

The Images of Caveman

I have added images to the pdf of the Caveman lecture. For those who only want to look at the pictures, I've repeated them here. This is an all-inclusive collection of art from the dawn of time all the way to the present, with one or two pieces left out for reasons of space.

The title page of Caveman is Rene Magritte's "The Betrayal of Images." It is a painting of a pipe with the caption, "This is not a pipe." This is a fun conundrum about the difference between art and reality. You can explain it for yourself. You can also explain why Jon Cruz is popping out of the pipe, because I certainly can't.

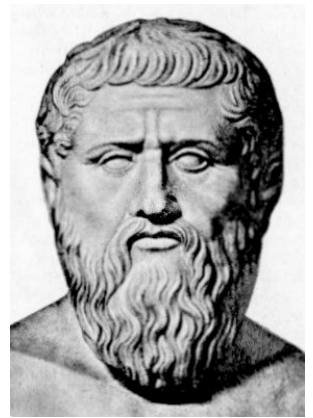


Art is as old as humanity. Witness the cave paintings in France. If I'm not mistaken these were created by artists spitting their paints onto the walls. This

was considered very French, even before France was invented.

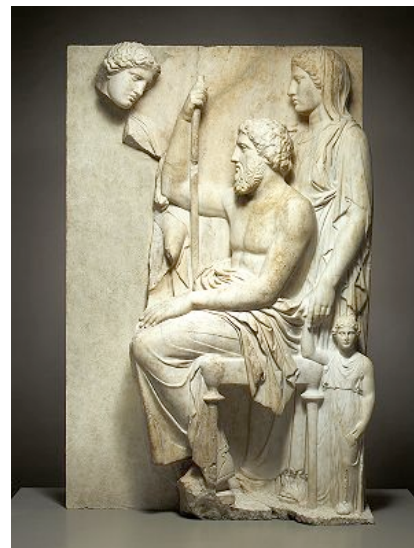


Plato was not big on individuals or individual rights. He believed that the world should be ruled by philosophers. He always listed his day job as—you guessed it—philosopher.

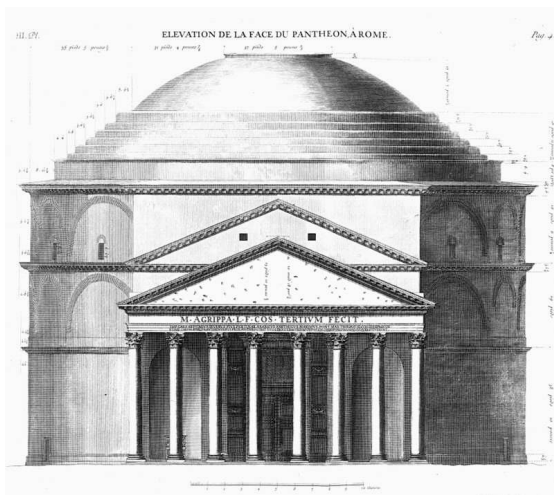


St. Augustine explained that the main goal of human life was salvation. That is, religion was everyone's number one goal. He always listed his day job as—you guessed it—religion guy.

The ancients learned to sculpt over the course of many centuries. The work got more realistic as they learned how to do it better and better. The sculptor of the piece below on the right, however, never did learn that heads simply do not float in space willy-nilly.

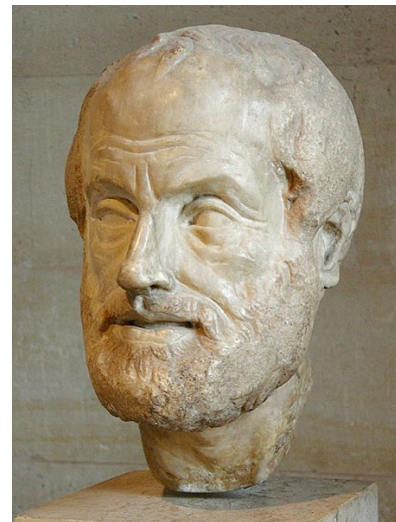


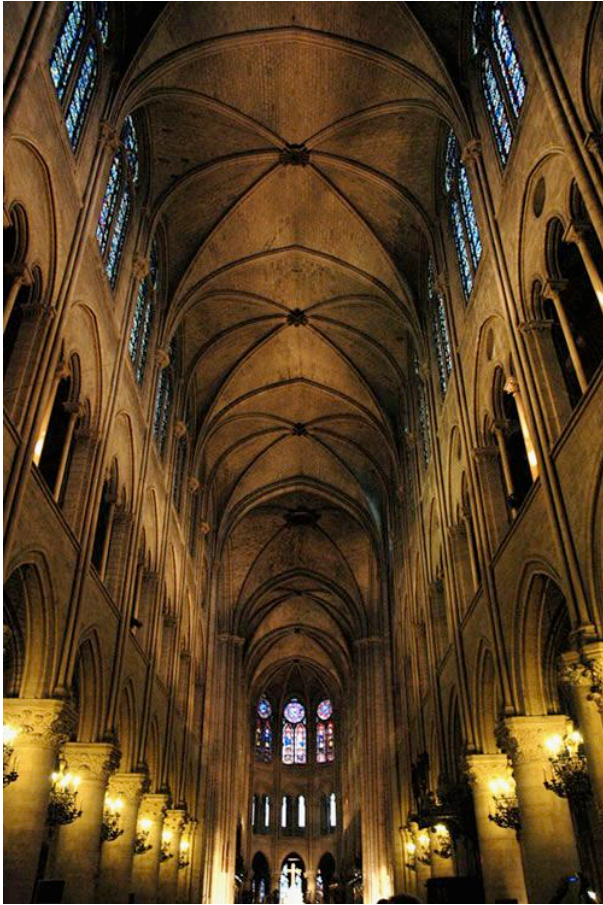
In ancient architecture, columns held up the roof. Today often it is only the columns that remain standing. Although the Greeks were aware of the arch, they did not incorporate it into their architecture, which was rather arch of them, but you know how it is. The Romans, on the other hand, had no such scruples and put arches everywhere. If you turn an arch around in a circle it becomes a dome. If your hair all falls out, your head becomes a dome. Draw your own conclusions



The Pantheon now stands in the middle of Rome, little changed from when it was originally built. There is a hole in the roof dome that lets in light. And rain. There are drains in the floor to let the rain out. The light remains trapped within.

Aristotle explained that works of art needed a beginning, a middle and an end. More to the point, he explained that the beginning should come first, the end should come last, and the middle should be somewhere in between. For this, he earned himself a statue.



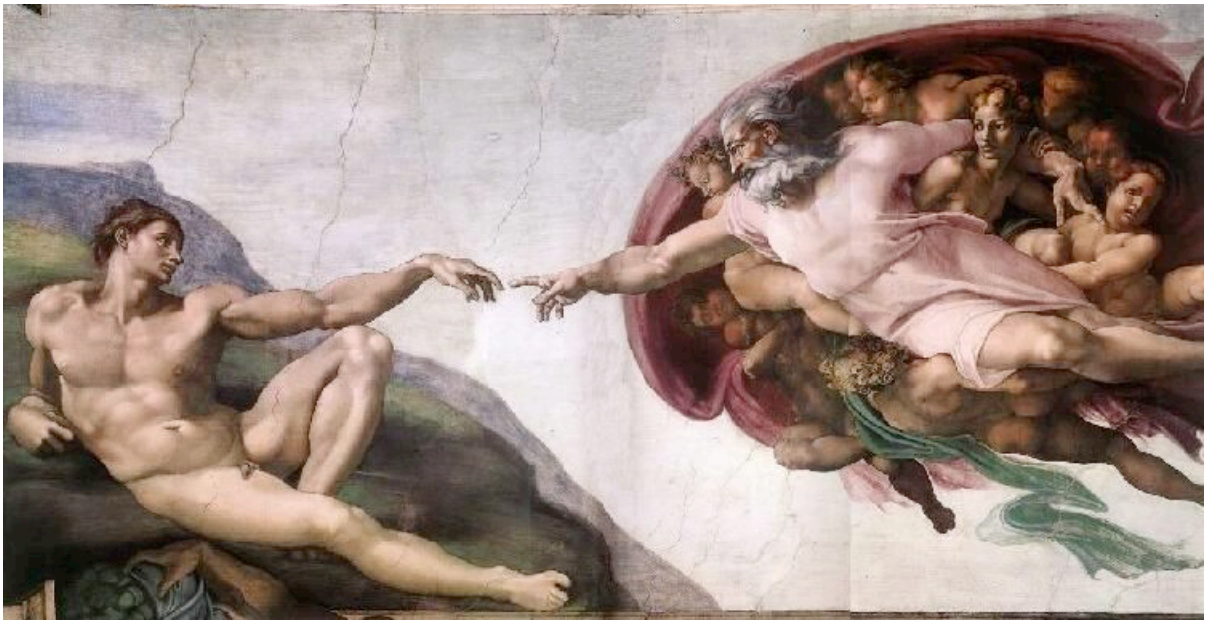


The vaulted ceiling of the nave of a cathedral gives the space great height, and great airiness, and a great feeling of spirituality facing up. (Facing down, there's just the floor, old chewing gum and an empty popcorn box.) This is architecture that has a job to do and does it.

This statue is a detail of Michelangelo's Pieta in St. Peter's in the Vatican. It's about as good as realistic sculpture could get, especially if that realistic sculpture was put in aid of transcendent spirituality.



When Mary is assumed into heaven, she trails a cord behind her in many paintings. St. Thomas is usually pictured as arriving too late, or grabbing the cord, or something along those lines. Sometimes these pictures just don't make sense unless you know the backstory.



Is the creation of man the beginning of Humanism?



Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 theses on the door of the church announced the beginning of the individual's role in his personal salvation, which is the underlying meaning of the Protestant Revolution.

There is no reason for a picture of Spongebob in this picture essay, but that doesn't mean we won't include one.





The romantic movement marks the trend away from all narratives being about gods and heroes to narratives about the common person. And who is more common than Huck Finn?



In the 19th Century the French insisted that paintings tell a story, preferably one of great moral value. Napoleon's exploits offered a perfect background for such narratives. But in

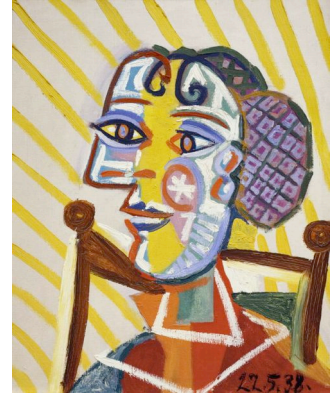


the latter 1800s a new batch of artists came along who wanted to paint different things altogether. Everyday scenes, the light in landscapes, paintings with stories that turned storytelling painting on its head. They came to be known as Impressionists, but they are probably better recognized as *refuses*, because when they submitted their work to the official academy for display, it usually went back to them with a big red R on the back, signifying that it had been refused.

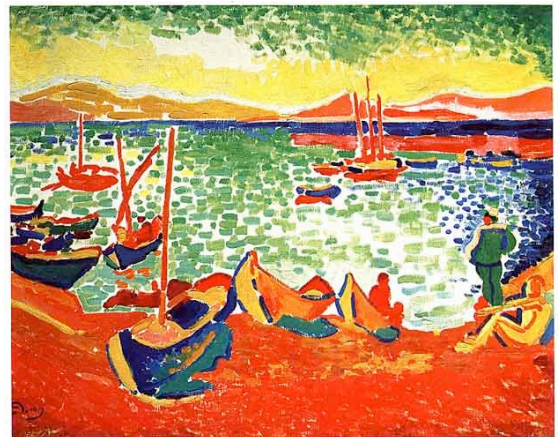




Duchamp and Picasso did not need eyeglasses. They were experimenting with perspective, and the way we look at paintings.



The Fauves, or “wild beasts” challenged the way we look at color.



Pollock questioned the way we put paint onto a canvas. And managed to save a lot of money on brushes while he was at it.

If I had any serious PhotoShop skills, that would be Jon Cruz coming out of that fireplace. Surrealists questioned the subject matter of paintings by painting realistic representations of unreal things. And what is more unreal than Jon Cruz?

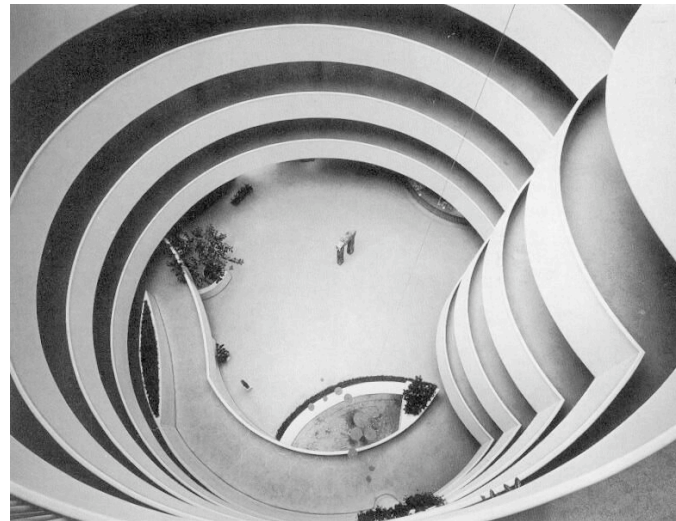


Skyscrapers speak to the longings of cities to reach for the skies, reminiscent of the way cathedrals reached for heaven with their high ceilings. Nowadays, some might suggest we tend to be worshipping commerce over God.



The modernists stripped away decoration from their work. Sometimes this resulted in something as clean and elegant as the UN building. Other times it resulted in ugly apartment buildings for “the workers” in which no one could conceivably be living happily within.

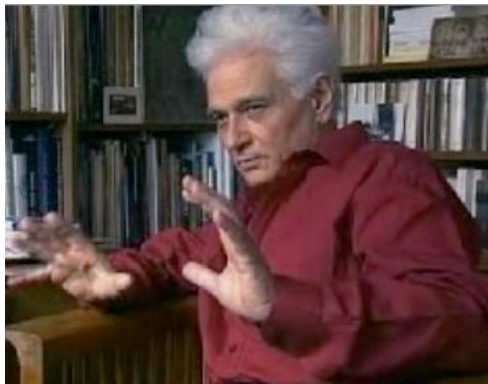
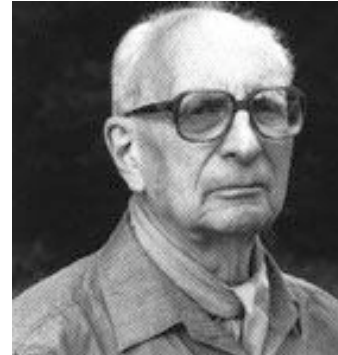
If form follows function, as some modernists would have it, then it is possible that Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim is a perfect example: a gallery designed for viewing art, a long continuous space wrapped into a spiral. Compare the oversized, plain vanilla white spaces of the recently redesigned MOMA...



With *The Dubliners*, you know a story has ended because you turn the page and there's the start of another story. *Ulysses* is possibly the English Major's Number One All-Time Favorite Novel. And *Finnegans Wake* is totally unreadable. Viva Joyce!



Claude Levy-Strauss is the father of both Structuralism and the grim Gallic stare.



Jacques Derrida needed both writing lessons and a decent haircut.

Michel Foucault, on the other hand, gave up haircuts while still in his formative years.



Baudrillard did not believe that there was any difference between art and reality, and as a result saved a lot of money on museum admissions.

Once your building materials are able to hold up virtually anything, you can start to *build* virtually anything. This is Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.



Postmodern architecture is free to sample from previous genres and styles at will. This classic Palladian arrangement has your traditional columns, with one or two (or seven) slight variations.

What happens in Egypt stays in Egypt.

