The Northern Renaissance

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Renaissance Art in Northern Europe

Should not be considered an appendage to Italian art.

But, Italian influence was strong.

- Painting in OIL, developed in Flanders, was widely adopted in Italy.

The differences between the two cultures:

- Italy → change was inspired by humanism with its emphasis on the revival of the values of classical antiquity.

- No. Europe → change was driven by religious reform, the return to Christian values, and the revolt against the authority of the Church.

More princes & kings were patrons of artists.
Characteristics of Northern Renaissance Art

- The continuation of late medieval attention to details.
- Tendency toward realism & naturalism [less emphasis on the “classical ideal”].
- Interest in landscapes.
- More emphasis on middle-class and peasant life.
- Details of domestic interiors.
- Great skill in portraiture.
Flemish Realism
Jan van Eyck (1395 - 1441)

More courtly and aristocratic work.
- Court painter to the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good.
- The Virgin and Chancellor Rolin, 1435.
Van Eyck - Adoration of the Lamb, Ghent Altarpiece, 1432
Van Eyck:

← The Crucifixion

&

The Last Judgment →

1420–1425
Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife (Wedding Portrait)

Jan Van Eyck

1434
Jan van Eyck - Giovanni Arnolfini & His Wife (details)
Rogier van der Weyden (1399–1464)

The Deposition

1435
van der Weyden’s Deposition (details)
Quentin Massys (1465–1530)

- Belonged to the humanist circle in Antwerp that included Erasmus.
- Influenced by da Vinci.
- Thomas More called him “the renovator of the old art.”

*The Ugly Dutchess, 1525–1530*
Massys’ *The Moneylender & His Wife*, 1514
France
A new phase of Italian influence in France began with the French invasions of the Italian peninsula that began in 1494.

The most important royal patron was Francis I.

- Actively encouraged humanistic learning.
- Invited da Vinci and Andrea del Sarto to France.
- He collected paintings by the great Italian masters like Titian, Raphael, and Michelangelo.
Jean Clouet - Portrait of Francis I, 1525
The School of Fontainebleau

- It revolved around the artists at Francis I’s Palace at Fontainebleau.
- A group of artists that decorated the Royal Palace between the 1530s and the 1560s.
- It was an offshoot of the Mannerist School of Art begun in Italy at the end of the High Renaissance.
  - characterized by a refined elegance, with crowded figural compositions in which painting and elaborate stucco work were closely integrated.
  - Their work incorporated allegory in accordance with the courtly liking for symbolism.
The School of Fontainebleau

Gallery [right] by Rosso Fiorentino & Francesco Primaticcio

1528-1537
Germain Pilon (1525–1590)

The Deposition of Christ
Bronze, 1580–1585.
Jean Goujon
(1510–1565)

“Nymph,”
1548–1549

“Nymph & Putto,”
1547–1549
Germany
Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553)

- Court painter at Wittenberg from 1505–1553.
- His best portraits were of Martin Luther (to the left).
Lucas Cranach the Elder

Old Man with a Young Woman

Amorous Old Woman with a Young Man
Matthias Grünewald (1470–1528)

- Converted to Lutheranism.
- Possibly involved in the Peasants' Revolt on the peasants side.
- Depictions of intense emotion, especially painful emotion.

*The Mocking of Christ, 1503*
Matthias Grünewald's *The Crucifixion*, 1502
Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)

- The greatest of German artists.
- A scholar as well as an artist.
- His patron was the Emperor Maximilian I.
- Also a scientist
  - Wrote books on geometry, fortifications, and human proportions.
- Self-conscious individualism of the Renaissance is seen in his portraits.

← Self-Portrait at 26, 1498.
Dürer - Self-Portrait in Fur-Collared Robe, 1500
Dürer
The Last Supper
woodcut, 1510
Durer - The Triumphal Arch, 1515-1517
The Triumphal Arch, details
The Triumphal Arch, details
England
Hans Holbein, the Younger (1497–1543)

- One of the great German artists who did most of his work in England.
- While in Basel, he befriended Erasmus.
  - *Erasmus Writing*, 1523
- Henry VIII was his patron from 1536.
- Great portraitist noted for:
  - Objectivity & detachment.
  - Doesn't conceal the weaknesses of his subjects.
Henry VIII (left), 1540 and the future Edward VI (above), 1543.
Holbein’s, *The Ambassadors*, 1533

A Skull
Multiple Perspectives
The English Were More Interested in Architecture than Painting

Hardwick Hall, designed by Robert Smythson in the 1590s, for the Duchess of Shrewsbury [more medieval in style].
Burghley House for William Cecil

The largest & grandest house of the early Elizabethan era.
The Low Countries
Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516)

A pessimistic view of human nature.

Had a wild and lurid imagination.
- Fanciful monsters & apparitions.

Untouched by the values of the Italian Quattrocento, like mathematical perspective.
- His figures are flat.
- Perspective is ignored.

More a landscape painter than a portraitist.

Philip II of Spain was an admirer of his work.
Hieronymus Bosch

The Garden of Earthy Delights

1500
Hieronymus Bosch

The Garden of Earthly Delights (details)

1500
Hieronymus Bosch

The Cure of Folly

1478–1480
Hieronymus Bosch

The Temptation of St. Anthony

1506–1507
Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525–1569)

- One of the greatest artistic geniuses of his age.
- Worked in Antwerp and then moved to Brussels.
- In touch with a circle of Erasmian humanists.
- Was deeply concerned with human vice and follies.
- A master of landscapes; not a portraitist.
  - People in his works often have round, blank, heavy faces.
  - They are expressionless, mindless, and sometimes malicious.
  - They are types, rather than individuals.
  - Their purpose is to convey a message.
Bruegel's, *Tower of Babel*, 1563
Bruegel's, Mad Meg, 1562
Bruegel’s, The Beggars, 1568
Bruegel's, *Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind*, 1568
Bruegel's, Niederländisch Proverbs, 1559
Bruegel's, *Hunters in the Snow*, 1565
Spain
Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco)

- The most important Spanish artist of this period was Greek.
- 1541 - 1614.
- He deliberately distorts & elongates his figures, and seats them in a lurid, unearthly atmosphere.
- He uses an agitated, flickering light.
- He ignores the rules of perspective, and heightens the effect by areas of brilliant color.
- His works were a fitting expression of the Spanish Counter-Reformation.
El Greco
Christ in Agony on the Cross
1600s
El Greco

Portrait of a Cardinal

1600
El Greco’s, *The Burial of Count Orgaz*, 1586–1588
El Greco’s, *The Burial of Count Orgaz*, 1586–1588 (details)
El Greco’s, The Burial of Count Orgaz, 1578–1580
El Greco

The View of Toledo

1597–1599
Conclusions

- The artistic production of Northern Europe in the 16c was vast, rich, and complex.

- The Northern Renaissance ended with a Mannerist phase, which lasted a generation longer in the North than it did in Italy, where it was outmoded by 1600.