

# ART HISTORY STYLE PERIODS

- **Pre-Historic (before writing) (15000BC)**

Cave paintings of animals, loosely done, great vitality and movement.

Prehistoric cave-art is important as it serves as some of the best means of showing the interaction between our primitive ancestors and the world as they perceived it.

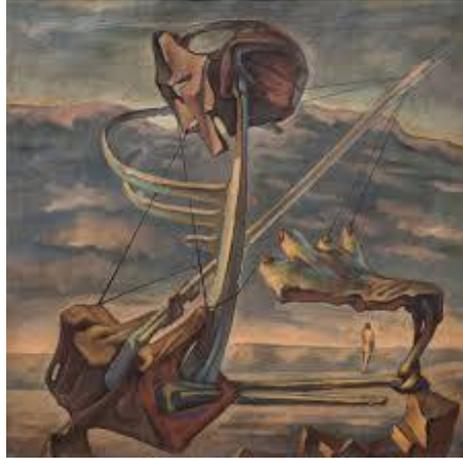
The Image (right) is the most basic self portrait (From Pech Merle, c. 25,000 BP). Through it we can see the first steps of our awakenings as a species. There are certain characteristics of cave-art that allow us to begin to form an impression of the people behind the drawings, often found at the depths of long, deep tunnel systems in small secretive caverns.



- **Egyptian Art (3500-500BC)**

Egyptian art, the ancient monuments, sculptures, paintings, and decorative crafts produced mainly during the dynastic periods of the first three millennia BCE in the Nile valley regions of Egypt and Nubia. The course of art in Egypt paralleled to a large extent the country's political history, but it depended as well on the entrenched belief in the permanence of the natural, divinely ordained order. Artistic achievement in representational art aimed at the preservation of forms and conventions that were held to reflect the perfection of the world at the primordial moment of creation and to embody the correct relationship between humankind, the king, and the pantheon of

the gods. For this reason, Egyptian art appears outwardly resistant to development and the exercise of individual artistic judgment, but Egyptian artisans of every historical period found different solutions for the conceptual challenges posed to them.



- **Greek (5<sup>th</sup> century BC)**

The first histories of Greek art were written in the Hellenistic period of the third to first centuries, during the last period covered in this book. By that time, Greek art and culture had spread well beyond the borders of the country of Greece today, and the Greeks themselves lived in cities from Russia and Afghanistan in the east to Spain in the west. Greek art was a common sight in Rome, whether statues expropriated from cities that the Romans had conquered or works commissioned from Greek artists by Roman patrons for their homes and villas. The oldest extant account of the history of Greek art is a “mini-history” written by the Roman orator Cicero around 46 Bc and appearing in his history of rhetoric and orators entitled Brutus: Who, of those who pay some attention to the lesser arts, does not appreciate the fact that the statues of Kanachos were more rigid than they ought to have been if they were to imitate reality? The statues of Kalamis are also hard, although they are softer than those of Kanachos. Even the statues of Myron had not yet been brought to a satisfactory representation of reality, although at that stage you would not hesitate to say that they were beautiful. Those of Polykleitos are still more beautiful; in fact, just about perfect, as they usually seem to me. A similar systematic development exists in painting. In the art of Zeuxis, Polygnotos, and Timanthes and the others who did not make use of more than four colors, we praise their forms and their draughtsmanship. But in the art of

Action, Nikomachos, Protogenes, and Apelles, everything has come to a stage of perfection. (Cicero, Brutus 70; tr. Pollitt 1990, 223)



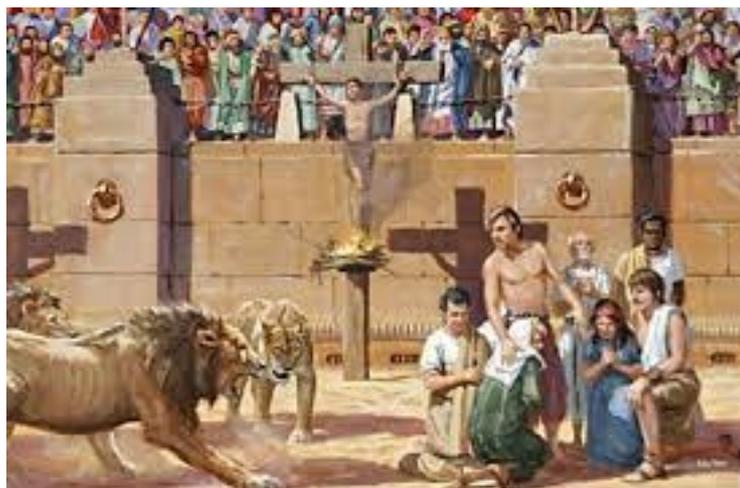
- **Roman (2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC to 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD)**

Similar to Greek but more realistic, shows people as they look very narrative. Innovators in architecture The ancient Romans distinguished themselves both politically and artistically at this time- in art, portrait sculpture that realistically depicted individuals was perfected during the Republican period. It is true that ancient Roman artists borrowed freely from Greek neighbors. But the Romans did develop their own styles in art. One example of Roman artistic innovation dating to the Republican Period is the portrait sculpture. Roman art grows out of Etruscan art and at the first it is a lot like Etruscan art. Because of this, it has a close relationship to Greek art as well. Roman art as a type of its own really gets going around 500 BC with the beginning of the Roman Republic. Roman people were particularly interested in portraiture: in making statues that really looked like one particular person, especially a famous person. Roman sculpture was closely tied to the work done by Greeks because both did most of their sculptures in marble. In fact, much of the Greek Art survives because it was copied by Romans. Yet, Romans had their own style which they brought to their art. The Greeks were famous for their idealistic portrayal of people and they for their realism.



- **Christian art (Begins :3<sup>rd</sup> century AD)**

The earliest surviving Christian art is found in Rome, in the catacombs the elaborate underground tomb chambers in which the Christian communities buried their dead. There is some uncertainty as to the date of the earliest catacomb paintings, but according to current opinion, it would seem that the earliest Christian catacombs, and their wall paintings carried out in fresco and tempera probably date from the 3rd century. This visual material is relatively small scale and private, occurring as it does in a funereal context, and the subjects chosen for representation tend to be those appropriate to private tombs, with an emphasis on hope and comfort. Perhaps surprisingly, images of Christ's death at the Crucifixion, which later became such a fundamental subject of Christian art, are rare in the catacombs. Perhaps at this point in the development of the emerging Christian church, direct portrayals of Christ's own violent death seemed less immediately or obviously redolent of hope than other images that more generally symbolized protection and deliverance. The image of the shepherd is a particularly popular one in early Christian art, occurring over 100 times in the catacombs as a whole. The shepherd symbolizes care and protection, ('The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul.') The shepherd had already appeared in Greek art, with the god Hermes sometimes being portrayed carrying a sheep or a ram. Pagan imagery of Hermes in this aspect was adapted by Christians to form the image of Christ the Good Shepherd.

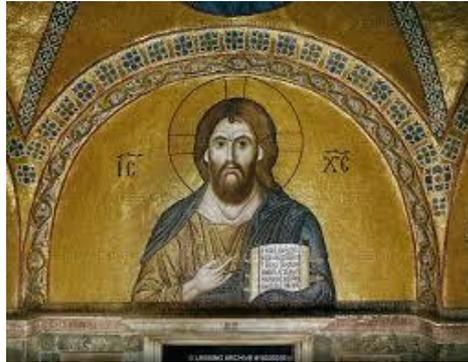


- **Byzantine art (East) (6<sup>th</sup> century AD)**

The development of early Christian religion had a significant impact on western art after the fall of the Roman Empire in the 4th century (AD). Through examining various works of art and architecture, it becomes evident that the period of Byzantium marked a significant transition in aesthetic conventions which had a previous focus on Roman elements. As this research entails, the period of Byzantium acted as a link between the periods of Antiquity and the Middle Ages and thus provides insight on the impact of Christianity and its prevalence in art and architecture during this vast historical period.

Later Byzantine Painting, proved to be somewhat useful in terms of its discussion on Justinian Style. Its particular inclusion of the Hagia Sophia was helpful in providing evidence of the shift in aesthetic influences following the sack of Rome in the 4th century (AD). Similarly, Ernst Kitzinger, author of *Byzantine Art in the Making*, provides some constructive information on Justinian Style (e.g., the San Vitale) in addition to providing vivid images of Early Christian sarcophagi, church interiors, mosaics, and other 3rd-7th century Byzantine artefacts. Thomas F. Mathews book entitled, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, contributed to my discussion on Justinian Style, but would have been more useful if I had chosen to analyse the San Vitale. Despite this setback, Mathew's discussion on early basilicas was helpful in providing information concerning the Hagia Sophia. Nelson's other historical work, entitled, *Hagia Sophia 1850-1950*, dedicates a solid two hundred and fifteen pages to the church. However, the first chapter is the only part relevant to my research as the book's entirety focuses on the modern Hagia Sophia. Dalton's findings in *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* were useful to some extent as the book focuses on Justinian Style. However, the art and archaeology that it analyses (e.g., Maximian's ivory throne) was irrelevant to my research. Regardless of this, Dalton's inclusion of Byzantine painting and illuminated manuscripts provided a detailed discussion of the codex. Lyn Rodley's book, *Byzantine Art and Architecture: An Introduction*, proved to be quite valuable as it provided information on three different areas that I chose to focus on: early basilicas, Justinian Style, and the codex. Aside from Laurie Schneider's *Art Across Time*, this resource made a significant contribution to my research. *Art Across Time* is definitely the greatest resource used within the context of this research, particularly because it is a complete history of western art and architecture. Used as a text for art history courses in postsecondary institutions, Laurie Schneider Adams does more than just brush the surface on the history of Byzantine art and architecture. She distinctly breaks down the different aesthetic elements and cultural influences found within a wide range of Byzantine sarcophagi, basilicas, architectural floor plans, mausoleums, mosaics, manuscripts and murals, covering a period of more than 1400 years. Her

findings are crucial in providing evidence of the impact that early Christian religion had on western art following the fall of the Roman Empire.



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