

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Hello. I'd like to welcome you to this episode of Exploring Art History with Ian. My name is Ian McConnell. And today's lesson is about style in works of art.

As you're watching the video, feel free to pause, move forward, or rewind as many times as you feel is necessary. And as soon as you're ready, we can begin.

Today's objectives, or the things you're going to learn today, are listed below. By the end of the lesson today, you'll be able to identify and define today's key terms, give examples of period, regional, and individual style. The big idea for today is that the analysis of style is a basic aspect of art history and helps art historians identify meaningful trends within works of art. And this identification of trends is important because stylistic trends, along with a similar overall consistent philosophy between artists, is indicative of an artistic movement.

Key terms, as always, are listed in yellow throughout the lesson. First key term is style-- the unique method and form used to make a work of art. Period style is a type of art with shared visual characteristics that is unique to a specific period of time. Regional style is art with shared subject matter or physical characteristics that are unique to a specific region. Individual style is art with subject matter and physical characteristics that are unique to a specific artist.

So period style refers to shared visual characteristics that are unique to a period of time. So why do we care? Well, aside from a way to categorize works of art-- similar characteristics, just common preferences, perhaps instructors, or the importance of the subject matter to a larger collection of people. So again, a way to categorize works of art-- and important to note that period style is heavily influenced by geography, meaning where the artists live, to put it simply.

Now, it isn't uncommon for people outside of art history to clump the art of ancient Egypt together. And even though there are strong stylistic elements that persist throughout the ancient Egyptian time frame, there were major historical events that had a profound impact on the visual style.

So I'll begin with the Statue of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III who reigned around the 14th century BC. Now, this statue sort of embodies the traditional elements we have come to associate with a lot of ancient Egyptian art, like the generic-looking face, the almond-shaped eyes, the headdress, the ornamental beard, and the rigid posing. But notice how the overall style changes dramatically when Ahmenhotep's son, Akhenaten, assumes the throne after Ahmenhotep's death.

Now, look at this. The headdress, the ornamental beard, and the rigid pose-- more or less-- remain the same. However, the face has now gained a rather distinct appearance and is widely believed to closely represent the actual appearance of Akhenaten.

Now, the rise of Akhenaten as pharaoh brought along with it one of the earliest documentations of a major religious shift among the Egyptians from a polytheistic religion with many gods to a more monotheistic religion where the emphasis was on one supreme god, an obscure sun god named Aten. Now, Aten had existed in the Egyptian religion prior to this. But it was Akhenaten who elevated his status to the supreme being, the supreme god. Needless to say, this didn't go over too well with the population, in general, and was subsequently dispatched as the state religion after Akhenaten's death.

Here's another type of sculptural relief showing more of the unusual-- at least unusual for Egyptian art-- the unusual physical characteristics like the elongated face and the head, the pear-shaped body and the large belly-- all elements that were applied to members of the royal family, as well, including his wife and children. Now this image is of the pharaoh Ramses II, who was characterized in the Bible as an antagonist to Moses. And he reigned roughly 60 years or so after Akhenaten.

You can see that, by this point, the features we saw in the original sculpture of Amenhotep the III have returned. Now, the erasure of the stylistic elements brought about by Akhenaten was another way of extinguishing his legacy.

So regional style are simply the stylistic characteristics and subject matter associated with a particular region. And this was an idea first proposed by the art history critic, Johann Winckelmann. So why do we care? Well, even artworks created during a particular period could differ significantly in the subject matter and the physical characteristics. So the regional style was referring to a more specialized way of identifying works of art that had common themes, common subject matter, or a common style.

So once again, the regional style is simply the stylistic characteristics and the subject matter that is associated with a particular region, such as the genre paintings of northern Europe, as shown here, or the emphasis of material textures by northern Renaissance painters, as well as the iconographic subject matter favored by other northern European artists. And we'll talk about iconography in another lesson.

So let me talk a little bit about individual style. Individual style refers to characteristics that are unique to a specific artist. So why do we care? Well, it's the most specific type of categorizing. It's where the artist's own interpretations of contemporary and regional subject matter really come through. An important note-- another connection to a different lesson of mine-- that connoisseurs of a particular artist would have extensive knowledge of an artist's individual style.

So I'll return to my earlier painting, which I didn't point out the title of, but I will here. It's depicting the "Fall of the Rebel Angels". And it's by an artist named Pieter Bruegel the Elder, who's a Flemish painter. And this is an example of a thematic preference. And I'm going to compare it with this painting of "Hell" by the Dutch painter, Hieronymus Bosch.

Now, both are using a similar theme-- biblical stories are references. And this was common in northern Europe. But Hieronymus Bosch's work includes a number of fantasy elements that were unusual for the time. And this is something really distinctive about his style-- see where the highlights include the large ears in the upper left quadrant of the picture, the figures that appear to be a hodgepodge of different body parts, and-- my personal favorite-- the pig dressed as a nun in the lower right-hand corner.

Now, this 20th century abstract painting by Mark Rothko is a more modern example of how an artist can still provide an original spin on a particular style and, at the same time, differentiate themselves from other artists while still remaining faithful to that style. And Rothko was known for his large paintings, which featured bands of contrasting colors.

So that brings us to the end of this lesson. Let's take a look at our objectives to see how we did? Now that you've seen the lesson, are you able to identify and define today's key terms? Can you give examples of period, regional, and individual style? Once again, the big idea for today's lesson is that the analysis of style is a basic aspect of art history and helps art historians identify meaningful trends within works of art. And once again, that idea of trends is important because stylistic trends, along with a similar overall consistent philosophy between artists, is indicative of an artistic movement.

Well, that's it for today. I'd like to thank you for joining me. And I'll see you next time.