

Chapter 16

The Battle of the isms:
Neoclassicism, Romanticism, and
Realism

Neoclassicism

- A visual expression of the ideas of the *Enlightenment*
- Order and rationality are valued above all
- Neoclassical painters rejected both the high drama and murky atmosphere of Baroque art and the misty-sentimentality of the Rococo
- They searched for clarity of line, color, and form, admiring the simplicity of Greek art

Neoclassicism

David and the French Revolution



- Art now should express a serious moral purpose
- Jacques Louis David's painting tells a story about the founding of Rome, and emphasizes the idea of self-sacrifice for the state
- The rigid outlines of the men's forms express their serious purpose, in contrast to the soft, "wilting" forms of the women - expressing the emotion of the scene
- David's work was seen as a condemnation of the Rococo style and of the regime that supported it

Neoclassicism

David and the French Revolution



- In his Death of Marat, David turns the controversial revolutionary (and his friend) Marat into a political martyr
- He is murdered in the bath (soaking because of a painful skin disease)
- David radically simplifies the background - as in a work by Caravaggio, nothing distracts us from the image of Marat dead

Romanticism

Goya and the Romantic Reaction

- Goya witnessed the war in Spain after *Napoleon* installed his brother on the Spanish throne
- He paints a massacre of innocent, unarmed civilians in Madrid
- He focuses on the terrified victims and shows one figure in a crucifixion-like pose
- The painting is a mixture of brutal realism and passionate romanticism
- It acts as a reminder of similar acts of political repression and cruelty in our own time



The Birth of Romanticism

- Both *Neoclassicism* and *Romanticism* shared a strong sense of moral purpose
- They each inspired a passionate adherence on the part of their supporters
- But they idealized completely different values
- The Romantics rejected the logic and order of Neoclassicism
- Instead of looking to past models for universal truths, Romantic artists looked within themselves
- Romantics were attracted to the savage, untamed aspects of the natural world – they sensed that nature could never really be controlled

The Birth of Romanticism



- The subjects of Friedrich's works could not have been more different from the subjects preferred by Neoclassicists
- In place of historical or mythological scenes, he painted seascapes, forests, and mountains
- He often places a solitary traveler silently contemplating the infinity of nature
- He evokes a sense of yearning and melancholy

The English Landscape and Romanticism

- Turner's vision of nature was similar to that of Friedrich, who gloried in the grandeur and power of the natural world – what the Romantics called the *sublime*
- In the Slave Ship he shows a disaster caused not just by the destructive power of nature, but also by human greed and fear - the slave traders have thrown their human cargo overboard in attempt to save themselves as a typhoon approaches
- Slave Ship is the ultimate Romantic scene of wild beauty mixed with horror



Romanticism and Politics in France



- The young Romantic painter Theodore Gericault went to Rome and was captivated by Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* and also by the works of Caravaggio
- In the *Raft of the Medusa* he captures the drama and horror of the aftermath of the sinking of a French ship
- He focuses on the dramatic moment when the survivors see the ship that will rescue them - creating a dynamic pyramid of figures, showing a range of human emotion from despair to elation

Romanticism and Politics in France

- In 1830, Paris rose up in a 3-day revolt against a repressive regime
- In Delacroix's pyramid of figures, they seem to press outward, toward us
- We feel we are in the midst of the battle – and triumph is juxtaposed with suffering and death – (as it was in Gericault)



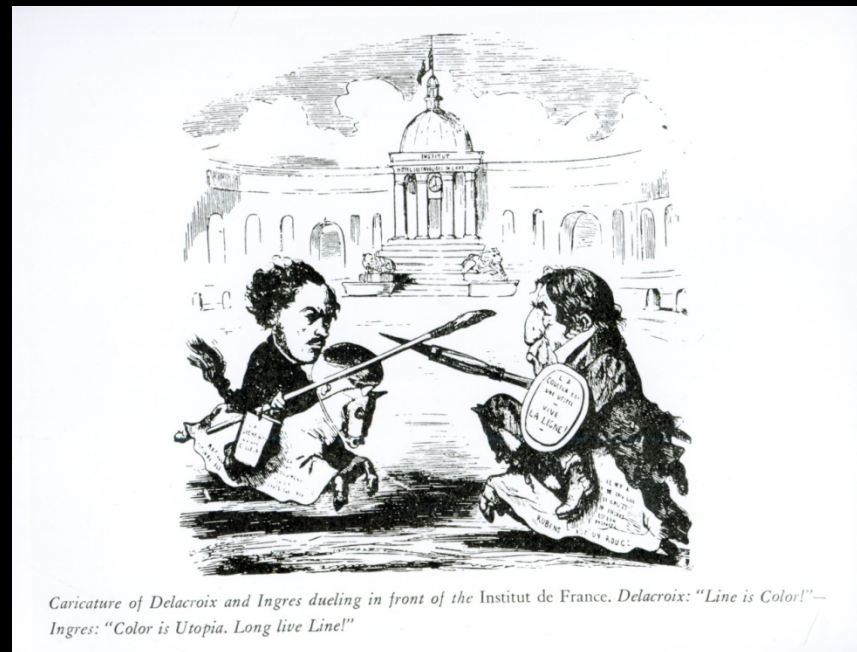
Ingres and Late Neoclassicism



- In France the style of David continued in his student Ingres
- Ingres consciously opposed the style of his rival, Delacroix, who was a colorist - insisting that beautiful line was more important than dramatic sweeps of color and tone
- In Ingres's portraits he brilliantly recreates beautiful details of texture and pattern

The French Art world divided

- The French art world was divided into 2 camps - Ingres led the new classicists, who admired Raphael - Delacroix led the Romantics, who revered Rubens
- This illustrates a basic difference between *painterly* and *linear* styles
- A *linear* artist draws with sharp outlines, clearly defined forms, and relatively solid areas of color
- A *painterly* artist paints with broader strokes, without distinct outlines between shapes, with gradual gradation of light to dark tones, and with colors blended into each other



American Romanticism: The Hudson River School



- The first authentically American “school” of painting
- Artists saw America as a new, unspoiled land of great promise
- Thomas Cole creates a calm, reflective mood in this landscape painted in the Catskills – the winding river meanders slowly through a sunny world, fertile with possibilities

School – here meaning a group of artists with a similar style

Realism: Art and Politics



- Realist artists focused on the world around them – going further than the Romantics in exposing the gritty details of contemporary life
- Daumier records a battle between the people in Paris and the government - after the protest of a law prohibiting unions, a sniper in a working-class apartment building killed a soldier – the remaining soldiers massacred the families in the building
- Daumier honestly depicts the tragic aftermath of unjust violence

Realism: Art and Politics



- On huge canvases, Courbet paints ordinary and working-class people
- He shows ordinary people clustered around an open grave – the composition seems rather boring and the painting almost pointless
- Courbet faithfully paints the people of his native village and emphasizes the reality of this occurrence of death – nothing is idealized or romanticized