Art of the Age of Anxiety

A.P. European History
Themes in Early Modern Art

- Uncertainty/insecurity
- Disillusionment
- The subconscious
- Overt sexuality
- Violence and savagery
Age of Anxiety Art

With Impressionism, the “formal style” had been crushed and thus we see an explosion of new genres

- All symbolize the post-war anxiety through the eyes of anger, war, death, individualism, skepticism, Freud, etc.
  - looking at things that can’t been seen externally, using art to get at mood, emotion, feelings, and thoughts

- Expressionism
- Cubism
- Abstract
- Dadaism
- Surrealism
- Bauhaus
Expressionism

- Developed in 1905
- Heightened, symbolic colors and exaggerated imagery
- The tendency of an artist to distort reality for an emotional effect
- Raises subjective feelings above objective observations
- Meant to reflect the artists state of mind rather than reality of external world
Marc Chagall (1887-1985)

- Jewish, born in Russia, but fled to Paris in 1914
Marc Chagall

- The Fiddler (1912-1913)
- Mythic figure representing the celebration of Jewish births, marriages, and deaths
- But bears this weight of the community alone
The Birthday (1915)
The Pinch of Snuff (1911)  The Soldier Drinks (1911-12)
Edvard Munch (1863-1944)

- Norwegian
- He abandoned impressionism to portray from his profound sense of isolation the themes of death, fear, and anxiety
- He developed an exciting, violent, and emotionally charged style
  - Birth of German Expressionism
- Reaction to his stark, fearsome images caused the closing of an important Berlin exhibition of 1892
The Scream (1895)

- one of the famous works of art in popular culture
  - "Together with the Mona Lisa, it's the most famous and recognized image in art history."
    - Michael Frahm, art adviser with Frahm Ltd.
- Sold for $120 million in May 2012
  - the most expensive artwork ever sold at auction
What makes *The Scream* so iconic?

http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9712000/9712756.stm
Evening on Karl Johan
Death in the Sickroom
Night in St. Cloud
Cubism

- One of the most influential and revolutionary movements in art
- Every aspect of a subject was seen simultaneously
  - a new, radical version of still life
  - Items are broken up as a puzzle, challenging you to put them back together
    - Looking at more than the visual and external
- Started in 1907 by Spaniard Pablo Picasso
Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

- Picasso was an experimental artist
  - Tried different styles, but eventually fell into Cubism

- Against the mechanical method of photographic paintings

- “One does not paint in order to decorate apartments.” - Picasso
Self-Portraits
The Young Ladies of Avignon (1907)
Prostitutes in a Paris brothel
Portrait of Marie-Thérèse (1937)
Studio with Plaster Head (1925)
Woman with a Flower (1932)
Guitar on a Table

Shows a guitar in pieces on a table

- Not trying to show the guitar, but the sound coming out of the guitar

- It’s a representation of sound
During the Spanish Civil War, Picasso had been asked to create a series of prints to raise funds for the Republic.

*The Dream and Lie of Franco* was a savage attack by Picasso on Franco's regime.
- Franco was portrayed as a swollen monster, proceeding through a series of scenes to desecrate and destroy all in his path.

Months later, he was asked to paint what became one of his most well-known pieces—*Guernica*.
On April 26th, 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, General Francisco Franco called on his allies Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to bomb the Basque town of Guernica. Targeted them due to their support for the Republicans. Intentionally targeted the city center when it was full of civilians doing their weekly shopping. The world's first intentional mass bombing of civilians. Guernica was a horrific example of saturation bombing, being hit with high-explosive and incendiary bombs for over three hours. Guernica burned for three days as hundreds were killed. By May 1st, news of the massacre at Guernica had reached Paris, where more than a million protesters flooded the streets to voice their outrage. Eyewitness reports filled the front pages of Paris papers. Stunned by the black and white photographs, Picasso painted Guernica while in Paris.
Guernica (1937)

- Picasso's hallucinatory nightmarish view of the Spanish Civil War
- Hoping for a bold visual protest to Franco's treachery from Spain's most eminent artist, colleagues and representatives of the democratic government came to Picasso's home in Paris to ask him to paint the mural
- one of modern art's most powerful anti-war statements
Guernica

- It first appeared at the 1937 World’s Fair in Paris
  - Specifically it appeared in the Spanish Pavilion at the World’s Fair
  - The German fair guide called *Guernica* "a hodgepodge of body parts that any four-year-old could have painted."
- After the Fair, *Guernica* toured Europe and North America to raise consciousness about the threat of fascism
- Although Picasso had always intended for the mural to be owned by the Spanish people, he refused to allow it to travel to Spain until the country enjoyed "public liberties and democratic institutions"
Picasso remarked, "It isn't up to the painter to define the symbols. Otherwise it would be better if he wrote them out in so many words! The public who look at the picture must interpret the symbols as they understand them."
Pablo Picasso looks at a picture of Stalin in 1949
Henri Matisse -- France (1869-1954)
The Woman with the Hat
Abstract

- Free experimentation and originality
- Thought their art would lead people to spiritual enlightenment
- Proponents of non-representational imagery
  - Has its own language that consists of colors, shape, and form of self-expression
    - Very philosophical
  - Used the beauty of common objects, which were described as “everyday poetic images”
    - Overlapping planes, broken surfaces, fragmented forms, etc.
  - Understanding it implicitly requires very demanding, time-consuming labor
- The leading abstract painters included Wassily Kandinsky (Russian), Paul Klee (Swiss), and Fernand Leger (French)
  - Leger and Klee served in WWI, and were both profoundly transformed by the experience
Paul Klee (1879-1940)
Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)
Fernand Leger (1881-1955)
Dadaism

- Lasted only from 1916-1922
- Precursor to Surrealism
- Literary and artistic movement by artists appalled and disillusioned by WWI
- Challenged established art forms with irrational concepts in their work (“anti-art”)
- Appeared to not make any sense
- Negative in their attitudes about European culture and society
Dadaism

- Name chosen randomly from a German dictionary and means nothing more than “hobbyhorse”
- Started by Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, and Tristan Tzara
Marcel Duchamp
- French Dada artist
- painted moustaches on postcards of the Mona Lisa
“I have forced myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste.”

Marcel Duchamp
Marcel Duchamp
- His 1917 urinal, entitled "Fountain"
- Just bought a urinal and signed it "R. Mutt"
- Sold for $1,185,000 in 2002
the Bauhaus School

- Started in Germany by Walter Gropius in 1919
  - This was when Weimar Germany was progressive socially, politically and culturally
  - A new school of art, architecture and design
  - Grappled with what it meant to live in an age of machines, mass consumption and post-war dread
  - His rational pursuit of common forms was a political response to the war
    - His strictly regimented apartment blocks had all right angles
the Bauhaus School

- wanted a new understanding of art
- Gropius conceived of a place where painters, sculptors, architects and designers worked together in experimental laboratories
  - Instead of the traditional art academy, where students imitated historical paintings and recreated tired archetypes of beauty
- the Nazis shut it down in 1933
Walter Gropius’s housing estates
Bauhaus architect Mies van der Rohe
Herbert Bayer’s graphic designs
Surrealism

“Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision.” - Salvador Dali (1929)

Surrealism developed out of Dada

Designed to undermine our complacent belief in a stable, predictable, rational world

Began in 1924 and combined irrationality of Dada with the idea of pure, unreasoned thought through subconscious dreams

- Influenced by Freud’s theories on psychoanalysis and the subconscious
- Believed ultimate reality lies in the subconscious mind
- Focused on children’s drawings, art of the insane, and untrained amateurs whose art sprang from pure creative impulses
In 1924, poet Andre Breton said the aim of surrealism is to explore the unconscious “in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation.”
Rene Magritte (Belgium, 1898-1967)

- The Fall (1953)
Son of Man (1964)  

La Thérapeute (1941)
Salvador Dali

- 1904-1989
- Spanish
- “hand-painted dream photographs”
- Snapshots of things that do not exist
The Persistence of Memory (1931)
The Apparition of the Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach
Suppression of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany

With Hitler in power by 1933, the Nazi Party mounted an aggressive campaign against Modern art.

- Hitler, himself a landscape painter, developed an intense hatred of the avant-garde.
- Attacked German Expressionists who showed German soldiers defeated in WWI and the economic depression following the war.
- Also against the distortions of the human form.
- Considered unpatriotic, sick and degenerative.
- Works were removed from museums, most publicly burned, and artists were forbidden to paint or exiled.
  - Ex. on 20 March 1939, 1,004 paintings and sculptures and 3,825 watercolors, drawings and prints were burned in the courtyard of the Berlin Fire Department.
“Degenerate Art”

- The Nazis branded some 20,000 works of art as "degenerate".

- For the National Socialists, the term “degenerate” applied to any type of art that was incompatible with their ideology or propaganda.
  - Art that was considered to be too "Jewish" or "un-German".
  - Included modernist art (Expressionism, Impressionism, Dada, Surrealism, Cubism) and any art by Jewish artists.
    - Artists included Paul Klee and Pablo Picasso.

- Many of them were sold to generate hard currency for Hitler's regime; other works were simply confiscated by Nazi functionaries; others were simply destroyed.
On July 19, 1937, the “Degenerate Art” exhibition opened in Munich

- Initiated by Minster of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels
- Hitler opened the exhibition by describing German art as suffering "a great and fatal illness"
- It included 650 works of art confiscated from 32 German museums
  - The exhibition sought to demonstrate the “degeneration” of artworks by placing them alongside drawings done by the mentally retarded and photographs of the physically handicapped
- The exhibition traveled to 12 other cities from 1937 to 1941
  - Eventually included 16,000 paintings and sculptures removed from the walls of German museums in 1937-38
- Nazi leaders invited public mockery and the exhibition saw 2 million visitors
  - One of the best attended modern art exhibitions of all time
"Degenerate Art"

The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany
The pieces were displayed in cramped, poorly lit rooms and were surrounded by insulting graffiti.
The "degenerate" art show in Berlin in 1938
Hitler at the Haus of German Art, Munich
Nehmen Sie Dada ernst! es lohnt sich
George Grosz
Aftermath

- Many artists were forced to flee their native countries because of persecution, like Paul Klee from Nazi Germany and Kandinsky and Chagall from Russia.

- Many left-wing intellectuals and artists had their artwork destroyed and some even died in concentration camps, both in Germany and Russia.
Nazis and Stolen Art

- the Nazis looted Europe's cultural treasures

- Hermann Goring scoured museums and private collections of wealthy deported Jews for works by famous masters
  - In his villa, he proudly displayed stolen masterpieces by Titian, Raphael, Rubens, and Rembrandt
  - Hitler also called for his Fuehrermuseum in Linz, Austria, to be filled with the supreme paintings from throughout the world
    - These were looted, confiscated and purchased by the Nazis in the occupied countries of France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Russia

- Throughout Europe, the Nazis acquired more than 100,000 works of art
U.S. Soldiers examine Edouard Manet's "Winter Garden," which was hidden in a salt mine, in April 25, 1945
May 3, 1945, US soldiers look at a painting that had been stashed by the Nazis in a salt mine near Heilbronn
General Dwight D. Eisenhower inspects stolen art treasures
American soldier inspects German loot stored in a church at Elligen, Germany, April 24, 1945.
Hermann Goering's art collection, stolen from museums across Europe, is stored temporarily in building near Berchtesgaden while being catalogued, June 9, 1945
an American GI looks at art work temporarily stored in a former Nazi air force barracks in southern Bavaria, 1945
US soldiers carrying paintings from a collection discovered in Austria, much of which was to be hung in an art museum the Nazis planned to build in Linz.