

Introduction to Neoclassical, Romantic, and Realist Art

Neoclassical Art

The neoclassical period lasted from about 1750 to 1850. Neoclassical artists revived and honored the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome. Neoclassical works of art showed a return to more traditional times, and encouraged order, reason, and discipline.



Painting

- based on classical Greek and Roman art and culture
- show heroic people in scenes from or inspired by ancient history
- figures look idealized and perfect
- bodies are draped in togas, or in formal, elegant clothing, or are nude
- faces are often calm, without emotion
- brush strokes tend to be smooth, barely visible

Literature

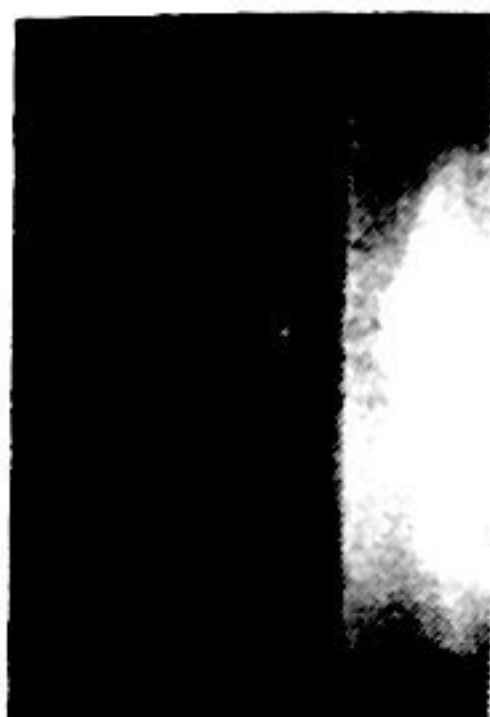
- stresses the world's harmony and order
- presents a logical and balanced view of human nature based on reason

Music (classical)

- mood is moderate; does not describe any extreme emotion
- melody (tune) is repeated and does not reach extreme high or low pitches (sounds)

Romantic Art

The romantic period lasted from about 1800 to the 1850s. Romantic artists believed in the importance of returning to nature. Romantic works of art showed strong imagination and emotion, rather than the reason and intellect more common in neoclassical art.



Painting

- shows scenes of family, nature, heroism, religious, and emotional subjects
- nature can be calm or stormy; there is an emphasis on the expanse of sky; people in the landscape are usually small in scale
- faces show inner thoughts and emotion, such as fear, anger, love, hope
- colors are natural, muted, and soft and show a lot of natural light

Literature

- stresses human emotions over the rational mind
- shows wild imagination and strong emotions; common themes are heroes, childhood, the past, and passionate love

Music

- mood is emotional; a wide variety of rhythms and instruments express great sadness, joy, or passion
- melody is dramatic; volume may change suddenly; may use very high to very low pitches

Realist Art

The realist period lasted from about the 1830s to 1900. Realist artists emphasized the importance of showing people and their lives as they really are. Realistic works of art depict situations from daily life, no matter how unpleasant or unheroic they might be.



Painting

- based on details of daily life
- scenes of common people at work are often shown
- figures are dressed in daily, casual, or work clothes
- the human body is not idealized
- faces do not show strong emotions
- artists attempt to paint light as it really looks on and around figures and objects

Literature

- describes the hardships of everyday life and criticizes the greed and bad manners of the middle class

Music (verismo)

- in opera, a play with its text set to music, mood changes with scene to imitate real-life situation of everyday characters
- melody imitates human speech and voice and conveys realistic emotions