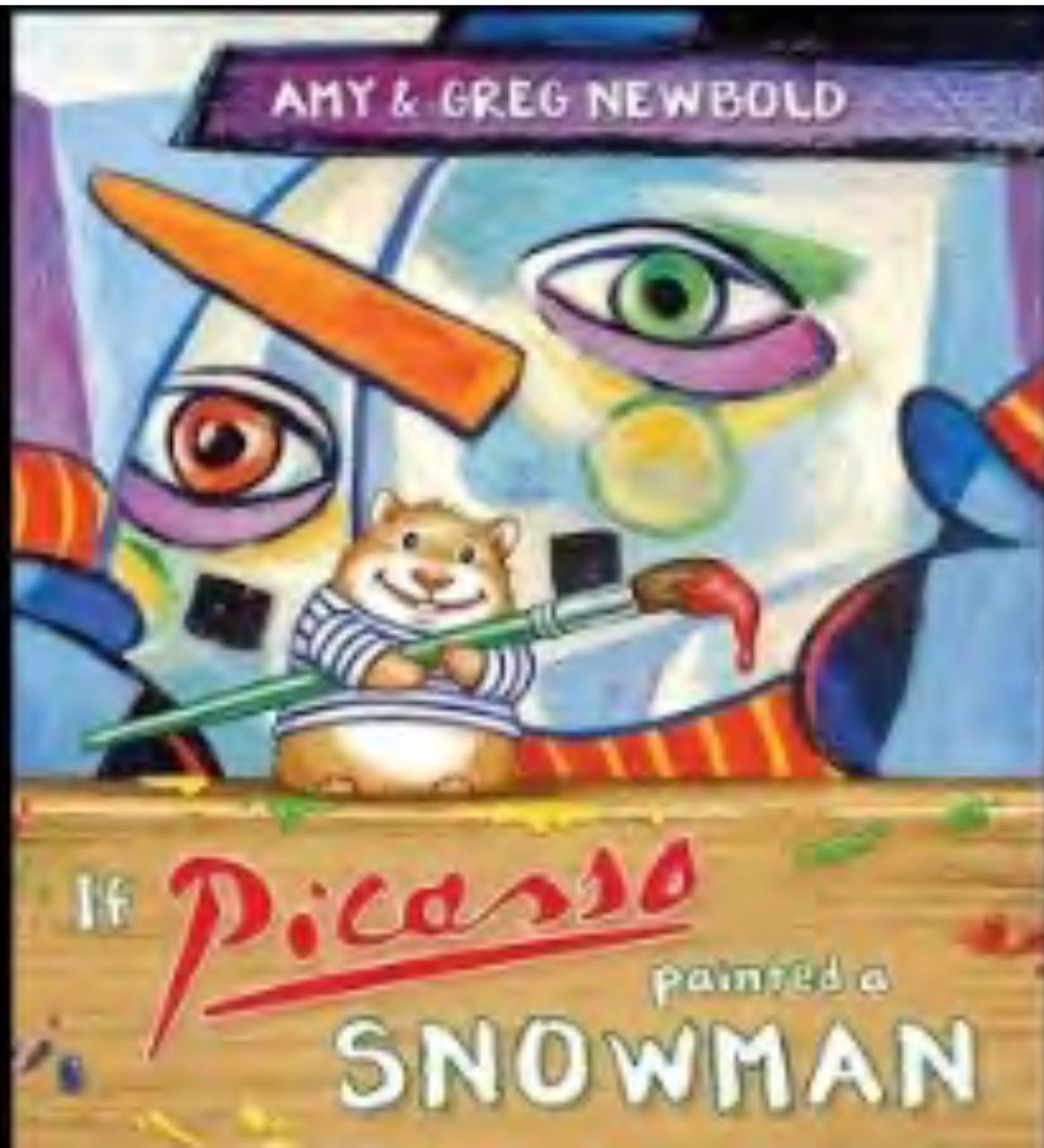


A HISTORY OF ART IN CATS



Project Inspired by:
Nia Gould





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svwdS8ut6Sc>

INTRODUCTION

Felis catus, better known as the beloved house cat, has been a valued human companion throughout history. It is a symbol of culture and refinement, capturing the imagination of the ancient Egyptians, who held cats in the highest esteem. Feline friends have stalked the studios of many artists, such as Pablo Picasso, Claude Monet, and Georgia O'Keeffe. So it seems entirely fitting to enlist cultured cats to navigate a journey through art history.

From ancient Egyptian and Byzantine art to the wacky and wildly successful world of young contemporary artists, students will explore the style that characterized important art movements and the artists who led them.

INTRODUCTION

Students will create a painting of a cat in the style of one of the movements introduced in the book “A History of Art in 21 Cats” by Nia Gould, as well as the book “If Picasso Painted a Snowman” by Amy and Greg Newbold.

Nia Gould uses the elements to create 21 felines that feature characteristics and aspects of an art movement.

Students will be given class time to research the movements introduced and chose one to focus on. Only 2 students will be able to sign-up for each of the movements.



INTRODUCTION

- **Biography and Art Style:** Write a brief paragraph about your movement and artist you will be exploring.
- **Art Works:** Choose 3-4 art works of your artists that you will be inspired by when creating your project. Make sure to include work title, medium, year, etc. For these 3-4 art works, answer how the artist used the elements of art? How does each of the Elements of Art affect the mood of the artwork (Line, Space, Form, Shape, Value, Texture and colour).
- **Derive Meaning:** Answer the following questions about your artist and his/her work. Why does your artist(s) create art? What is his/her (their) motive? What is he/she (they) trying to say?

INTRODUCTION

- **Role and Development of Visual Arts:** Students will need to further research their art movement explaining when and where the artists lived and what life was like in their culture. What does their artworks say about the social, economic, or political culture of the world they live in? How are their feelings/attitudes communicated? What kind of recognition has your artist received- local, national, international? How does their artwork reflect their culture? What role or influence does it have today?
- **Bibliography of Research**

INTRODUCTION

Once the research is completed, students need to create their design in their sketchbook. As part of the preliminary sketchbook work, students need to identify the symbolism used in their art work.

POST-IMPRESSIONISM



SWIRLING SKIES

A technique called impasto, where paint is layered thickly to give a three-dimensional feel, was used to great effect in Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night*, giving it a feeling of depth and movement. The gentle, mystical mood of the work was inspired by Van Gogh's desire to explore the connection between his intense emotions and reality.



AN APPLE FOR THE ARTIST

These apples show the unusual perspective Paul Cézanne employed to give his paintings a sculptural feel. This innovative approach made him hugely influential to the Cubists, who took this style of painting and exaggerated it.



SUNFLOWERS

Postimpressionists were more concerned with how a picture captured mood and atmosphere than how realistic it looked. Van Gogh's vibrant sunflowers radiate the happiness he felt when painting them.

TOTALLY TROPICAL

Paul Gauguin used a lot of mysterious, dreamlike scenes in tropical settings in his work. Although Gauguin tried to encourage Van Gogh to incorporate imaginary elements, his interest was in the ordinary, natural world.



BANDAGED EAR

Van Gogh, famous for his self-portraits, is well-known for supposedly cutting off his ear after an argument with Gauguin. One of his most recognizable paintings, *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*, shows him soon afterward.

"I shut my eyes in order to see."
—Paul Gauguin



DIFFERENT STROKES

Despite Postimpressionists moving away from realism, they were still extremely technically skilled and saw mark making as the foundation of their art. Van Gogh's sketches, made in pencil and charcoal, are so stylized that they are instantly recognizable as his work.

INTRODUCTION

DADAISM



DUCHAMP SUITCASE

One of the first Dadaists, Marcel Duchamp's "anti-art" mentality defined his work. He used everyday, mass-produced items such as a suitcase as the basis for his pieces, in order to express his distaste for materialistic attitudes toward art and culture.

MACHINE PARTS

Known as "Papa Dada," Francis Picabia used industrial elements to celebrate the technological advances that he believed were vital to the development of American culture. He produced a series of mechanomorphic works that looked like playful versions of technical drawings.



"It's inspiration that counts, not the drill."
—Hugo Ball



SCHWITTERS COLLAGE

Kurt Schwitters created collages that challenged the very definition of "art" and artist's materials, using discarded papers and other found objects. He even encouraged artists to add to his work, turning the experience of his work into something that others could participate in, rather than simply observe.



No one is totally sure where the term "Dada" came from, but a popular story is that the artist Richard Huelsenbeck chose the word at random by plunging a knife into a French-German dictionary.



PHOTOMONTAGE

Hannah Höch was a prominent female artist in the Dada movement. Like others, she used photomontage to create surreal and disjointed pieces that questioned society's expectations of women and beauty.

DON'T BE A SQUARE

Hans Arp pioneered a technique that crossed collage with abstraction, tearing squares from paper, dropping them onto separate sheets, and sticking them wherever they fell. The tidiness and regularity of his finished pictures suggests he may have given them a helping hand, though.



ARP SPLODGES

Much of Arp's work used organic, irregular shapes, like these colorful, floating blobs. The seemingly random placement belies his obsession with structural balance and brings a trademark touch of humor to a Dadaist cat.

INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT IMPRESSIONISM



JACK THE DRIPPER

Jackson Pollock developed the now-famous technique of "drip painting"—pouring, dripping, and throwing paint onto his canvases.



KANDINSKY CAT-FACE

Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian painter who was a huge influence on the movement. Predating the Abstract Expressionists, he is often credited with creating the first purely abstract works.

The impression of spontaneity is key to Abstract Expressionism—capturing emotions as they were experienced was a vital part of the artistic process.



As an action painter, Franz Kline used vigorous, expressive brushstrokes that had obvious texture. A Kline cat would have had powerful, sweeping black strokes, most probably set off against plain white paint.



COLOR-BLOCK FUR

Mark Rothko's trademark was using vertically aligned colored shapes set against flat-colored backgrounds. He thought these had the power to represent basic human emotions, such as tragedy, ecstasy, and doom.



POLLOCK PAW PRINTS

Pollock worked spontaneously, walking and dancing across his canvases to channel his subconscious impulses. His footprints can be seen in some paintings, so an Abstract Expressionist cat might leave its own paw marks in paint.



EARS

Throughout her career, American artist Lee Krasner changed her style several times. After time spent focusing on small, geometric shapes, she went on to produce large, expressive canvases.



WHISKERS

Willem de Kooning was a master of "gestural abstraction"—taking apart, distorting, and reassembling the elements of figures using bold, expansive brushstrokes.



DE KOONING HAIR, DON'T CARE

De Kooning often left his paintings with an unfinished feel, as if the brushstrokes were still in motion across the canvas.

KRASNER TAIL

At times, Krasner painted in a state of "controlled chaos," using defined shapes on a much smaller scale than her contemporaries. Her geometric paintings demonstrate the expressive power of small, intricate lines, especially when placed next to bigger, bolder pieces by other artists.

SNEE M DINKS



A HISTORY OF ART
IN 21 CATS



Nia Gould

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN

This cat's air of arrogant self-importance was typical in ancient Egyptian art. Cats were associated with various gods, and their likenesses were preserved as sculptures and amulets and seen in wall and tomb paintings.

Rather than serving a decorative purpose, Egyptian art was used to convey spiritual meaning. Much of it reflects the people's belief in life after death. The images that appeared on tombs and murals were very stylized and made no attempt to show realistic likenesses, either feline or human.

Egyptian artists indicated the rank and importance of the people they depicted with the colours that they used and with the sizes of figures in relation to each other. Anyone observing this cat would instantly identify it as a god rather than a humble mouser.



BYZANTINE

Bathed in a flickering light play created by a thousand church candles, this Byzantine cat stares out of its golden surroundings. It's stylized, spiritual features are made up of a magnificent mosaic of tiny, glazed ceramic tiles.

The Byzantine Empire (330 to 1453 CE) lasted over a thousand years, and its boundaries changed endlessly, yet the style of its art remained remarkably consistent throughout. As it was a continuation of the Roman Empire, it is not surprising that the art of Byzantium was based on the art of the Roman and Greek classical eras. Yet it also developed its own aesthetic, reflected in the symbolic and abstract representation of this cat.





RENAISSANCE

The Mona Lisa is certainly one of the most visited and valuable paintings in the world. It is also the most frequently parodied. With an enigmatic look worthy of La Gioconda herself, this cat-in-a-hat typifies all things Renaissance.

The word "renaissance" means "rebirth" and refers to an exciting period in the history of European art, science, music, literature, and philosophy. It was a time when a reexamination of classical Rome and Greece was combined with new technology, political stability, and prosperity. It coincided with the lives of some of the greatest artists ever known, including Leonardo da Vinci and Johannes Vermeer, from whose paintings this early cat selfie takes inspiration. Renaissance art was concerned with realism.

ROCOCO

Fun-loving felines would have found the Rococo period utterly heavenly. Compared with the austere style of earlier art, this new movement featured brighter, more vibrant colors; flowing lines; and a general feeling of youthful exuberance.

Artists such as Jean-Honore Fragonard and Francois Boucher captured the playful curvaceousness and sensuality of their subjects. Boucher had the most prominent success, becoming the favorite artist of Madame de Pompadour, the mistress of Louis XV and (disappointingly) a famous dog lover.

Although it was born in France, Rococo style spread throughout Europe. In England, it influenced the technique of William Hogarth-yet another who favored canine companions-and the fashionable portraits painted by Thomas Gainsborough.



IMPRESSIONISM

Playing around a pond, this feline ballerina is not in the least offended by the emergence of Impressionism. Catastrophic reviews greeted the first offerings of now world-renowned artists. Seldom does an art movement take its name from an intended insult, but Impressionism does.

Artists such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Edgar Degas liked to paint outside, or En Plein Air. They used distinct brushstrokes to evoke sun, shadow, and the fleeting effects of changing light. They experimented with colour combinations, pairing complementary colours to intensify them. While tradition held that warm colors advance and cool ones recede, the Impressionists placed them beside each other rather than using them to separate foreground and background. Once scorned, their radical vision created some of the best-loved paintings today.





POST-IMPRESSIONISM

Cats are known for testing boundaries, and much like the Postimpressionists, this kitty isn't afraid to ruffle a few feathers. The paint was scarcely dry on Impressionist paintings before some artists wanted more emphasis on subject matter and started experimenting with a new style. These trailblazers chose not to look to the past for inspiration but instead to create new forms of artistic expression. Thus a move toward abstraction began.

As different in style as cat and dog, the main artists grouped under the name of Post-Impressionists were Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent van Gogh. Despite their stylistic differences, what they did share was a belief that art should express feelings rather than portray a subject.

POINTILLISM



Heavily influenced by Impressionist style, artists Paul Signac and Georges Seurat went dotty for a new painting technique that involved meticulously applying tiny spots of pure colour very close together. The idea was to create a sort of optical illusion—from a distance the dots seemed to fuse together, becoming solid colours.

As usual, art critics sneered at this bold new approach, but this colourful cat had the last laugh as the Pointillist style became hugely influential into the 20th century and is used by artists to this day. Pointillism reflected innovative thinking by scientists who explored how the eyes and brain react to colour, and by the artists who took that knowledge and applied it to canvas.

SYMBOLISM

There's no mistaking the fact that this enrobed cat thinks itself a little more highbrow than the average kitty. In fact, it would be the first to explain that the term "Symbolist" was originally applied to a French literary movement that explored human emotions through dreamlike imagery and mythical themes.

It wasn't long before this approach appealed to artists, too, and the movement spread beyond France, attracting artists all over Europe. Symbolist artists had no interest in portraying the natural world, preferring to prompt strong emotions in the viewer by their use of unusual colour and composition. Leading figures, such as Edvard Munch and Gustav Klimt, shocked the public with their evocative images, a world away from the light and colour of Impressionism-as this deep-thinking kitty would surely attest.



FAUVISM

Don't be deceived-this friendly looking feline represents the movement and artists that came to be known as Les fauves, which means "wild beasts." They favored simplified forms and bold, unnatural colours, applied with the energy of a cat chasing its tail. Their work astounded visitors of the 1905 Salon d'Automne exhibition in Paris, including critic Louis Vauxcelles, who gave the movement its name.

The name stuck, and the movement grew. Artists Andre Derain and Henri Matisse spent the summer together painting on France's Mediterranean coast. They explored recent scientific colour theories, mostly relating to complementary colours. Soon, other artists adopted the Fauvist style, but for the most part it was a temporary phase (even the sweetest-natured cat enjoys the odd stint as a wild beast).





CUBISM

Scandalous! When Cubism first appeared at the beginning of the 20th century, it caused uproar among the public and even in the art world. Instead of trying to convey depth by using perspective, tone, and colour, Cubist artists showed their subject from different angles at the same time, using geometric shapes in unexpected combinations. The most famous of the Cubists was Pablo Picasso, an ardent cat lover, whose work often depicted feline forms with features at unusual angles.

There are two main types of Cubism. Analytical Cubism used a lot of black, grey, and ochre, which gave a stark, severe feel. This was followed by Synthetic Cubism, which used brighter colours, simpler shapes, and elements of collage.



DADAISM

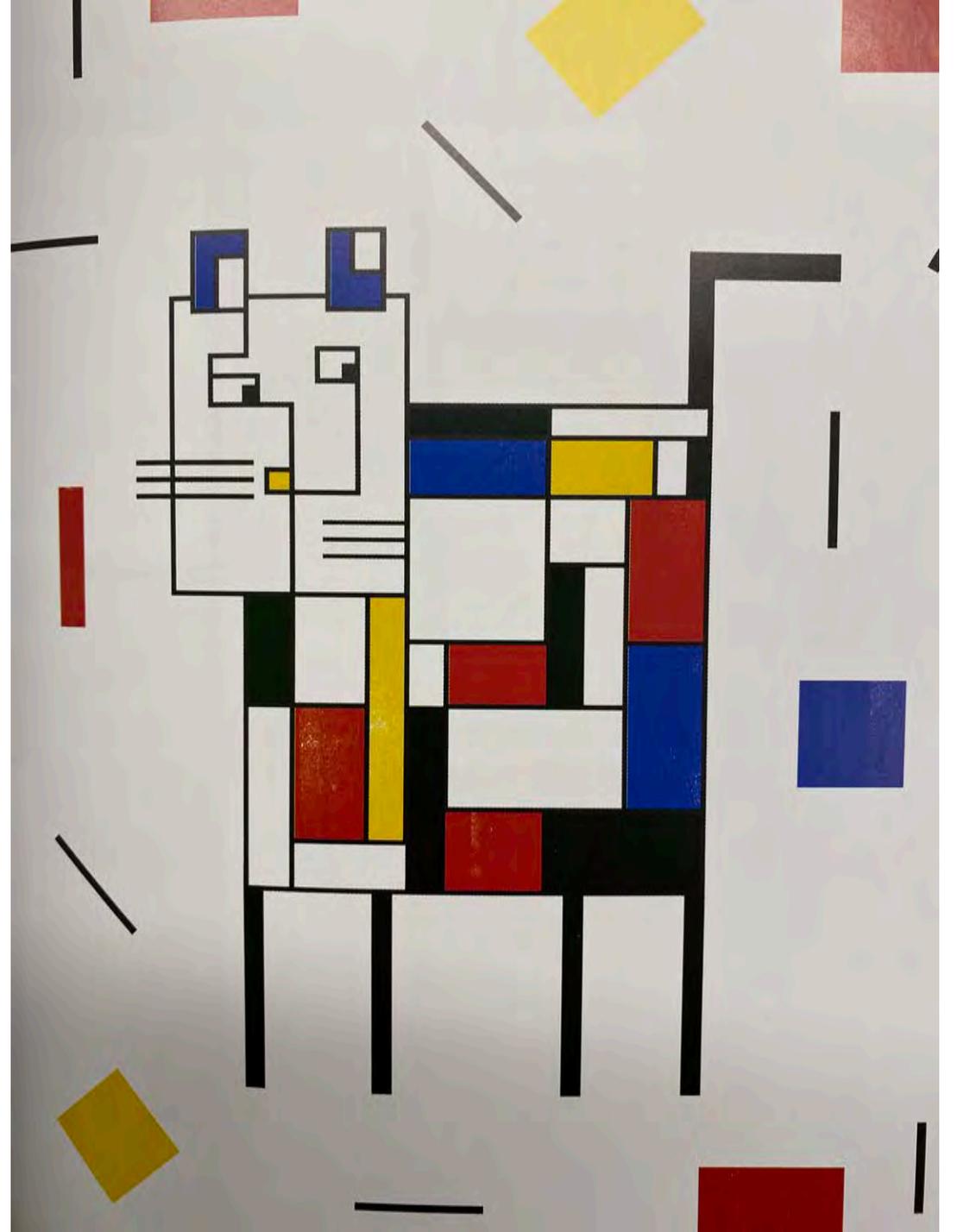
This quirky cat is a prime example of the experimental nature of Dadaism. A movement founded in Europe in reaction to the horrors of the first World War, artists such as Francis Picabia and Hannah Hoch set out to shock the middle classes- easily done in those days! Stylistically, anything was up for grabs, and the Dadaists often expressed themselves in nonsensical and irrational ways. This might explain why this hybrid creature is half high-heeled glamour-puss, half heavy machinery.

The Dada art style varied from one city and country to another-from political photomontage in Berlin, to found objects in New York. In Paris, Marcel Duchamp created "readymades," famously buying a urinal from a bathroom supplier and calling it Fountain. The idea was that an artist didn't need to make an object for it to be art but instead could simply choose it.

DE STIJL

It's hard to imagine the hard lines and sharp corners of this cat settling cozily on a lap. However, the De Stijl-style artwork is instantly recognizable with its graphic, geometric shapes and bright colours. Founded in 1917 by Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg, De Stijl became a hugely influential movement in art, architecture, and design, aiming to do away with the bells and whistles that came with trying to portray a subject realistically and instead stripping art back to basics.

Mondrian gave the name "neo-plasticism" to this severe art style, which was based on horizontal and vertical lines and a palette of primary colours with black, white, and grey.



MAGIC REALISM

This stylish kitten is inspired by Frida Kahlo's iconic self-portraits, and, like the best Magic Realism, some fantasy elements have been included in her colourful depiction. It's not surprising that Kahlo has been an inspiration-she is one of the most famous artists who worked in the Magic Realist style, producing pieces that combined stark realism with fantasy elements to represent a symbolic reality that she felt existed where the ordinary and extraordinary worlds met.

Other artists, such as Franz Radziwill and Alberto Savinio, used odd juxtapositions of objects, distortions of space, allegory, and symbolism. Some of their work could be described as surreal, but the Magic Realist artists made a point of distinguishing themselves from the Surrealists by focusing on real objects rather than the unconscious mind; a giant Magic Realist mouse wouldn't be only in this cat's dreams.



ART DECO

The Art Deco style burst into being in the 1920s, when optimism and creative energy replaced the traumas of the First World War. Originally called Style Moderne, its influence was to blaze a trail across many disciplines, including fashion and architecture. Its own influences were equally wide-ranging—they included folk art, Cubism, Fauvism, and art from India and the Far East. The discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922 prompted a huge public interest in ancient Egypt and added another exotic element to the already eclectic mix.

This sleekly elegant feline is typically Art Deco, with its graceful geometric forms and inherent air of wealth and luxury. However, while seriously stylish, it was these elements that caused the movement to fall from grace during the Depression of the 1930s.





SURREALISM

A cat in a bowler hat wouldn't raise an eyebrow among Surrealist artists. Even the addition of a decorative mermaid tail or a pair of claws would fail to shock. At first glance, a lot of Surrealist art looks like random objects merged indiscriminately (Lobster Telephone, anyone?), but there is a fascinating philosophy behind this apparent disregard for convention.

Artists such as Salvador Dali, Rene Magritte, Max Ernst, and Joan Miro took recognizable, everyday objects and rendered them in unfamiliar ways. They aimed to jolt viewers out of their familiar assumptions and force them to consider what might be going on in their unconscious minds. Surrealist artists found magic in the strange beauty of the unexpected and otherworldly. Nature provided their most frequent inspiration. Dali's work often included ants and eggs, and Ernst even painted his alter ego in the form of a bird.

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Just as a typical cat hates to be confined, so the Abstract Expressionists strived to imbue in their work a sense of freedom. It is perhaps the art movement most likely to have inspired feelings of "I could have done that" in some viewers of the time, yet the most famous Abstract Expressionists were experts in drawing, composition, and colour. They simply chose the radical approach of expressing their ideas without painting recognizable objects.

With his color-block pattern and painterly paw prints, this mixed-up kitty is representing the two distinct categories of Abstract Expressionism at once. The key difference between them is the type of emotions they convey. The "action painters," who included Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and Willem de Kooning, were passionate and intense, using huge canvases and a dynamic style. Their art is in contrast with the subtle, meditative effects created by "colour-field" painters Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman.





COBRA

It may look naive and childlike, but this revolutionary cat has one thing on its mind- changing the way people think about art. The CoBrA group formed at the end of 1948, was founded by artists Corneille, Karel Appel, Asger Jorn, and Constant Nieuwenhuys. Choosing not to offer any detailed doctrine in their manifestos, they instead focused on a need to "discover their desires."

The group subscribed to the Surrealist theory of "automatism," where the artists allow unconscious impulses to direct the painting or drawing process. Very much a group affair, the artists were Marxists and desired to break down the barriers that isolate individuals, collaborating on books and prints. This CoBrA cat would soon be left to its own devices, though; the group disbanded in 1951, and its members followed their own artistic paths.

POP ART

This bright, bold, and brash cat is showing off the rock 'n' roll attitude that was a hallmark of the rebellious Pop Art movement. It arrived with a "Bang!" and a "Wham!" in the 1950s, just as Britain and the USA embraced a manufacturing boom and many Pop artists took advantage of mechanical techniques, such as screen printing, to make their images.

The pieces were often based on comic strips and advertisements and included dialogue, logos, and exclamations, emphasizing their kitsch appeal. While the irreverence of Pop Art might have shocked the old guard of the fine-art world, it gave the public a new and liberating view of what art could be.

These cans, stacked high, might demonstrate a return to representing subjects more realistically, but it seems it's not enough to soothe this sensitive soul.



MINIMALISM

There's not a shape or a line to spare on this semi-Minimalist cat. A reaction against the excesses of Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism aimed to represent nothing but itself, instead concentrating on form and the materials the artwork was made of (which means this cat is a bit too recognizable to be truly Minimalist).

Minimalism first began to appear toward the end of the 1950s and became prominent in the 1960s and '70s. You'd be hard-pressed to find a cute and fluffy kitty amid the three-dimensional sculptures and installations created by artists such as Sol Lewitt and Donald Judd—their sleek and streamlined artworks had more in common with a sophisticated Siamese cat. Often making use of industrial materials, Minimalists emphasized a democratic approach that is far removed from the reverence people might be expected to feel for fine art, or beloved pets.



GRAFFITI

A smiley happy cat it may be, but there are certainly people who would have liked to have this graffiti scrubbed off if they saw it decorating a public building. Despite this disapproval, the pioneers of street art created an aesthetic that has been hugely influential both on gallery walls and in popular culture. Artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Futura 2000, and Kenny Scharf have also produced album covers, stage backdrops and clothing.

There's no denying that the most famous graffiti artists have taken the medium from backstreet mess to mainstream success- painting by Basquiat was sold for \$110.5 million in 2017. More generally, however, graffiti remains controversial. In 2008, London's Tate Modern invited six international artists to paint huge murals on its facade as part of a street art exhibition. On the day the exhibition opened, members of London's DPM street art crew were sentenced to prison for their graffiti in the same city.



CONCEPTUALISM

Behold this odd-looking creature and imagine how this edgy art style catapulted art students to international fame and fortune.

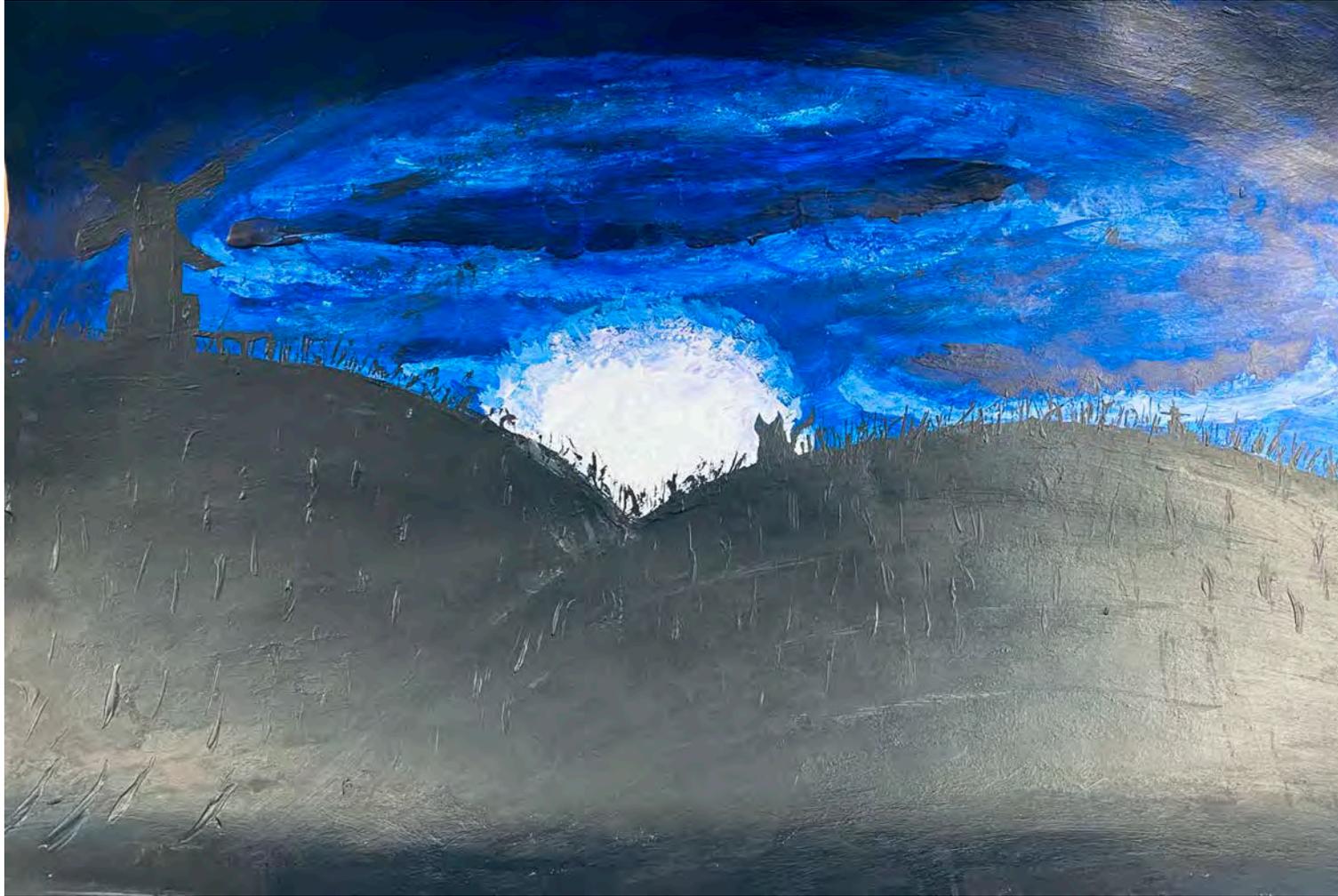
This conceptual cat is typical of the way contemporary artists, as they became known, were prepared to shock the public in pursuit of their art. Conceptual artists don't share any distinctive style apart from a completely open-minded approach to what might constitute art and a thick-skinned approach to criticism from the press, which mocked their use of subjects and culture. It seemed that shock and ridicule were like catnip to this media-savvy group, but their gamble paid off, and most became highly successful artists who are now part of the art establishment.



ART 9 STUDENT EXAMPLES



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