating. You're



seeing from multiple perspectives, and so forth. But we begin always with the human image and the female form. And we will shock because these are five prostitutes in a bordello. This one is coming out of her cubicle. She has just pulled back the curtains and she is saying, "Next." And this one is coming on to the viewer. There is a still life of fruit for the gentlemen who might be waiting in the bordello for their turn. It is shocking; it could be viewed disgusting, but he has gotten the world's attention by going to that traditional subject which was always so sacred—the female nude. The shock of the new. It's title, *Les Demoiselle d'Avignon*, (The Young Ladies from Avignon). Of course he's Spanish, but he's in Paris; everybody's in Paris painting, so he gives it a French title. But this is not Avignon in France; this is Avignon Street in Barcelona which in that time was the red light district, and so it's a coded title. So there we have the new vision.

When I teach I might do two to three slides and hour; we looked at *The Madonna of the Rocks*. I spent 60 minutes on that with my class. We probably spent 50 minutes on this. When I'm working with the young people, my job is to introduce method, technique, paint, everything. That's not our task here. That's not what we're here for. We're dealing more with ideas, so I'm clicking away. And I say this because we could spend two weeks on this painting; it's so rich and complex. But I want to point ideologically, and so I'm moving on to other things. There's so much that goes on there.

So then we begin the broken and fractured view of the Cubists. All Picasso's, this portrait of a woman, this female nude—I ask my students, "Would you know it was a female nude if the title didn't tell you?" Now the art becomes frenetic—difficult to see and figure out. That's why people in the Museum of Modern Art cozy up to the title to see what they're looking at. Some people like that and some people don't. But I also remind our students it is more difficult art. It may sound as though I'm mocking it, but I'm not. It's different. It actually challenges the mind much more. When you stand in front of *The Madonna of the Rocks*, it's all laid out for you.



But here you have to work, and so actually I want to pay it a compliment. It is very intellectual art; it requires a lot of thinking and some will say, “No, I don’t want to have to look at the title; I want to know.” But isn’t it exciting that maybe we have to look and we see different things? The still life, bowl of fruit become fractured, even landscapes and cityscapes.

A great debate arose in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century between the traditionalists (even including the impressionists) and the modernists, and finally it had to come to a head. They decided to have a great international exhibition of modern art to finally settle this and see which way the critics would go. They held it here in New York in an armory in the famous 1913 New York Armory Exhibition. Everybody exhibited there including a number of impressionists who were still alive—Picasso, Matisse—they were all here in Manhattan, not in Paris. The most controversial painting was this one by Marcel Duchamp, 1913. And when I teach I show it and I ask my students to write down on a piece of paper what it is and hand it in; I don’t say anything about it. Most commonly my students say, “Soldiers going off to battle.” One wrote, “a venetian blind that’s kind of coming loose from the window.” And they are disturbed that they don’t all agree. I think it’s rather challenging. And then I tell them the title which I think we all can see: *Nude Descending a Staircase*. It is one female nude coming down a staircase, and what we have now, in addition to the Cubism, is the taking from time-lapse photography the attempt to show motion. It’s the

one thing that could never be shown, along with sound, in painting, so we have it here, here, here, here, here, here—all the different steps of coming down the staircase, and you’ll forgive me, but we can follow her derrière because she’s nude coming down the staircase, and the most light is here. Here are her knees; here are her hips; there’s her behind; there are her breasts and her head.

Now the truth is, if you look enough at Picasso’s Cubism, one begins to develop an eye for that kind of form, and you get comfortable seeing it. But it’s a nude descending a staircase—new, shocking, but also a wonderful amalgam of the traditional image plus the desire in the baroque to show motion, along with time-lapse photography. Marcel Duchamp.

Well, it caused a great uproar, and the biggest uproar was that not everyone could figure out what it was as soon as they saw it. So *The New York Times* critic wrote the next day, “*Nude Descending a Staircase*, no, Explosion

in a Shingle Factory.” But when the reviews were in, the bulk of the critics supported modern art and that exhibition marked the triumph of modernism over the traditional modes.

When you look at Picasso, you’re looking at an artist who’s in the tradition of Cezanne. But when you look at Dali and the surrealists, they’re more in the tradition of Van Gogh, a turning-in.

Now this term surrealism began first in literature after World War I, and the surrealist writers were very serious. Devastated by the horrors of World War I, they tried to find truth. They really wanted to find truth, but they didn’t look in the Bible, they wanted a new way. They tried automatic writing by staying up 48 hours and seeing if you could write delirious, they took drugs, they did all kinds of things. They were very serious about it, disillusioned by a war that was beyond human imagination—the first mechanized war. They sought in their own way to find truth. They sought something that was above reality.

The surrealist painters—it’s a gimmick. Drawing on now what is well-established Freudian theory, people like Dali would delve into the world of your dreams and fantasies; you’ll never see this, but you might dream it, and if you keep dreaming it enough, you might go to the shrink and say, “Doctor, why do I keep dreaming about melting watches?” And he would say, “Well, what do you think?” And the fun of it is, we can look and of course it speaks to me about the passage of time and so forth. I love surrealism. It’s fun. It’s something new. You see, each of these artists is trying to find something new; it’s got to be new. One is going to fracture the form; one is going to delve into the world of the subconscious, but it’s a gimmick, and it’s a fun gimmick. However, even Dali, and Dali can get silly at times, his 1954 painting of the cosmic movement of Raphael’s Madonna. This is Raphael’s version. To me it’s getting a little bit silly. But then, as you know, he paints in the 1950s a series of religious paintings using the surrealist techniques that are among the most beautiful things done in religious art.

After Leonardo did *The Last Supper*, almost no painter would do anything other than do the same version and sign his name as a way of saying, I can’t do better. And in 1950, Dali does this beautiful painting, this modern painting of the Last Supper. When I was young in the 50s, priests who would be ordained would have this image on their mass cards at ordination.

They found it that beautiful. And so I want to point out, it’s a little bit wild, it’s a little bit crazy, but even in someone like Dali, a wonderful last supper with the priests in 1950s haircuts, and modern vestments that tell us the eternity of that banquet, whether it was in the year of Christ or in 1950. Because it’s surrealist, not Jerusalem, but the choice of the lake of Galilee where He



preached. We can also see the Christ risen or ascending, and then this modern casement with the tetrahedron and there'd be all sorts of math in there. But you can do it because you're using this multiple surrealist technique, but the result is one of the most devout and striking paintings of the Last Supper ever done, and it's Dali of all people who tells us, Leonardo didn't have the last word. Almost no one did anything new for 400 years, but it can be done. And if you look at the detail and the devotion of those priests, those 1950s priests with their modern haircuts. Now, interestingly, unlike Leonardo's, bowing in adoration, because they realize, as the apostles did not yet fully, that this is the Word, the *Logos*, the Christ. 1950, Salvatore Dali.

Not to mention his extraordinarily powerful crucifixions of the same year, 50 and 51. And yes, it's a Cubist cross and the nails float, but somehow the power of the Christ suspended on the cross that becomes like a butchers block reminds us of the sacrificial lamb. Powerful. So through all of this, the beauty breaks through.

I also love very much the Italian surrealist de Chirico. His art reveals a lot about his life, but if you know his art, you know that it's filled with classical forms, particularly the Roman (obviously, he was Italian). Such incredible loneliness and emptiness. So here's another example of painting that's surrealist but also very inward looking. *The Agony of Departure*. This moving van that is going off in such an empty landscape. And I'm going to show you five of them. But I'll tell you something personal I get from them because with this kind of art, the gain is not to say what the artist was feeling. What were you feeling in front of it? It's not important what Van Gogh felt, but when I stand in front of a Van Gogh, what does it say to my inner being?



What I see here, and I know this is pushing it a bit because it does reflect his life is in an age in which—do you remember the Greeks and the Romans had pulled together the *logos*, reason and the spiritual together? We have sort of the remains of that abandoned culture because now the *logos* and reason are separated and such incredible loneliness results. It's as if we're at the end of the road of that Greco-Roman tradition that we've let go, that we've turned our back on. I can assure you, I'm sure that's not what the picture is about, but it's what I see. We have every classical form, but it is so empty, so coldly abandoned.

1913 Russia, Wassily Kandinsky is the first to produce what we call “non-objective art”—art in which there is no object, not a person or a thing. We have paint, color, shape, line and form. Now the down side is we have paint, color, shape, line and form. Not only is the human figure gone, content is gone. So the human is gone. But let's speak of the positive. Kandinsky wrote that same year on the spiritual in art. And he believed that art could communicate the deepest spiritual experience by freeing itself from the human image and from everything that was specific, and that painting should be like music. When you put a piece of music on, you don't read a book about it before you listen to it. You put it on and it either moves you or it doesn't. If it moves

you, you don't need the music professor or the music book because it has moved you. And if it doesn't, you don't want the professor or the music book because it hasn't moved you. He said painting should be that way—immediate. And the way it would be would be an immediate experience of color, shape, line and form. And painting that would be international, it wouldn't be German or Italian or Spanish or Chinese or Russian, it would be pure form. For him, this was pure music. His *Light* painting of 1913, in my opinion is one of the most beautiful paintings ever done, all on canvas. Just look and see; it is so uplifting and light. And when some people say to me, "I could do that." I say, "No, you couldn't." Just look at the levels of perspective, the levels of depth. This reminds us, before the revolution Russia set so many of the directions in art. We saw avant-garde after the revolution had to be crushed; modern art was very dangerous. The three totalitarianisms of fascism, Nazism and communism crushed modern art because it's hard to censor; you never know what it's saying. It had to be traditional art so you could read it. But spending his time between Moscow and Paris, Kandinsky creates the *Light* painting and non-objective art, and suggests that a painting can be an immediate spiritual experience.

Well, in New York in the 1950s, Jackson Pollack takes it to the next stage. One of the problems with Pollack is slides are pathetic because the paint is so important; you must stand in front of the painting, so if you know *Autumn Rhythm*, which is almost as large as the front of this room, this only gives you a conceptual idea. It makes it look trivial; it is so beautiful. Pollack takes it the next stage. It is not only non-objective, it's only line, color, paint and form, but as you know he develops action painting in which he flings the paint and so the paint goes from the brush and lands. One critic said to him, "Jackson, you're just spilling paint." To which he answered, "That brush is in my hand and my mind controls every movement of it, and I am responsible for every place that the paint falls." For those who have tried to dismiss it as if he were just kicking over a can of paint, his point was "I have created this." And I want to show you this photograph where on these enormous paintings he would come in and touch up the smallest details to make them as he would have them. Students also sometimes think, how long did it take him to do that, an hour? Seven months because he agonized over the place of every single line and dot. The simplicity of the end product should not delude us into speculating about either the seriousness of the artist or the effort that went into it.



These are artists that are taking a new look at art, and I think it's us; we're not prepared for it. We were so comfortable with our iconography and our angels and all the things that would speak to us, but they want to speak to us in a new and different way. And the beauty will not be contained. But the interesting thing about Jackson Pollack as his spills his paint is that the subject of the painting becomes not only paint, but how it was painted because you can enter into the movement of the paint and actually experience the act of creation for the first time. Have you ever seen someone in front of a Pollack...what they're doing is entering into the paint as it's spilled. With no other artist can this be done. But, you remember what I said, around 1800 the subject of art becomes art? Now the subject of art becomes the act of painting. And that's both good and not good. But in front of a Pollack, I feel a spiritual experience. It is of Beauty, absolute Beauty that speaks to me. Was that Pollack's intention? I can assure you, not at all. It was not on his mind, but the beauty will not be contained. And so next time we stand in front of a Pollack, really to see the depth. By the way, he had imitators, and no one could create after him anything that compared to those paintings. People dripped, they threw, they tried, whatever. Something spiritual came out of the man so that all his imitators—somehow it was something else. Look at the Pollack's next time with new eyes.

So Helen Frankenthaler, a woman artist, does the same thing. Her thing is to take the paint and rub it into the canvas with glass, but we get the effect of paint. *A Buddhist Court*, Helen Frankenthaler, the emergence of orange, and so again the subject of painting is paint.

Rothko, Color Field painting in which we would have on the canvas several simple colors. There were probably, since the time of the Renaissance, no paintings that are more spiritual than the Rothko's, and here again these are slides. I don't have to point out to you how they glow from within, how the light comes from within the color, how there are contrasts of light and shadows, or how the forms float into perspective, but I would suggest to you, certainly when I look at them, and I know what his intention was, a desire to express a spiritual mural and a spiritual search, but the vocabulary is different. And these are compelling works of art. He was commissioned by the Menil family to do an entire series of painting for a chapel in a university in Texas and he did paintings like this, slightly darker in color as religious paintings for a chapel, what is today an inter-denominational chapel. Even in my pathetic slides they glow with a luminescence that is from within and when you see them—I think it's a compliment to these artists; now we can no longer look at the slides; we can only say, "I must go to the museum and look at them." Stand before them in the peacefulness with which they were created. I think they will speak to the human spirit. They become absolutely other-worldly. Isn't that what spiritual art should do? Does it need an image or only paint?

Well, I end tonight with Andy Warhol. Great character, New York figure, you'd see him every Saturday at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street buying cookie jars at what was then the flea market. He was often derided because he made money and he was very, very sharp about art, but I would very much like to suggest that he was a painter of who we are. Oh, the Brillo boxes and the Campbell's Soup cans, you know he was first a designer? He designed shoes for commercial advertising and so forth. But I'll tell you why I think he's such a great artist and why this is a painting that has such deep spiritual dimensions. I love the Coca-Cola bottle's of 1968, the year I came to St. Francis College and began teaching. In every age from the time we began, art was the faithful mirror of the age; it reflected exactly. And we look at this and we say, "He was a weirdo." The problem is we don't like what we're looking at. And when you look in the mirror and you don't like what you see, and it's us, you have two choices—you either change, or you break the mirror and walk away. And the way we break the mirror and walk away is to say, "Well all this art always reflected society, but he's just a weirdo." We're looking at America. Now 1968-2008, the ultimate American product, Coca-Cola, lined up, stacked up the way we live in high-rise buildings, mass produced and impersonal. In the entire world I've never been anywhere where I couldn't say, "Coca," and there it was. When China opened up, the first factory that went there was Coca-Cola. Every nuclear secret we have has been stolen, I think, but they've never gotten the formula for Coca-Cola. What a brilliant



idea. And I love coke, by the way, more than Pepsi, (forgive me). It's the ultimate American product; still is. Stacked up, mass produced, and you know something? Now it's tin cans, but it used to be the bottles. In the landfill and in the ground there is so much of this going back to last 1800s, along with the cans, that is we survive 4,000 years like the Egyptians, and they lose contact with everything we did, they will think we worshipped this

because it's the largest thing they're going to find. And Warhol paints it. And I have to say in reaction to Pollack and to Rothko, to the non-image and the Color-Field painting, and he says, "I'm going to bring back the image," but that's a whole other thing—art still reacting to art, but he says, "America, here you are, mass produced, stacked up, this is your claim to fame—Coca-Cola." And we certainly know that if art addresses the loneliness that we saw and the isolation, what about the consumerism that consumes us today? It consumes our society. Consumes us at this time of year, in contradiction to everything this season is about. Well it starts out with the idea of giving a gift. One philosopher said, remember Descartes? "I think, therefore I know." Warhol said, without trying to be funny, "I shop, therefore I am." I assert myself by buying things. And I would suggest that this is not a religious painting. By the way, Warhol was a rather devout Catholic, went to mass with great regularity, but he addresses one of the issues of the human condition, and isn't that what faith and religion try to address and to support and to help us with?

I end with a sculpture which I think is a wonderfully affirming way to end the evening. Henry Moore, I would say the greatest sculptor of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but that's a personal preference. He was an English sculptor who died not that long ago. Here is his abstract sculpture called *Family Group*, abstracted of a man, a woman and a child. We have Henry Moore's at Lincoln Center. I'm sure you know them; they're all around the city. And we could say, "Boy, modern art has certainly reduced everything down to the essentials." But it's so international and so eternal—the bond of love between a man and a woman so deep that it generates a third, like the Trinity, the love of the Father



and the Son so deep that it generated the Spirit. And the interrelation between them as the mother gives the child to the father and the father holds the child from the mother—all one. The family, one of the hopes of our society. Modern art not religious? I would say that this comes to the very root of the modern experience and of the human experience, and if we have eyes, we see that the religious awareness in human beings continues to break through in artists who may have been more concerned about art than about the human condition, but actually we really don't know at the deepest levels what their first concerns were.

There's a very famous quote from Dostoevsky that art will save the world. Well, art may not save the world, but it certainly shows that it is a faithful mirror of who we are and where we have been and where we are going. Art helps if it is used, not only enjoyed (and it should be enjoyed), but used to keep human experience on track, and to avoid those excesses we've sometimes seen of a good idea gone a bit too far one way or the other.

Thank you.