

Art History 102: Long Essay Review Guide

Here are the ERAS to study for (taken from the past quizzes) with some of the art works underneath each Era. (And for the short essay...probably look at what is more recent)

1. Proto Renaissance: In Proto-Renaissance, religious images are the abundant focus of art. Religious figures are often drawn with gold to represent their saintliness. In the image of *St. Francis in Ecstasy*, *Saint Francis* (from High Renaissance) is shown as being very human like. This is a big change from previous images in which saints were depicted as glowing godlike figures. Making the images of saints more akin to the images of other humans illustrates humans as being closer to God and godliness.

- The Proto Renaissance era occurred in Northern Italy.
 - The era enjoyed a relatively stable social and political structure.
 - It was a collection of adjoining Republics (as was the case with Florence, Venice, Genoa and Siena) and Duchies (Milan and Savoy).
 - Trade flourished throughout the region and a thriving economy makes for a more contented populace.
 - During this same period, the Black Death swept through Europe with devastating results. The Church underwent a crisis which saw, at one point; *three* simultaneous Popes excommunicate one another.
 - The changes took place in *how* people viewed (a) the world and (b) their respective roles in it.
 - As art is created by thinking persons, these new ways of thinking naturally began to be reflected in works of art.
 - Human figures, as seen in Church architectural elements, became slightly less stylized and more deeply relieved (in sculptures).
 - Paintings soon followed with halos on the figure's head. Most of the paintings during this era are religious with very large altarpieces.
- a. Giotto *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, 1305-1310, Florence
- i. Exhibits greater spatial consistency and sculptural solidity while retaining some of Cimabue's conventions. Position of the figures within a symmetrical composition reflects Cimabue's influence. Light and shadow play gently across her stocky form and her action...holding child's leg instead of pointing him out to us is less contrived. In spite of the hieratic scale and the formal, enthroned image and flat, gold background, Giotto has created the sense that these are fully three dimensional beings, whose plainly draped, the bulky bodies are inhabited in real space. Giotto's angels are substantial solids whose foreshortened postures are projected from the foreground toward us, unlike

Cimabue, which stay on the surface along lateral strips composed of overlapping screens of color.

- b. 17-11a Duccio *Maesta Altarpiece*, 1308-1311, Siena
 - i. Commissioned by Siena Cathedral known as Maesta
 - ii. Reconstruction of how the front of the maesta might have looked. It is dominated by a large representation of the Virgin and Child in Majesty.
 - iii. Above and below this tableau were small narrative scenes from the last days of the life of the Virgin and infancy of Christ.
 - iv. The background is in gold color, symbolizing the saintliness of the Mary and infant Christ.

2. **Early Renaissance:** In renaissance art, great Cathedrals are constructed. These great Cathedrals are works of art which glorify religion but do not depict humans as godlike; the images painted upon their ceilings later, however, do.

- The Early Renaissance period was set in Florence.
- It was of major importance that the end of the 14th-century saw rival Popes.
- During the 14th century, however, the Black Death wiped out half of the population and two banks succumbed to bankruptcy...which led to civil unrest and occasional famine, coupled with episodic, new outbreaks of plague.
- The 15th-century saw an unprecedented rise in humanist thought because the humanists began writing prolifically.

- a. 19-9 Donatello *St. George*, 1417-1420, Florence
 - i. Saint would have been a standing advertisement for their trade, carrying a metal sword in his right hand and probably wearing a metal helmet and sporting a scabbard.
 - ii. Figure has remarkable presence, even without his accessories.
 - iii. St. George stands in solid contrapposto, legs braced to support his armor heavy torso, the embodiment of alertness and determination. He seems to be staring out into our world.
 - iv. The figure looks like its tense, alert, focused, if perhaps also somewhat worried.
- b. 19-20 Fra Angelico *Annunciation*, 1438-1445, Florence
 - i. This painting describes a quiet, measured space where the demure archangel greets the unassuming, youthful Mary. Fra Angelico used linear perspective with unusual skill, extending the monks' stairway and corridor outward into an imagined portico and garden beside the Virgin's home.
 - ii. The figures are graceful and slender, wearing quietly flowing draperies, assume modest poses.

- iii. Natural light falling from the left models their forms gently, casting an almost supernatural radiance over their faces and hands. Scene is a sacred vision of rendered in a contemporary setting.

3. High Renaissance: In this era, religious images retain old meanings but become greater in scale and admiration. Huge works are commissioned by the Catholic Church from artists such as Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael. Saints and other religious figures, even God is depicted in such ways that they appear very naturalistic and just like regular humans. Depicting religious figures in this way makes humans seem very close to Godliness and the idea that they were created in God's own image. Beginning in this era, portraits of more and more regular humans emerge. Previously, only religious figures were painted, but now, even regular people are being painted gloriously, showing that the human condition is becoming more and more respectful in general.

- Simply put, this period represented a culmination. The tentative artistic explorations of the Proto-Renaissance, which caught hold and flowered during the Early Renaissance, burst into full bloom during the High Renaissance. Artists no longer pondered the art of antiquity. They now had the tools, technology, training and confidence to go their own way, secure in the knowledge that what they were doing was as good - or better - than anything that had been done before.
 - Additionally, the High Renaissance represented a convergence of talent - an almost obscene wealth of talent - concentrated in the same area during the same small window of time. Astounding, truly, considering what the odds against this has to have been.
- a. 20-5 da Vinci *Mona Lisa*, 1503-1506, Rome
 - i. The figure is supposed be Lisa Gheradini del Giocondo, wife of a prominent Florentine merchant.
 - ii. Young woman is portrayed without jewelry, not even a ring. The solid pyramidal form of her half-length figure -another departure from traditional portraiture, which was limited to the upper torso, was silhouetted against distant hazy mountains, giving the painting a sense of mystery.
 - iii. Mona Lisa's facial expression has been called enigmatic because her gentle smile is not accompanied by the warmth one would expect to see.
 - iv. It is this expressive complexity and the psychological presence it gives the human face, especially in the context of the masklike detachment that was more characteristic of Renaissance portraiture.
 - v. Painting has a dusky, mysterious sensation...covered with a tin, lightly tinted tarnish, which enhanced overall smoky haze.