

## Mannerism

Where High Renaissance art emphasizes proportion, balance, and ideal beauty, Mannerism exaggerates such qualities, often resulting in compositions that are asymmetrical or unnaturally elegant. Mannerism is notable for its intellectual sophistication as well as its artificial (as opposed to naturalistic) qualities. Mannerism favours compositional tension and instability rather than the balance and clarity of earlier Renaissance painting. Mannerism in literature and music is notable for its highly florid style and intellectual sophistication.

Maniera artists looked to their older contemporary Michelangelo as their principal model; theirs was an art imitating art, rather than an art imitating nature.

### Origin and development

By the end of the High Renaissance, young artists experienced a crisis: it seemed that everything that could be achieved was already achieved. No more difficulties, technical or otherwise, remained to be solved. The detailed knowledge of anatomy, light, physiognomy and the way in which humans register emotion in expression and gesture, the innovative use of the human form in figurative composition, the use of the subtle gradation of tone, all had reached near perfection. The young artists needed to find a new goal, and they sought new approaches. At this point Mannerism started to emerge. The new style developed between 1510 and 1520 either in Florence, or in Rome, or in both cities simultaneously.



Michelangelo/Tintoretto

### Early mannerism

The early Mannerists in Florence—especially the students of Andrea del Sarto: Jacopo da Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino—are notable for elongated forms, precariously balanced poses, a collapsed perspective, irrational settings, and theatrical lighting. Parmigianino (a student of Correggio) and Giulio Romano (Raphael's head assistant) were moving in similarly stylized aesthetic directions in Rome. These artists had matured under the influence of the High Renaissance, and their style has been characterized as a reaction or exaggerated extension of it. Instead of studying nature directly, younger artists began studying Hellenistic sculpture and paintings of masters past.

### Spread of mannerism

The cities Rome, Florence, and Mantua were Mannerist centers in Italy. Venetian painting pursued a different course, represented by Titian in his long career. A number of the earliest Mannerist artists who had been working in Rome during the 1520s fled the city after the Sack of Rome in 1527. As they spread out across the continent in search of employment, their style was disseminated throughout Italy and Northern Europe. The result was the first international artistic style since the Gothic. Other parts of Northern Europe did not have the advantage of such direct contact with Italian artists, but the Mannerist style made its presence felt through prints and illustrated books.

Francis I of France, for example, was presented with Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time*. The style waned in Italy after 1580, as a new generation of artists, including the Carracci brothers, Caravaggio and Cigoli, revived naturalism.

### Antonio da Correggio 1489-1534

Correggio was remembered by his contemporaries as a shadowy, melancholic and introverted character. An enigmatic and eclectic artist, he appears to have emerged from no major apprenticeship.

Correggio's illusionistic experiments, in which imaginary spaces replace the natural reality, seem to prefigure many elements of Mannerist and Baroque stylistic approaches.



**Noli Me Tangere**



**Venus and Cupid  
With a Satyr** c1528



**Jupiter and Io** 1520-40

### Jacopo da Pontormo 1494-1557

Jacopo da Pontormo's Joseph in Egypt features what would in the Renaissance have been considered incongruous colors and an incoherent handling of time and space.

Haunted faces and elongated bodies are characteristic of his work

His work represents a profound **stylistic** shift from the calm **perspectival** regularity that characterized the art of the **Florentine Renaissance**. He is famous for his use of twining poses, coupled with ambiguous perspective; his figures often seem to float in an uncertain environment, unhampered by the forces of gravity.



**Joseph in Egypt**

1515-18



**Supper at Emmaus**

1525



**Deposition from  
the Cross** 1525-28

1525-28



**The Visitation**1528

### Agnolo Bronzino 1503-72

A Florentine Mannerist painter, he was mainly a portraitist but also painted many religious subjects, and a few allegorical subjects, which include what is probably his best known work, Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time, c. 1544–45, now in London.

He trained with Pontormo, the leading Florentine painter of the first generation of Mannerism, and his style was greatly influenced by him, but his elegant and somewhat elongated figures always appear calm and somewhat reserved, lacking the agitation and emotion of those by his teacher. They have often been found cold and artificial, and his reputation suffered from the general critical disfavour attached to Mannerism in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Recent decades have been more appreciative of his art.

Mannerist portraits by Agnolo Bronzino are distinguished by a serene elegance and meticulous attention to detail. As a result, Bronzino's sitters have been said to project an aloofness and marked emotional distance from the viewer. There is also a virtuosic concentration on capturing the precise pattern and sheen of rich textiles.



**Young Man with a  
Book** c1530-39



**Portrait of Bia de'  
Medici** c1545



**Eleonora di Toledo  
with child Giovanni**



**Venus, Cupid, Folly  
and Time** 1444/5

### Parmigianino 1503-40

Parmigianino's work is characterized by a "refined sensuality" and often elongation of forms and includes Vision of Saint Jerome (1527) and the iconic if somewhat untypical Madonna with the Long Neck (1534), and he remains the best known artist of the first generation whose whole careers fall into the Mannerist period.

His prodigious and individual talent has always been recognised, but his career was disrupted by war, especially the Sack of Rome in 1527, three years after he moved there, and then ended by his death at only 37. He produced outstanding drawings.



**Self Portrait in a convex Mirror** c1524



**Bardi Altarpiece** 1521



**Antea (Portrait of a Young Woman)** 1524-27



**Madonna with the Long Neck** 1535-40



**Circumcision of Christ** c 1523

### Benvenuto Cellini 1500 – 1571

This intricate 26-cm-high sculpture, of a value conservatively estimated at 58,000,000 schilling, was commissioned by Francis I. Originally a goldsmith, Cellini's famous gold and enamel Salt Cellar (1543) was his first sculpture, and shows his talent at its best. Featuring Poseidon, a naked sea god, and Amphitrite (water and earth) sitting opposite each other with legs entwined, and with elongated proportions symbolically representing the planet Earth, it is considered a masterpiece of Mannerist sculpture.



**Salt Cellar** 1540-43



**Perseus With the Head of Medusa** 1545

**Perseus with the Head of Medusa** is a bronze sculpture, certainly a masterpiece, designed with eight angles of view, another Mannerist characteristic, and artificially stylised in comparison with the Davids of Michelangelo and Donatello. The sculpture stands upon a square base with bronze relief panels depicting the story of Perseus and Andromeda, similar to a predella on an altarpiece. It is located in the Loggia dei Lanzi of the Piazza della Signoria in Florence.

Book: Cellini's Autobiography describing the casting of Perseus.

He even writes in a complacent way of how he contemplated his murders before carrying them out. He writes of his time in Paris:

"When certain decisions of the court were sent me by those lawyers, and I perceived that my cause had been unjustly lost, I had recourse for my defense to a great dagger I carried; for I have always taken pleasure in keeping fine weapons. The first man I attacked was a plaintiff who had sued me; and one evening I wounded him in the legs and arms so severely, taking care, however, not to kill him, that I deprived him of the use of both his legs. Then I sought out the other fellow who had brought the suit, and used him also such wise that he dropped it."

### Giambologna 1529 – 1608

A Flemish sculptor based in Italy, celebrated for his marble and bronze statuary in a late Renaissance or Mannerist style.



**Rape of the Sabine Women** 1579-83

**Francesco Primaticcio 1504 - 1570**

**Primaticcio**  
Stucco over door, fontainebleau  
1530/40s

**Giulio Romano 1494 - 1546**

**Romano**  
*The fall of the giants*,  
fresco 1526-34

**Rosso Fiorentino 1494 -1550**

**Fiorentino**  
Decoration, Fontainebleau

**Giorgio Vasari 1511 – 1574**

An Italian painter, architect, writer, and historian, most famous today for his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, considered the ideological foundation of art-historical writing.



**Vasari**  
*Six Tuscan Poets* c1544



**Vasari**  
*Pieta* c1550

**Theme: Susanna and the Elders**

The subject depicts the story of Susanna from the Old Testament. She was the wife of one Joachim, and received the advances of his husband's friends while taking a bath. After her refusal, the "Elders" accused her of adultery, but the accusation was later proved to be false thanks to the intervention of Daniel. It has been a topic among artists from all periods.

**Alessandro Allori 1535–1607**

An Italian portrait painter of the late Mannerist Florentine school. His *Susanna and the Elders* is distinguished by latent eroticism and consciously brilliant still life detail, in a crowded, contorted composition.

**Lorenzo Lotto c1480 - 1556/7**

An Italian painter, draughtsman and illustrator, traditionally placed in the Venetian school, though much of his career was spent in other North Italian cities. He painted mainly altarpieces, religious subjects and portraits. While he was active during the High Renaissance, his nervous and eccentric poses and distortions represent a transitional stage to the first Florentine and Roman Mannerists of the 16th century.

**Artemisia Gentileschi 1593 - c1656**

An Italian Baroque painter, today considered one of the most accomplished painters in the generation following that of Caravaggio. She trained in the workshop of her father, Orazio Gentileschi. They visited England when summoned to the court of Henry VIII. In an era when women painters were not easily accepted by the artistic community or patrons, she was the first woman to become a member of the Accademia di Arte del Disegno in Florence.

At the age of seventeen she produced her first major work, *Susanna and the Elders*.

**Guido Reni 1575 - 1642**

An Italian painter of high-Baroque style. He painted primarily religious works, as well as mythological and allegorical subjects. Active in Rome, Naples, and his native Bologna, he became the dominant figure in the Bolognese School, and his eclectic classicism was widely influential.

**Massimo Stanzioni 1585 - 1656**

An Italian Baroque painter, mainly active in Naples.

**Tintoretto 1518- 1594**

An Italian painter and a notable exponent of the Renaissance school. For his phenomenal energy in painting he was termed Il Furioso. His work is characterized by its muscular figures, dramatic gestures, and bold use of perspective in the Mannerist style, while maintaining colour and light typical of the Venetian School.



**Allori**



**Lotto 1517**



**Gentileschi 1610**



**Reni 1620/25**



**Stanzioni 1643**



**Tintoretto 1555/6**

### **Giuseppe Arcimboldo 1526/7 1593**

Arcimboldo is chiefly known for his portraits contrived from still life compositions carefully constructed by his imagination. Besides, when he assembled objects in one portrait, he never used random objects. Each object was related by characterisation. In the portrait now represented by several copies called *The Librarian*, Arcimboldo used objects that signified the book culture at that time, such as the curtain that created individual study rooms in a library. The animal tails, which became the beard of the portrait, were used as dusters. By using everyday objects, the portraits were decoration and still-life paintings at the same time. His works showed not only nature and human beings, but also how closely they were related.



**Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian and Family** c1563



**Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor as Vertumnous, the Roman god of the Seasons** c1590/1



**The Librarian,**  
Skokloster Castle 1562



**The Four Seasons**

Some scholars, who had a close relationship with the book culture at that time, argued that the portrait *The Librarian* ridiculed their scholarship. In fact, Arcimboldo criticised rich people's misbehaviour and showed others what happened at that time through his art. In *The Librarian*, although the painting might have appeared ridiculous, it also contained a criticism of wealthy people who collected books only to own them, rather than to read them.

### **El Greco 1541-1616**

El Greco attempted to express religious emotion with exaggerated traits. After the realistic depiction of the human form and the mastery of perspective achieved in high Renaissance Classicism, some artists started to deliberately distort proportions in disjointed, irrational space for emotional and artistic effect. El Greco still is a deeply original artist. El Greco has been characterized by modern scholars as an artist so individual that he belongs to no conventional school. Key aspects of Mannerism in El Greco include the jarring "acid" palette, elongated and tortured anatomy, irrational perspective and light, and obscure and troubling iconography.



*Baptism of Christ* 1614

### **Joachim Wtewael 1566-1638**

A Dutch Mannerist painter and draughtsman, as well as a highly successful flax merchant, and town councillor of Utrecht. Wtewael was one of the leading Dutch exponents of Northern Mannerism, and his distinctive and attractive style remained largely untouched by the naturalistic developments happening around him, "characterized by masterfully drawn, highly polished figures often set in capricious poses".

He continued to paint in a Northern Mannerist style until the end of his life, ignoring the arrival of the Baroque, and making him perhaps the last significant Mannerist artist still to be working. His subjects included large scenes with still life in the manner of Pieter Aertsen, and mythological scenes, many small cabinet paintings beautifully executed on copper, and most featuring nudity.



*Self portrait* 1601



*Perseus and Andromeda* 1616



*Mars and Venus Surprised by the Gods* 1605



*Judgement of Paris* 1615



*The Wedding of Peleus and Thetis* 1612

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