

Mannerism

Great Masters of European Art – the High Renaissance

Mannerism

Mannerism is the label given by historians to the style that appears in Italy (at first in Rome and Florence) from about 1520 and will become the dominant current in the arts and architecture until the 1590's. The word comes from the Italian term for "style" maniera, and underlines the notions of artistic invention, self-consciousness and artifice.

Mannerism developed out of the supreme inventions of the High Renaissance artists and most particularly Michelangelo. In its treatment of the figure it favours complex poses, elongation, contortion and an exaggerated muscularity. It prefers crowded and tense spaces, acid colors and sudden shifts from light into dark. Its mood is frequently irrational (Pontormo) even neurotic (Rosso) or frigid and arrogant (Bronzino). Some historians attribute this new mood to the trauma caused in Italy by the sack of Rome by Charles V's troops in 1527 or even the rise of the rebellious creed of the Protestants that will unsettle the Catholic Church. Many of its traits are however already apparent in the later art of Raphael and in Michelangelo circa 1520 and seem to be natural artistic evolutions carried experimentally to new extremes or into new formulas that are then copied and widely imitated thanks to the propagation of engravings. It is also a style suitable to the increasingly sophisticated and snobbish princely courts of the 16th century (the Medici grand dukes in Florence). Aristocratic affectation, preciousness and a literary culture that favours complicated poetry, allegory and pedantic references to the antique past are the dominant trends in these noble circles and greatly affect the art produced for them.

Principal Mannerist Masters:

Giuseppe Arcimboldo 1527 -1593

Bronzino (Agnolo Tori) 1503 - 1572

Benvenuto Cellini 1500 - 1571

Daniele da Volterra (Daniele Ricciarelli) 1509 -1566

Pontormo (Jacopo Carrucci) 1494 -1557

Giulio Romano (c. 1499 - 1546)

Rosso Fiorentino (Giovanni Battista di Jacopo) 1494 -1540

Andrea del Sarto (Andrea d'Agnolo di Francesco di Luca) 1486 -1531

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