

LEBANON COLLEGE
15 HANOVER STREET
LEBANON, NH 03766
PH: 603-448-2445
FAX: 603-448-2491

SPRING 2012

HUM120
HISTORY OF
WESTERN ART

INSTRUCTOR
 Donna Stepien

1. The **ROCOCO** is characterized by pastel colors, flourishes, dainty figures, and a lighthearted—at times frivolous—mood. Rococo originated in Italy, however it became most popular in France. Art Historians have seen it as a reaction against the strict formality of the *Baroque*.

2. *The Salon de la Princesse in the Hotel de Soubise* by *Germain Boffrand* is a typical French Rococo hotel design of the 1730s. The gold and silver against wide expanses of white and pastel characterize it as Rococo, and seen here are a visual confusion of mirror reflections, sculpted stucco and carved wood panels called *boiseries*. Residences such as the *Hotel de Soubise* often were designed around the theme of classical love stories. (29–2)

3. In Habsburg Germany and Austria the Rococo style is clearly evidenced in the *Residenze*, a palace built for the prince-bishop of Wurzburg by *Johann Balthasar Neumann*. This slide shows the *Kaisersaal* or Imperial Hall. The plan is symmetrical as a Palladian design however boasts all the flourishes of the Rococo such as stucco and gilt as well as lavish pilasters and sculptures in niches. The painter *Giovanni Battista Tiepolo* assisted Neumann in achieving this glorious effect with his scenes glorifying the 12th century crusader emperor Frederick Barbarossa, who had been a patron of the bishop of Wurzburg. The scene shown here depicts the marriage of the Emperor Frederick with Beatrice of Burgundy. Also see (29–9), *Neumann's Interior, Church of the Vierzehnheiligen*.

4. Rococo painting is as soft and full of flourishes as is Rococo architecture. *Jean Antoine Watteau's Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera* is a perfect example, with pastel colors and slightly out-of-focus style. Cythera was a mythical island of love. Pictured here are the nobility, full of joyful playfulness with no more to do than make love on an island. (29–4)

5. *Jean Honoré Fragonard* carried on the tradition begun by *Watteau*. His most famous work is a group of 14 canvases commissioned in 1771 by *Madame du Barry*, Louis XV's mistress. *The Meeting* depicts a secret encounter between a young man and his sweetheart, who looks back anxiously over her shoulder to be sure the two were not followed. Note the luxuriant vegetation and the sculptures depicting Cupid and Venus.

Of interest, the *Neoclassical* style was coming into vogue and by the time the entire set of 14 commissioned paintings were completed *Madame Du Barry* rejected them, requesting an entirely new set in the *Neoclassical* style.

6. Paralleling the time of Rococo frivolity painters such as *Jean-Simeone Chardin* preferred realism in the style of the *Baroque*. *Chardin* specialized in luscious still lifes and genre scenes an example of which is *The Meat Day Meal*. Work such as this foretold the upcoming *Neoclassical* style which occurred as revolution began to stir around the world. Also see (29–33) *The Governess*.

7. *Chardin's Girl with a Shuttlecock*.

NEO-CLASSICISM

8. *Neoclassical* Art (mid 18th–early 19th c) is an art of ideals. It reflects then-new interest in history characterized by subject matter borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman art, heroic nudity in sculpture and occasionally painting, classical orders in architecture, and the use of “pure line” in painting and drawing. Its moral rigidity was a reaction to the frivolous Rococo and the emotional *Baroque*. The rise of *Neoclassical* Art was part of a revival of classical thought inspired by the recent excavations of *Pompeii* and *Herculaneum*. As a part of this revival of the classical, Roman Republican ideals of moral incorruptibility, patriotism and courage were important influences in the American and French revolutions.

Around 1800, *Romanticism* emerged as a style during the same time period as *Neoclassicism*. *Romanticism* featured fantastic themes and a poetic and melancholy spirit. *Romanticism* could be considered an emotional—even irrational—approach to art-making from the artist's subjectivity. *Romanticism* counterbalanced *Neoclassicism*, and many artists were influenced by both styles. Importantly, artists frequently worked in both *Romantic* and *Neoclassical* styles as well as Rococo and *Baroque* depending on their desired visual effect.

9. Jefferson believed in architecture as a means of expressing national ideals. Further, he believed Neoclassicism was the style appropriate for our nation's public buildings. Jefferson utilized designs based on Roman temples for Virginia's State Capitol and the library and academic buildings of University of Virginia at Charlottesville (initially based on a Palladian design). After a trip to France in which he was struck by the more elegant domestic architecture he returned home to redesign his home at *Monticello*—his first architectural attempt—with French doors, tall narrow windows and a balustrade above a unifying cornice to mask the second floor. *Monticello* was his first architectural attempt. (29–63)

10. *Canova* was a major figure in both Neoclassical and Romantic styles as evidenced here. He was credited with reviving classical art in Italy. Schooled in Venice and active in Rome, he was in his time the dominant figure in European art, so much so he was said to be the next *Michelangelo*. A master at marble, he sculpted great tombs, Napoleon II, the Classical style, heroic Roman gods and delicate nymphs. *Eros and Psyche* depicts Eros reviving Psyche, who was put to sleep forever by inhaling a magic perfume. This piece is as much allusion to the legend of Psyche, the immortal soul of Platonic myth (myth being important to Greek philosophy, both as a foil and a mode of philosophical thought), as it is a hymn to love. Avoiding academicism, *Canova* constructs a pyramid of these entwined bodies which are animated by delicate arrangement of limbs undulating in the light. The transparency of the white marble offers visual poetry to a group that was the outcome of long deliberation (the model dates from 1787), and then copied by *Canova* for Prince Youssouppoff. Also see (29–14), *Pauline Borghese as Venus*.

11. Marie-Louise-Elisabeth *Vigee-Lebrun* was the favorite painter of *Marie Antoinette* and gained great fame during her long career as a portrait painter. *Vigee-Lebrun* was one of many French painters of the time who abandoned the frivolous subject matter of the Rococo for more classical arrangements. Nevertheless, her work is reminiscent of Rococo coloring and softness in application. (29–35)

This painting is somewhat political as the court of the Bourbons sought to portray their queen as a loving mother, a representation of the ideals espoused by French-Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau who wrote men and women should conform to the roles assigned them by nature. This painting was made two years before the outbreak of the French Revolution during which *Vigee-Lebrun* escaped with her daughter to Italy, then to Russia to wait out the crisis.

12. *Adelaide Labille-Guillard* was a forceful advocate for women in the Academie Francaise. She and *Vigee-Lebrun* were two of four women who filled the allowable quota of female membership during the mid-18th century. In 1790 *Labille-Guillard* successfully petitioned the Academie to end the restriction on entry for women. Her commitment to the promotion of female painters is seen in this painting of herself with two of her students looking on. It is believed she painted this to dispel rumors her paintings were created by a man. The only man present in this scene is the bust of her father in the background. This painting was exhibited in the Salon of 1785, a biannual exhibit open to members of the Academie Francaise. (29–39)

13. Mrs. Richard Brinsley *Sheridan* was the wife of famous playwright, she was famous singer. Thomas *Gainsborough's* work recalls the Rococo style in its feathery brushstrokes and light palette. Mrs. *Sheridan's* windblown hair repeats the shape and substance of the tree. This visual simile is notable; women at this time in history were compared to nature. Emphasis on nature and the natural as the sources of goodness and beauty were values of the Enlightenment. *Gainsborough's* style is also evident in (29–24), *Robert Andrews and Frances Carter (Mr and Mrs Andrews)*.

14. *Angelica Kauffman*, an Italian-born Swiss citizen and leading history painter, is known for painting moralistic scenes. 1786 she was only one of two women artists named among the founding members of the Royal Academy in London. *Cornelia Pointing to Her Children as Her Treasures* (29–26) is a piece, based on a Roman fresco, which illustrates a moralizing tale of a woman showing off her jewels. She asks *Cornelia* to show her her jewels. *Cornelia* gestures toward her children, replying "These are my most precious jewels." The painting—and the moral—glorifies the ideal mother. (Recall Enlightenment philosophies on the natural as the sources of goodness and beauty; one being the belief it is natural for a woman [any woman; women in general] to raise children.)

15. John Singleton Copley, the son of an immigrant painter-engraver, became the colonies' most famous painter because of his beautiful, clear technique and excellent abilities as a portrait painter. We see here the richness of fabric common to Copley's work, which reminds the viewer of the wealth of the subject. Mrs. Ezekiel Goldthwait may appear homely however she is firmly rooted between the table and chair with her hand on the fruit, which symbolizes her position as the matriarch of her family.

16. Copley's *Watson and the Shark* (29–30) is one of his more intriguing pieces. See pp929 column two and 930 column one for description of the true story of which this scene depicts, as well as the political tones of the time in which it was painted.

16. Jacques Louis David was the leading force in French painting during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. He was a history painter and developed a truly Classical style. After studying in Italy on a Prix de Rome, he returned to France and began making paintings that were fiercely anti-Rococo. In them he extolled the antique virtues of moral incorruptibility, stoicism, courage, and patriotism.

17. *The Oath of the Horatii* depicts three brothers, the Horatii, chosen by Rome to defy the champions of the town of Alba called the Curiaces, taking an oath they will win—or die—and are receiving swords from their father. David contrasts the stoic resolution of the warriors, underlined by strict geometry and strident color, with the gentle line of the women which expresses their suffering. Painted in 1784 and shown in Paris the following year, this painting earned David a European reputation as uncontested leader of the Neoclassical movement.

18. Appointed official painter to the Emperor in December 1804, David was commissioned to commemorate the Coronation festivities in four huge canvasses, only two of which were executed (the second, *The Distribution of the Eagles* is at Versailles), This ceremony took place in the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. David here depicts the episode following the actual consecration: Napoleon is crowning Josephine while Pope Pius VII gives him his blessing. The action is but a small portion of a composition conceived as an enormous group portrait containing over a hundred figures.

19. *Napoleon Crossing the Saint-Bernard* refers to Napoleon's crossing of Mont St. Bernard from France through the Alps into Italy. David painted this fictitious account before Napoleon was crowned Emperor. In truth the general made the crossing on a donkey. The rocks shown here are incised with the name, Napoleon, and the names of his heroic predecessors, Hannibal and Charlemagne. (29–47)

Refer in your text to pp935 column two and 940 column one, in reference to (29–37), *David's Death of Marat*. Of special interest in David's works, especially notable in this piece, is his use of lighting to enhance the sensitivity to the subject matter.

20. Accused by the Athenian government of denying the gods and corrupting the young through his teachings, Socrates (469–399 BCE) was offered the choice of renouncing his beliefs or being sentenced to death by drinking hemlock. David shows him calmly discoursing on the immortality of the soul with his grief-stricken disciples. *The Death of Socrates*, painted in 1787, with its stoic theme, is perhaps David's most perfect Neoclassical statement. The printmaker and publisher John Boydell wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds that it was "the greatest effort of art since the Sistine Chapel and the stanze of Raphael.... This work would have done honour to Athens at the time of Pericles." The subject is loosely based on Plato's "Phaedo," but in painting it David consulted a variety of sources, including Diderot's treatise on dramatic poetry of 1758 and works by the poet André Chenier. The pose of the figure at the foot of the bed was reportedly inspired by a passage in a novel by the English writer Richardson.