

# Art of the Early Twentieth Century in Europe

Every age, it has been said, learns from and builds on the one before it. The truth of these words is clear from developments in art in the early 1900s. Several new styles came along, each borrowing in a different way from Post-Impressionism. These styles, which stunned the art world, continue to affect art through the present day. In this lesson you will learn about the pioneers behind these innovative ways of making art.

## FAUVISM

In 1905 a showing by a group of French artists started the art community buzzing. The most striking feature of the works in the show was their raw, sizzling colors. No effort had been made to paint realistic pictures. The artists' goal was to express their feelings through sharply contrasting colors and heavy outlines. One angry critic wrote that the paintings looked as though they had



► **Figure 16-1** Describe the lines in this painting. How have the elements been used to give the work a sense of oneness?

Henri Matisse. *The Red Studio*. Issy-les-Moulineaux. 1911. Oil on canvas. 181 x 219.1 cm (71¼ x 86¼"). Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.

been done by *fauves* (fohvs). This term, which is French for “wild beasts,” gave the movement its name: Fauvism (fohv-iz-uhm). **Fauvism** is an art movement in which artists used wild, intense color combinations in their paintings.

The leader of the Fauves was a law student who chose to become an artist. His name was Henri Matisse (ahn-ree mah-tees). For his paintings, Matisse chose colors that communicated a joyous or happy mood. He then combined them, as in the picture in Figure 16-1, to create rich, decorative patterns. To understand the importance of color in Matisse's works, try to imagine Figure 16-1 in black and white. In what way would the painting be different? How would its mood change?

## EXPRESSIONISM

Matisse and the Fauves wanted to show feelings in their art. In Germany the same goal was shared by another group of artists, who developed a movement known as Expressionism (ek-spressh-uh-niz-uhm). Artists using **Expressionism** worked in a style that emphasized the expression of innermost feelings. They ignored the contemporary rules of art. They had the strength to experiment with, to exaggerate, and in other ways to change, the proportions of figures and objects.

### Painting

An early leader of the Expressionist movement was an artist named Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (ehrnst lood-vig keerk-nuhr). Figure 16-2 shows Kirchner's inner view of a street scene. Note his use of brilliant, clashing colors and sharp, twisted shapes. The people in Kirchner's world are crammed together in a small space. Yet they manage not to notice one another. How might you sum up the artist's feelings toward these people and their world?



▲ **Figure 16-2** The artist has used twisted shapes to express his emotions. An earlier artist you read about did the same thing. Do you recall that artist's name?

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. *Street, Berlin*. 1913. Oil on canvas. 120.6 x 91.1 cm (47½ x 35¾"). Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York.

### Printmaking

The power of Expressionism can also be seen in the prints and drawings of Käthe Kollwitz (kay-tuh kohl-wits). At a time when most artists were exploring color, Kollwitz created works mainly in black and white. Many, like the print in Figure 16-3, focus on the ills of working-class life. Can you identify the emotions on the faces of these people?

## CUBISM

Paul Cézanne, you will remember, was interested in showing objects as solid-looking forms. A guiding idea behind Cubism was Cézanne's notion that all forms in nature are made up of three shapes. Those three are the sphere, cone, and cylinder. This idea led to the development of **Cubism**, a style in which objects are shown from several different angles at once.





▲ Figure 16-3 This was from a series of prints showing an angry German peasant revolt in the 1500s. What might the artist's choice of subject tell us about events in her own time?

Käthe Kollwitz. *The Prisoners*. 1908. Etchings. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

### Painting

The founder of Cubism was an artist you have met before in this book. Even if you had not met him here, his name is one you would instantly recognize. It is Pablo Picasso.

Picasso's early Cubist paintings were different arrangements of bits and pieces of his subject viewed from different angles. The subjects of these works are at times difficult to pick out. Later he began using brighter colors and larger shapes in his works. He also added texture and pattern, often by gluing found objects to his paintings. The picture in Figure 3-7 on page 42 is one of Picasso's later Cubist works. Are you able to identify the objects in this picture?

### Sculpture

The Cubist style also found its way into sculpture of the early twentieth century. Jacques Lipchitz (**zhahk lip-shuts**), a Lithuanian-born sculptor who studied in Paris, used Cubism in his bronze castings. One of these works is pictured in Figure 16-4. Notice how the many fragments of a figure add up to a carefully designed three-dimensional whole. How has the artist used texture to give the work a sense of harmony?



▲ Figure 16-4 What has the artist done to create different light and dark values? Can you point to places where a variety of lines and forms is used?

Jacques Lipchitz. *Bather*. 1923-25. Bronze. 198.5 x 79.1 x 70.5 cm (78 1/8 x 31 1/8 x 27 3/4"). Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas. Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Algur H. Meadows and the Meadows Foundation, Inc.

### NON-OBJECTIVE ART

One evening in 1910 after painting outdoors all day, a weary artist returned to his studio. There he was greeted by a surprise that changed the course of art history. Perched on his easel was a painting unlike anything he had ever seen. Its brightly colored shapes and lines seemed to glow and shimmer in the dim light. Rushing to the canvas, the artist had his second surprise of the night. The work was his own; he had carelessly placed it upside down on the easel! The artist's name was Wassily Kandinsky (**vahs-uh-lee kuhn-din-skee**). His discovery led to the birth of a new style called **non-objective art**. These are *works in which no objects or subjects can be readily identified*.

### STUDIO EXPERIENCE

Look through the pages of a magazine for street scenes. Cut any pictures you find into angled shapes of different sizes. Arrange these shapes into a collage. Your work should capture the look and feel of a twentieth-century American street scene. Glue the shapes to a sheet of white paper. Compare your street scene with the one in Figure 16-2. Is your collage as successful in expressing a mood or feeling? Why, or why not?

In the experiments that followed, Kandinsky found he could express feelings using only colors, shapes, and lines. These elements could be arranged, just as the notes of a song are, to create a mood. Look at the painting that opens this chapter on page 240. Imagine the colors, shapes, and lines to be musical notes. What kind of tune do these elements seem to play? Do they play a loud and brassy melody, or a soft and mellow one?

### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What is Fauvism? Who was the leader of the Fauves?
2. What is Expressionism? In what way did the Expressionists ignore the rules of art?
3. To what movement did the artist Käthe Kollwitz belong? What media did she favor?
4. Define *Cubism*. Name the Post-Impressionist artist whose ideas influenced the Cubist movement.
5. Tell in what area of art Jacques Lipchitz worked. By what art movement was he influenced?
6. Tell how non-objective art got its start. Name the originator of the movement.



# Art of the Early Twentieth Century in America

In the early twentieth century the pace of life quickened in the United States. The airplane, assembly line, and telephone were all part of a new fascination with speed. A search for new formulas in American art mirrored the restlessness of the age. In this lesson you will learn about the most important of the new art movements. You will also learn about developments in the art of Mexico.

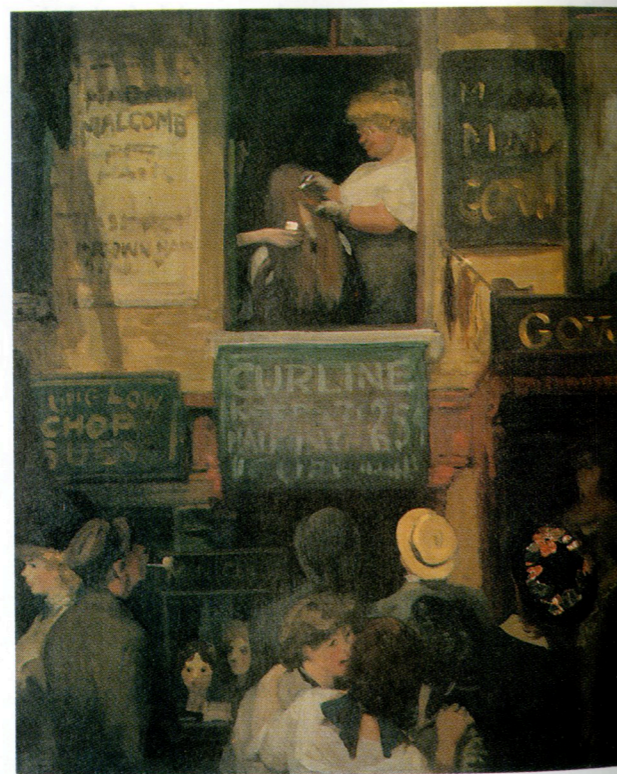
## THE ASHCAN SCHOOL

As the 1800s gave way to the 1900s, the important names in American art remained unchanged. Homer, Eakins, and Ryder continued on as the unchallenged leaders. In New York a group of lesser-known painters felt a change was overdue. Since there were eight members in all, they called themselves, simply, **The Eight**. This was a group of artists who created art work that reflected the spirit of the times in which they lived, the early 1900s.

The members of The Eight were all one-time newspaper cartoonists or magazine illustrators. These experiences influenced their choice of subjects for their paintings. Their works drew on images from everyday life in the big city. These pictures of crowded city streets, dark alleys, and gray slums were recorded in a no-nonsense, realistic style. When The Eight held their first public showing in 1908, viewers politely examined their works. Then they laughed. A more fitting name for these chroniclers of working-class American life, some decided, was the **Ashcan School**. This became the popular name given to the group of artists who made realistic paintings of working-class America.

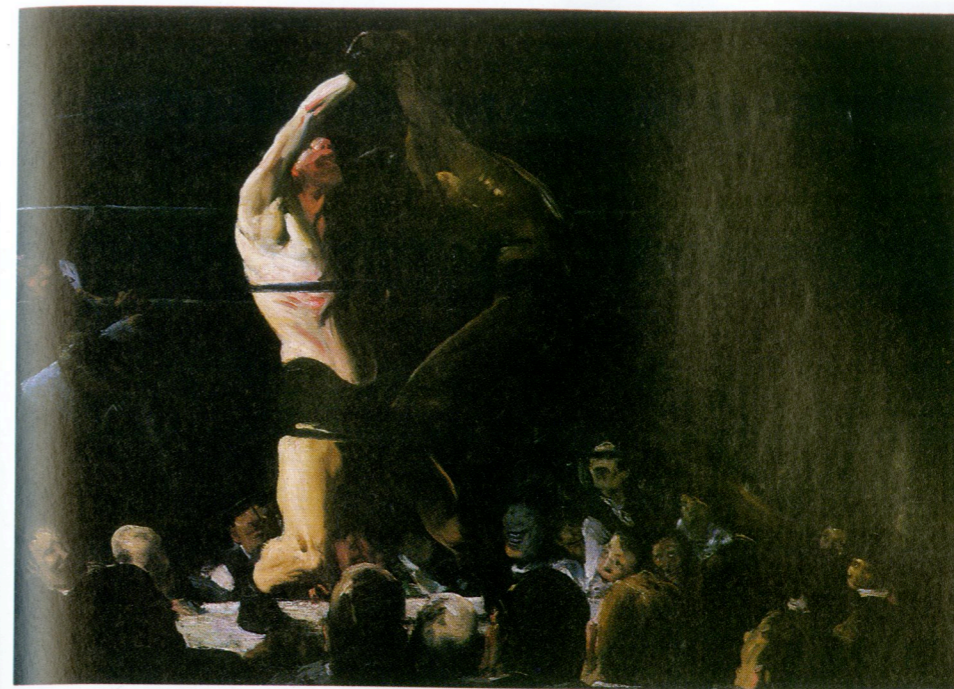
## Painting

One of the most talented members of the Ashcan School was John Sloan. His pictures capture the color, movement, and humor of big-city life. Look at the painting by Sloan in Figure 16-7. The hairdresser in the picture goes about her business with hardly a care. Below, meanwhile, passersby stop and stare as if witnessing an important event. Locate the girls at the bottom of the picture. One, you will notice, seems to be talking excitedly. What do you suppose she is saying?



▲ Figure 16-7 What has the artist done to emphasize the figures in the second-story window? How has movement been introduced?

John Sloan. *Hairdresser's Window*. 1907. Oil on canvas. 81 x 66 cm (31<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 26"). Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection.



◀ Figure 16-8 Do you think this painting would be more dramatic if the artist had added more detail or taken away some detail? What has the artist done to create a feeling of movement? What aesthetic view would you use when judging this work?

George Wesley Bellows. *Both Members of This Club*. 1909. Canvas. 115 x 160.5 cm (45<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 63<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Chester Dale Collection.

An artist who was closely tied to the Ashcan School, though not one of The Eight, was George Bellows. His painting in Figure 16-8 is of one of his favorite subjects, a prizefight. The work shows two boxers clashing furiously at center ring while onlookers cheer them on. Study the faces of the crowd. The quick, slashing brush strokes with which they are captured match the action in the ring.

## Photography

The Ashcan painters were not alone in using city scenes as subjects for art. The same look and feel was achieved in the works of artist Alfred Stieglitz (**steeg-luhts**). Stieglitz played an important part in the early development of photography as a new art form. Examine his photograph in Figure 16-9. What details in the work reveal it to be of a bitterly cold winter day? What mood does the picture communicate?



◀ Figure 16-9 Find the curving and diagonal lines that help pull the viewer in. How does the variety of light and dark values add interest to the work?

Alfred Stieglitz. *The Terminal*. c. 1892. Photogravure. 25.4 x 33.7 cm (10 x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"). The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. The Alfred Stieglitz Collection.





► **Figure 16-10** How is the principle of emphasis used in this painting? Point to lines that lead to the figures of the preacher and the girl.

John Steuart Curry. *Baptism in Kansas*. 1928. Oil on canvas. 101.6 x 127 cm (40 x 50"). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York. Gift of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney.

## REGIONALISM

After World War I a different brand of realistic art enjoyed brief popularity in the United States. Several artists used a style that became known as **Regionalism** (reej-uhn-uhl-iz-uhm) to record *local scenes and events from the artist's own region, or area, of the country.*

An example of the Regionalist style may be found in Figure 16-10. The artist of the work, John Steuart Curry (**stoo-urt ker-ee**), was a native of Kansas. In this painting he shows a preacher about to baptize, or spiritually cleanse, a young girl. The setting is a Kansas farm. Relatives and friends have gathered to witness this ritual of passage. They all look at the preacher and girl, automatically directing the viewer's eyes there. The legs of a windmill point to the scene as well as to the glowing clouds in the sky.

## ART IN MEXICO

The early twentieth century was a time of unrest and revolution in Mexico. Hard-working peasants, treated like slaves by rich landlords, struggled to free themselves. Several artists witnessed the struggle. They used their art to lend their support to the people. One who did so was Mexico's foremost muralist (**myoor-uh-luhst**). A **muralist** is *an artist who paints large art works directly onto walls or ceilings.* His name was Diego Rivera (**dee-ay-goh rih-vehr-uh**). In the mural in Figure 16-11, the artist tells of the only true escape for the poor: death. Several soldiers of the common people kneel around one of their own who has fallen in battle. In the distance flames rise from the landlord's house; the peasant's death has already been avenged.

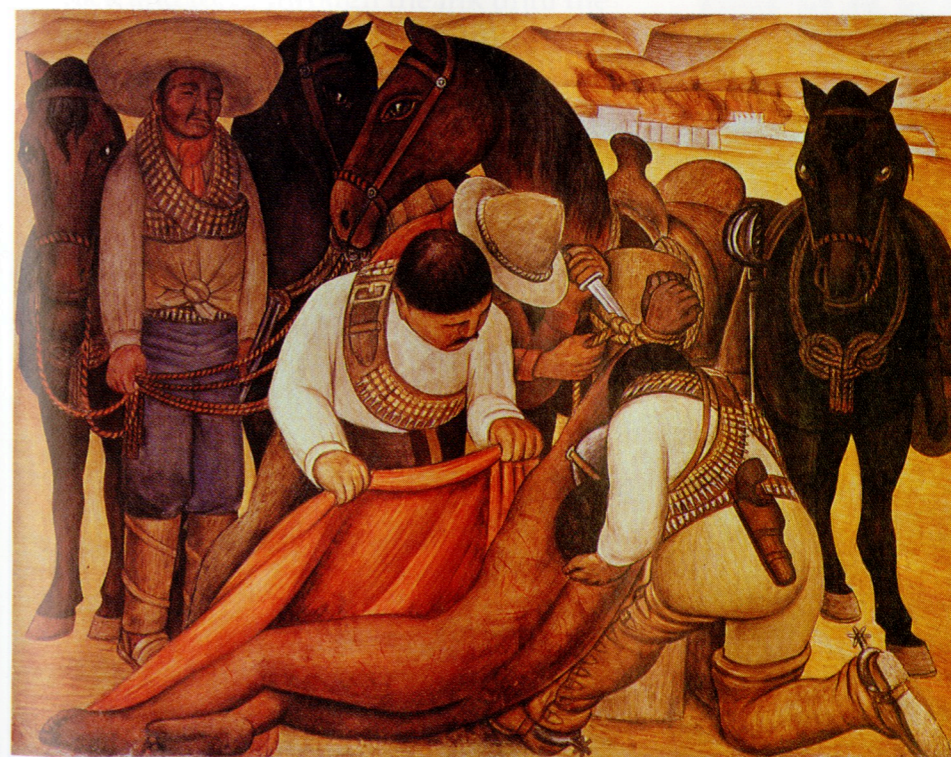
## ✓ CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Who were The Eight? What were their backgrounds as artists? What kinds of paintings did they create?
2. When did The Eight stage their first showing? How did the public react? What nickname were The Eight given?
3. What art form was the specialty of Alfred Stieglitz?
4. What style of art became popular after World War I? Name an artist who created works in this style.
5. What is a muralist? Who was Mexico's foremost muralist?
6. What theme appears in the work of Diego Rivera?

## STUDIO EXPERIENCE

Look again at Figure 16-11. The work, you will notice, is both abstract and expressive.

Choose one of the following words: *war, hunger, anger.* Look through magazines, tearing out pages showing objects that capture the idea of this word. Using pencil and tracing paper, carefully transfer the images you have found to a sheet of paper. Overlap the drawings to create an abstract effect. Use India ink to create contrasts of light and dark shapes. Display your work. Ask classmates to guess which word you used as the theme of your work.



◀ **Figure 16-11** Describe the way in which these soldiers care for the dead. What feelings do you think this painting stirred up in Mexican viewers of the artist's day?

Diego Rivera. *Liberation of the Peon*. 1931. Fresco on plaster. 187.9 x 241.3 cm (74 x 95"). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris.



**BUILDING VOCABULARY**

Number a sheet of paper from 1 to 8. After each number, write the term from the box that best matches each description below.

Ashcan School	Fauvism
Cubism	muralist
The Eight	non-objective art
Expressionism	Regionalism

1. An art movement in which artists used wild, intense color combinations in their paintings.
2. A style that emphasized the expression of innermost feelings.
3. A style in which objects are shown from several different angles at once.
4. A style in which no objects or subjects can be readily identified.
5. A group of New York artists who created art work that reflected the spirit of the times in which they lived, the early 1900s.
6. The popular name given to the group of artists who made realistic paintings of working-class America.
7. A style that records local scenes and events from an artist's own region, or area, of the country.
8. An artist who paints large art works directly onto walls or ceilings.

**REVIEWING ART FACTS**

Number a sheet of paper from 9 to 14. Answer each question in a complete sentence.

9. What feature did Expressionism and Fauvism have in common?
10. Identify the artist whose idea led to the forming of the Cubist movement.
11. What artist is credited with developing the non-objective style?
12. In what way were the photographs of Alfred Stieglitz linked to the work of the Ashcan painters?

13. When did the Regionalist movement begin? Name a member of the movement.
14. Which artist that you read about in this chapter was a muralist?

**THINKING ABOUT ART**

On a sheet of paper, answer each question in a sentence or two.

1. **Extend.** Imagine that Käthe Kollwitz had chosen to do her print *The Prisoners* (Figure 16-3) in color. Do you think such a decision would have added to the power of the work? Explain your answer.
2. **Interpret.** Cubists, it has been noted, relied mostly on their minds to think their way through a painting. Think of a verb you might use in place of *think* to make this statement fit the work of the German Expressionists.
3. **Analyze.** The work by John Steuart Curry (Figure 16-10) offers an excellent example of an artist's use of emphasis. Find another work in this chapter that uses emphasis. Explain what the artist of that work does to lead the viewer's eye to the most important feature.

**MAKING ART CONNECTIONS**

1. **Language Arts.** Divide a sheet of paper into three columns. Label one column *Subject*, one *Composition*, and one *Content*. Then, going through the art works in this chapter one by one, decide in which column or columns each artist's name belongs. Compare your completed list with those of other students in your class.
2. **Language Arts.** What might you say to someone who claimed photography is not art? Would you agree or disagree? How might you use the work by Alfred Stieglitz (Figure 16-9) to support your argument?

**LOOKING AT THE DETAILS**

The detail shown below is from Wassily Kandinsky's *Painting Number 200*. Study the detail and answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What do you notice in this work that suggests that a drawing medium has been used. Explain your answer.
2. Which aesthetic view would you use in judging this work? Give reasons to support your answer.

3. Look at the entire work on page 240. The viewer's eye tends to follow this image from the center of the canvas to the lower left, then upward through the middle. Which elements of art help to define this path?
4. Which principles of art unify this work?



Wassily Kandinsky. *Painting Number 200*. 1914. Oil on canvas. (Detail.) 162.5 x 80 cm (64 x 31½"). Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.