Chapter 24 Baroque Art - Notes
The cultural production of the 17th and early 18th centuries in the West is often described as Baroque, a convenient blanket term. However, this term is problematic because the period encompasses a broad range of developments, both historical, and artistic, across an expansive geographical territory. Although its origin is unclear, the term may have come from the Portuguese word barroco, meaning an irregularity shaped pearl. Use of the term baroque emerged in the late 18th and 19th centuries when critics disparaged the Baroque period’s artistic production, in large part because of the perceived deficiencies in comparison to the art of the period preceding it. Over time, this negative connotation faded, and the term is now most often used as a general designation of the period. Some scholars use Baroque to describe a particular style that emerged during the 17th century. It was a style of complexity and drama that is usually associated with Italian art of the period. The dynamism and extravagance of this Baroque style contrast with the rational order of classicism. Not all artists adopted this style during the Baroque period.

In our study, because of the diversity of styles in the various cultures of the period, Baroque will be used to describe the characteristics associated with a particular culture, such as, Italian Baroque or Dutch Baroque.

One historian claims that between 1562 and 1721, all of Europe only had peace for four years. The major conflict was the Thirty Years War that was rooted in conflict between militant Catholics and Protestants that grew into secular, dynastic, and nationalistic reasons. The result was a major restructuring of Europe. The formation of the United Provinces of the Netherlands (the Dutch Republic), Sweden and France expanded their authority; Spain’s and Denmark’s power diminished. The building of nation-states was underway. In addition to the reconfiguring territorial boundaries, the Treaty of Westphalia in essence granted freedom of religious choice throughout Europe. The treaty thus marked the abandonment of the idea of a united Christian Europe, which was replaced by the practical realities of secular political systems.

By the 17th century, European societies began to coordinate their long distance trade more systematically. The allure of expanding markets, rising profits, and access to a wider range of goods contributed to the relentless economic competition between countries. Much of the foundation for worldwide mercantilism - extensive voyaging and geographic exploration, improved cartography, and advances in shipbuilding - was laid in the previous century. In fact by the end of the 16th century, all major trade routes had been established.

In the 17th century changes in financial systems, lifestyles, and trading patterns, along with expanding colonialism, fueled the creation of a worldwide marketplace. The Dutch founded the bank of Amsterdam in 1609, which eventually became the center of European transfer banking. By establishing a system in which merchant firms held money on account, the bank relieved traders of having to transfer precious metals as payment. As a result trading became more complex and could involve many parties rather than simple exchanges between two or three parties. Many new goods became available. Coffee from island colonies, tea from China, and
sugar exploded in popularity. Sugar, along with tobacco, and rice, were slave crops, and the slave trade expanded to accommodate demand for these goods. Africans were enslaved and imported to European colonies and the Americas to provide the labor for producing these commodities.

The worldwide mercantile system permanently changed the face of Europe. The prosperity such trading generated, affected social and political relationships, necessitating new rules of etiquette and careful diplomacy. With increased disposable income, more of the newly wealthy spent money on art (among other things), expanding the number of possible sources of patronage. By 1700, the growth of the moneyed class had contributed significantly to the emergence of Rococo, a decorative style associated with the wealthy and aristocratic.

17th Century Italian Baroque
What to do about the considerable appeal of Protestantism in the succeeding century occupied the Catholic Church even into the 17th century. With the popes and clergy still continuing as major patrons of the arts, as in the previous centuries, much of Italian Baroque art was aimed at propagandistically restoring Catholicism’s predominance and centrality. Whereas Italian Renaissance artists often had reveled in the precise, orderly rationality of classical models, Italian Baroque artists embraced a more dynamic and complete aesthetic. During the 17th century, dramatic theatricality, grandiose scale, and elaborate ornateness, all used to spectacular effect, characterized Italian Baroque art and architecture. Papal Rome’s importance as the cradle of Italian Baroque art further suggests the role art played in supporting the aims of the Church. Protestant objection to using images in religious worship was firmly resisted by the Catholic Church, insisting on their necessity for teaching the laity. Therefore Italian Baroque art commissioned by the Church was not merely decorative but didactic as well.

The popes of the late 16th and 17th centuries contributed much to reestablishing the preeminence of the Catholic Church. They were responsible for building what is the modern city of Rome. The papal treasury commissioned art and architecture that embodied the renewed energy of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and communicated to its populace.

Architecture
The facade designed by Carlo Maderno (1556-1629) at the turn of the century for the Roman church of Santa Susanna, stands as one of the earliest manifestations of the Baroque spirit. The facade emphasizes verticality and dramatizes the major features. The facade’s tall central section projects forward from the horizontal lower story and the scroll buttresses that connect the two levels are narrower and set at a sharper angle. The elimination of an arch framing the pediment over the doorway further enhances the designs vertical thrust. Strong shadows cast by Santa Susanna’s vigorously projecting columns and pilasters mount dramatically toward the stressed central axis. The recessed niches, which contain statues, heighten the sculptural effect.
Saint Peter’s
The drama of Santa Susanna’s facade appealed to Pope Paul V (1605-1621), who commissioned Maderno in 1606 to complete Saint Peter’s in Rome. As the symbolic seat of the papacy, Saint Peter’s radiated enormous symbolic presence, and needed to be finished.

In many ways Maderno's facade of Saint Peter’s is a gigantic expansion of the elements of Santa Susanna’s first level. But the compactness and verticality of the smaller church’s facade are not as prominent because the expansive width in Saint Peter’s counterbalances them. The preexisting core of an incomplete building restricted Maderno, so he did not have the luxury of formulating a totally new concept for Saint Peter’s. His design for the facade was also never fully executed. The two outside bell tower bays were not part of Maderno’s original plan. Hence, had the facade been constructed according to the architect’s initial design, it would have established greater verticality and coherence.

Maderno’s plan also departed from the central plans designed by Bramante and Michelangelo during the Renaissance. Seventeenth century clergy rejected a central plan for Saint Peter’s because of its association with pagan buildings, such as the Pantheon. Paul V commissioned Maderno to add three nave bays to the earlier nucleus. The longitudinal plan reinforced the symbolic distinction between clergy and laity and provided space for the processions of ever growing assemblies. Lengthening the nave, unfortunately, pushed the dome further back from the facade and the effect Michelangelo had planned - a structure pulled together and dominated by its dome is not readily visible. When viewed at close range, the dome hardly emerges above the facades soaring frontal plane; seen from far back, it appears to have no drum. Visitors must move back quite a distance from the front to see the drum and dome together and experience the effect Michelangelo intended.

Bernini
The design of Saint Peter’s was finally completed (except for details) by Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680). Bernini was an architect, painter, and sculptor, and one of the most important and imaginative artists of the Italian Baroque era. He also designed its most impressive single project; the monumental piazza (plaza; 1656-1667) in front of Saint Peter’s. In much the same way Michelangelo was forced to reorganize the Capitoline Hill, Bernini had to adjust his design to some preexisting structures on the site - and an ancient obelisk the Romans brought from Egypt (which Pope Sixtus V had relocated to the piazza in 1585 as part of the pope’s vision of Christian triumph in Rome) and a fountain Maderno designed. He used these features to define the long axis of a vast oval embraced by colonnades joined to Saint Peter’s facade by two diverging wings. Four rows of huge Tuscan columns make up the two colonnades, which terminate in severely classical temple fronts. The dramatic gesture of embrace that the colonnades make as viewers enter the piazza symbolizes the welcome the Catholic Church gave its members during the Counter-Reformation. Bernini himself referred to his design of the colonnade as appearing like the welcoming arms of the Church. Beyond their symbolic purpose, the colonnades served the functional purpose of providing pilgrims with easy access to the piazza. The wings that connect Saint Peter’s facade with the oval piazza flank a trapezoidal space. The diverging wing counteracts the natural perspective and tends to bring the facade
closer to the observers and emphasizing its height. A Baroque transformation expanded the compact and central designs of Bramante and Michelangelo into a dynamic complex of axially ordered elements that reach out and enclose spaces of vast dimension. By sheer scale and theatricality, the completed Saint Peter’s presented the Catholic Church in an awe inspiring and authoritative vision.

The Baldacchino
Long before he began planning the piazza, Bernini had been at work on the interior of Saint Peter’s. His first commission, completed between 1624 and 1633, called for the design and erection of the gigantic bronze baldacchino under the great dome. The canopy like structure (baldacchino is Italian for “silk from Baghdad,” such as for a cloth canopy) stands almost 100 feet high (the height of an average eight story building), has both functional and symbolic purposes. It marks the high altar and the Tomb of Saint Peter. It visually bridges human scale to the lofty vaults above. It also provides a dramatic presence at the crossing. Its columns create a visual frame for the elaborate sculpture representing the throne of Saint Peter’s (Cathedra Petri) at the far end. The structure’s symbolic character speaks of the power of the Catholic Church and Pope Urban VIII. The fluted and wreathed columns recall those of the ancient baldacchino that once straddled the same spot and evoked the past to reinforce the primacy of the Roman Catholic Church. At the top of the columns, four colossal angels stand guard at the upper corners of the canopy. Forming the canopy’s apex are four serpentine brackets that elevate the orb and the cross that since the time of Constantine represented the Church’s triumph. The baldacchino also features numerous bees, symbols of the Barberini family the Pope’s family, and gives recognition to the patron.

The construction of the baldacchino was itself an awesome feat. Each of the bronze columns was cast in five sections using the lost wax method from wooden models. Although Bernini did some of the actual production of the columns himself, much of the work was contracted out to experienced founders and sculptors. The bronze for the huge structure was acquired by dismantling the portico of the Pantheon - ideologically appropriate given the church’s rejection of paganism.

David
Bernini devoted much of his prolific career to the adornment of Saint Peter’s where his works combine sculpture and architecture. Although he was a great architect, Bernini’s fame rests primarily with his sculpture, which like his architecture, expresses the Italian Baroque spirit. Bernini’s David, predates his work at Saint Peter’s and was commissioned by Cardinal Scipione Borghese. This marble statue aims at catching the figure’s split second action and differs markedly from the figures of David presented by Donatello, Verrocchio, and Michelangelo. Bernini shows David with his muscular legs widely and firmly planted, and is beginning the violent, pivoting motion that will launch the stone from the sling. Bernini selected the most dramatic of an implied sequence of poses, so observers have to think simultaneously of the continuum and of this tiny fraction of it. This is not the kind of sculpture that can be inscribed in a cylinder or confined in a niche; its indicated action demands space around it. Nor is it self sufficient in the Renaissance sense, as its pose and
attitude direct the the viewer’s attention beyond it to its surroundings. David’s intense gaze is a far cry from the placid expression on Donatello’s David. **The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa** also displays the expansive quality of Italian Baroque art and its refusal to limit itself to firmly defined spatial settings. **The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa** is in the Cornaro Chapel of the Roman Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria. For this Chapel, Bernini utilized the full capabilities of architecture, sculpture, and painting to charge the entire area with palpable tension. He accomplished this by drawing on his considerable knowledge of the theater he derived from writing plays and producing stage designs. The marble sculpture that serves as the focus of this chapel depicts Saint Teresa, who was a nun of the Carmelite order and one of the great mystical saints of the Spanish Counter-Reformation. Her conversion occurred after the death of her father, when she fell into a series of trances, saw visions, and heard voices. Feeling a persistent pain, she attributed it to the fire-tipped arrow of Divine love that an angel thrust repeatedly into her heart. In her writings, Saint Teresa described this experience as making her swoon in delightful anguish. The whole chapel became a theater for the production of this mystical drama. The niche in which it takes place appears as a shallow **proscenium** (the part of a stage in front of the curtain) crowned with a broken Baroque pediment and ornamented with polychrome marble. On either side of the chapel, sculpted relief portraits of the Cornaro family behind draped praying desks attest to the piety of the patrons (Cardinal Federico Cornaro and his relatives) Bernini depicted the saint in ecstasy, unmistakably a mingling of spiritual and physical passion, swooning back on a cloud, while the smiling angel aims his arrow. The entire sculptural group is made of white marble, and attests to Bernini’s supreme technical virtuosity in creating different textures; clouds, rough monk’s cloth, gauzy material, smooth flesh, and feathery wings. Light from a hidden window of yellow glass pours down on bronze rays that suggest the radiance of Heaven (whose painted representation covers the vault). The passionate drama of Bernini’s sculpture correlated with the ideas disseminated earlier by Ignatius Loyola, who founded the Jesuit Order in 1534 and was canonized as Saint Ignatius in 1622. In his book **Spiritual Exercises**, Ignatius argued that the **recreation of spiritual experiences** for viewers would do much to increase devotion and piety. Thus, theatricality and sensory impact were useful vehicles for achieving Counter Reformation goals.

**Architecture**

**Francesco Borromini** (1599-1667) took Italian Baroque architecture to even greater heights. A new dynamism appeared in the little church of **San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane** (Saint Charles of the Four Fountains), where Borromini went far beyond any of his predecessors or contemporaries in emphasizing the building’s sculptural qualities. Although Maderno incorporated sculptural elements in his designs for the facades of Saint Susanna and Saint Peter’s, they still develop along relatively lateral planes. Borromini set his whole facade in motion, forward and back, making a counterpoint of concave and convex elements on the two levels. He emphasized the three dimensional effect with deeply recessed niches. The facade is not the traditional flat frontispiece that defines a building’s outer limits, it is a pulsating, engaged component inserted between interior and exterior space, designed not to separate but to provide a fluid transition between the two. This functional interrelation of the building and its environment is underlined by the curious fact that it has not one but two facades. The second is
a narrow bay crowned by its own small tower, turns away from the facade and, following the curve of the street, faces an intersection. The upper facade was completed seven years after Borromini’s death, and historians are not sure to what degree the present design reflects his original intention.

The interior is not only an ingenious response to an awkward site but also a provocative variation on the theme of a centrally planned church. In plan, San Carlo looks like a hybrid of a Greek cross and an oval, with a long axis between entrance and apse. The side walls move with an undulating flow that reverses the facades motion. Vigorously projecting columns define the space into which they protrude as much as they accent the walls attached to them. This molded interior space is capped by a deeply coffered oval dome that seems to float on the light entering through the windows hidden at the base. **Rich variations on the basic theme of the oval, dynamic relative to the static circle, create an interior that appears to flow from entrance to altar, unimpeded by the segmentation so characteristic of Renaissance buildings.**

**Guarino Guarini**
The heir to Borromini’s architectural style was **Guarino Guarini (1624-1683)**, a priest, mathematician, and architect who spent the last 17 years of his life in Turin converting that provincial Italian town into a showcase of architectural theories that later swept much of Europe. In his **Palazzo Carignano**, Guarini effectively applied Borromini’s principle of undulating facades. The facade is divided into three units, the central one curving like San Carlo and flanked by two block like wings. This lateral three part division was characteristic of Baroque palazzi and is probably based on the observation that the average person instinctively can recognize up to three objects in a unit. A greater number would require the viewer to count each object individually. A tripartite organization of extended surfaces thus allowed artists to introduce a variety into their designs without destroying structural unity. It also permitted added emphasis on the central axis. Guarini did this by punching out deep cavities in the middle of the convex central block. He enhanced the variety of his design with richly textured surfaces (all executed in brick) and pilasters, which further subdivide his units into three bays each. High and low reliefs create shadows of different intensities and add a decorative effect.

Guarini’s mathematical talents must have guided him when he designed the extraordinarily complex dome of the **Chapel of the Santissima Sindone (Holiest Shroud)**, a small central plan building attached to the Turin Cathedral. A view into the dome reveals a display of geometric elements appearing to move in kaleidoscope fashion around a circular focus containing a painting of the bright dove of the Holy Spirit. Here the architect transformed the traditional dome in a series of segmented intersecting arches. The pristine clarity of the unmodified shape of the Renaissance “dome of Heaven,” is gone and replaced with the dynamism of the Baroque.

The styles of Borromini and Guarini moved across the Alps and inspired architects in Austria and Southern Germany in the late 17th and 18th centuries. These styles were very popular in Catholic regions of Europe and the New World, especially Brazil.
Caravaggio
Although sculpture and architecture provided the most obvious means of manipulating space and creating theatrics, painting also was capable of much. One of the greatest of the Baroque painters was Michelangelo Merisi, known as Caravaggio (1573-1610) after the northern Italian town he came from, developed a unique style that had tremendous influence throughout Europe. His outspoken disdain for the classical masters drew bitter criticism from many painters who denounced him as the “antichrst of painting. Giovanni Pietro Bellori, the most influential critic of the age felt that Caravaggio’s refusal to emulate the models of his distinguished predecessors threatened the whole tradition of Italian painting that had reached its peak in Raphael. Yet despite this criticism and the problems of Caravaggio’s troubled life, he received many commissions, both public and private, and numerous artists paid him the supreme compliment of borrowing from his innovations. His influence on artists outside of Italy was immense. In his art, Caravaggio injected naturalism into both religious and classics, reducing them to human dramas played out in the harsh and dingy settings of his time and place. His unidealized figures selected from the fields and the streets were, however, effective precisely because of the Italian public’s familiarity with such figures.

Conversion of Saint Paul, painted for the Cerasi Chapel in the Roman Church of Santa Maria del Popolo. The saint to be is depicted flat on his back with his arms thrown up toward a light that has no obvious source. An old hostler seems preoccupied with caring for the horse. At first glance there is little here to suggest a momentous spiritual event is taking place. This appears to be a mere stable event, not a great miracle. Although Caravaggio departed from the traditional depictions of such religious scenes, the eloquence and humanity with which he imbued his paintings impressed many.

Caravaggio also employed other formal devices to compel the viewer’s interest and involvement in the event. In Conversion of Saint Paul, he used perspective and a chiaroscuro intended to bring viewers as close as possible to the scene’s space and action, almost as if participating in them. The sense of inclusion is augmented by the low horizon line. Caravaggio designed Conversion of Saint Paul for presentation on the chapel wall, positioned at the viewer’s eye level as they stand at the chapel entrance. The sharply lit figures are meant to be seen as emerging from the dark of the background. The stark contrast of light and dark was a feature of Caravaggio’s style that first shocked then fascinated his contemporaries. Caravaggio’s use of dark settings enveloping their occupants, which profoundly influenced European art. Caravaggio’s painting technique has been called tenebrism. The word comes from the Italian word tenebroso, or “shadowy” manner. Although tenebrism was widespread in 17th century art, it was especially strong in Spain and the Netherlands. The tenebrism in Caravaggio's work usually had great meaning. In Conversion of Saint Paul the light is divine revelation converting Paul to Christianity.

In 1603, Caravaggio produced a large scale painting, Entombment, for the Chapel of Pietro Vittrice at Santa Maria in Vallicella in Rome. This work includes all the hallmarks of Caravaggio’s distinctive style: the plebeian figures, the stark use of light and dark, and the invitation of the viewer to participate in the scene. The action takes place in the foreground.
The artist positioned the figures on a stone slab whose corner appears to extend into the viewer’s space; suggesting that Christ’s body will be laid directly in front of the viewer.

This moving composition also had theological implications. With Counter-Reformation concerns, this image gives visual form to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (the transformation of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ), and was rejected by Protestants. By depicting Christ’s body as though it were physically present during the Mass, Caravaggio visually articulated the abstract theological concept.

**Artemisia Gentileschi**

Caravaggio’s combination of naturalism and drama became very popular. Those who were greatly influenced by him were called Caravaggista. One of those was Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653). Gentileschi was instructed by her father Orazio, who himself was strongly influenced by Caravaggio. Her successful career, helped disseminate Caravaggio’s manner throughout the Peninsula.

In *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, Gentileschi used the tenebrism and the dark subject matter Caravaggio embraced. Significantly, Gentileschi picked a narrative involving a heroic female figure, a favorite theme of hers. The story from an Apocryphal work of the Old Testament, the Book of Judith, relates the delivery of Israel from its enemy, Holofernes. Having succumbed to Judith’s charms, the Assyrian general, Holofernes, invites her to his tent for the night. When he fell asleep, Judith cut off his head. In this version, (she made several), Judith and her maid servant are beheading Holofernes. Blood spurts everywhere and the strength required to complete the deed is evident as the two women struggle with the sword.

**Annibale Carracci**

In contrast to Caravaggio, Annibale Carracci (1560-1609), not only studied, but also emulated the Renaissance masters carefully. Carracci received much of his training at the academy of art in his native Bologna. Founded cooperatively by his family members, the Bolognese Academy was the first significant institution of its kind in the history of Western art. It was founded on the premise that art can be taught and that its instruction must include the classical and Renaissance traditions in addition to the study of anatomy and life drawing. Carracci embraced a more classically ordered style while Caravaggio’s style was more naturalistic.

In, *Flight into Egypt*, based on the Biblical narrative from Matthew 2:13-14, Carracci created the ideal or classical landscape that represented nature as ordered by divine and human reason. The roots of the style are in Venetian Renaissance paintings, the pastoral. The viewer is led from the foreground to the background and eventually to the architectural setting of the castle. Such constructed environments captured idealized antiquity and the idyllic life. Although artists often took their subjects from religious of heroic stories, they seem to have given precedence to the pastoral landscapes over the narrative. In other words, the stories were an opportunity to do landscape, as evidenced by the scale of the figures.

Among Carracci’s most notable works is his decoration of the Palazzo Farnese gallery in Rome. Cardinal Orlando Farnese, a wealthy descendant of Pope Paul III, commissioned this ceiling
fresco to celebrate the wedding of the Cardinal’s brother. Its iconographic program is titled *Loves of the Gods* - interpretations of earthly and divine love in classical mythology.

Carracci arranged the scenes in a format resembling framed easel paintings on a wall, but here he painted them on the surfaces of the shallow curved vault. This type of simulation of easel painting for ceiling design is called *quadro riportato* (transferred framed paintings). Carracci’s great influence made it fashionable for more than a century. The framed pictures are flanked by polychromes seated nude youths, whose heads turn to gaze at the scenes around them, and by standing Atlas figures painted to resemble marble statues. The influence of the Sistine chapel is clearly evident. Notably the chiaroscuro is not the same for the pictures and the figures surrounding them. The figures inside the quadri are modeled in an even light, while the outside figures appear to be lit from underneath as large statues illuminated by torches in the gallery below would be. The great interest in illusion continued in the grand ceiling paintings of the 17th century. In the crown of the vault a long panel representing the *Triumph of Bacchus* is an ingenious mixture of Raphael’s and Titian’s styles into Carracci’s own.

**Pietro Da Cortona**

Patrons who wanted to burnish their public image or control their legacy found monumental ceiling frescos to be perfect vehicles for such statements. In 1633, Pope Urban III commissioned a ceiling fresco for the *Gran Salone of the Palazzo Barberini in Rome*. This project was the most important decorative commission of the 1630’s and was highly coveted. Urban III selected Pietro Da Cortona (1596-1669), a fellow Tuscan who had moved to Rome in 1612. The grandiose and spectacular *Triumph of the Barberini* overwhelms spectators with the glory of the Barberini family (and Urban III in particular). The iconographic program for this fresco, designed by the poet Francesco Bracciolini, centered on the accomplishments of the Barberini. Divine Providence appears in a halo of radiant light directing Immortality, holding a crown of stars, to bestow eternal life on the Barberini family. The laurel wreath (also a symbol of immortality) reinforces the enduring Barberini legacy. It floats around bees and is supported by Faith, Hope, and Charity. The papal tiara and keys announcing personal triumph of Urban III are also clearly visible.

**Fra Andrea Pozzo**

Fra Andrea Pozzo (1642-1709) was a lay brother in the Jesuit order and master of perspective, on which he wrote an influential treatise. Pozzo designed and executed the vast ceiling fresco *Glorification of Saint Ignatius* for the church of Sant’ Ignazio in Rome. Sant’ Ignazio was prominent in Counter-Reformation Rome because it was named for the founder of the Jesuit order. Pozzo created the illusion that heaven is opening up above the congregation. To accomplish this, the artist illusionistically continued the church’s actual architecture into the vault so that the roof seemed to be lifted off. As Heaven and Earth co mingle, Saint Ignatius is carried to the waiting Christ in the presence of figures personifying the four corners of the world. A disk in the nave floor marks the stand point for the whole perspectival illusion. For visitors looking up from this point, the vision is complete; they are truly in the presence of the heavenly and spiritual.
The effectiveness of Italian Baroque religious art depended on the drama and theatricality of individual images, as well as on the interaction and fusion of architecture, sculpture, and painting. Sound enhanced this experience. Churches were designed with acoustical effect in mind, and in an Italian church filled with music; the stimulation of images and sound must have produced a powerful effect, creating an effect of Heaven to the faithful.

Spain
During the 16th century Spain had established itself as an international power. Such dominance provoked animosity among other European countries and increasing challenges. By the 1660’s the imperial age of Spanish power was over. In part the demise was due to economic woes, which were exacerbated by expensive military campaigns during the Thirty Year’s War. By Phillip III and his son Phillip IV, The increasing tax burden that was placed on the Spanish subjects led to revolts and civil war in Catalonia and Portugal in the 1640’s. At the dawn of the Baroque in Spain the leaders struggled to maintain control of their empire. Realizing the communicating value of images, Phillip III and IV were avid art pensions.

Jose (Jusepe) De Ribera (1588-1652) (sometimes called Lo Spagnoletto “the Little Spaniard”) immigrated to Naples as a young man and settled there. Influenced by Caravaggio, Ribera imbued his work with both naturalism and compelling drama, which lend shock value to his often brutal themes. These themes express both the harsh times of the Counter Reformation and a Spanish taste for the representation of courage and devotion. The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew is grim and dark in subject and form. Executioners are hoisting into position Saint Bartholomew, who is about to suffer the torture of being skinned alive. The saint’s rough, heavy body and swarthy, plebeian features express a kinship between him and his tormentors. The concept of idealized forms of any kind is scorned.

Francisco Zurbaran (1598-1664) also produced forceful images, many which were commissioned by monastic orders. Saint Serapion was painted as a devotional image for the funerary chapel of the Order of Mercy. The Saint who participated in the Third Crusade of 1196, was martyred while preaching the Gospel to the Muslims. According to one account of his martyrdom, the monk was tied to a tree, tortured, and decapitated. The Order of Mercy was dedicated to self sacrifice, and Saint Serapion’s membership in this order amplifies the resonance of this work. In Saint Serapion the figure emerges from a dark background and fills the foreground. The bright light shining on the figure calls attention to the tragic death and increases the dramatic impact. Two tree branches are barely visible in the background, and a small note next to the saint identifies him for the viewers. The course features of the Spanish monk, born in England, label him as common, evoking empathy from a wide audience. Zurbaran’s paintings are often quiet and contemplative, appropriate for prayer and devotional purpose.

Diego Velazquez (1599-1660) is often extolled as the greatest Spanish painter of the age. He produced many religious paintings, but he is most known for the work he painted for his major patron, King Phillip IV. Trained in Seville, Velazquez was quite young when he came to the attention of Phillip IV. The king was struck by the immense talent of Velazquez and named
him to the position of court painter. With the exception a few trips, he spent the rest of his life in Madrid. Velazquez was given the rare opportunity to fulfill the promise of his genius with a variety of artistic assignments.

Velazquez painted **Water Carrier of Seville** when he was only twenty. The figures are painted with a great naturalism showing the influence of Caravaggio whom he studied. The artist presented this genre scene with such care and conviction that it seems to convey a deeper significance.

After an extended visit to Rome from 1648 to 1651, Velazquez returned to Spain and painted his greatest masterpiece, **Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor)**. In it, Velazquez showed his mastery of both form and content. The painter represented himself in his studio standing before a large canvas. The young Infanta (Princess) Margarita appears in the foreground with her maids in waiting, her favorite dwarfs, and a large dog. In the middle ground are a woman in widow’s attire and a male escort; in the background, a chamberlain is framed in a brightly lit doorway. The personages present have been identified. The room represented in the painting was the artist’s studio in the palace of Alcazar in Madrid. After the death of Prince Baltasar Carlos in 1646, Phillip IV ordered part of the prince’s chamber converted into Velazquez's studio.

Las Meninas is noteworthy for its visual and narrative complexity. Art historians do not agree on any single interpretation or reading. A central issue is what is taking place in Las Meninas? In the painting, what is Velazquez depicting on the huge canvas in front of him? Is it this picture? Alternately is he painting the portrait of King Phillip IV and Queen Marianna, whose reflections appear in the mirror on the far wall? If so that would suggest the king and queen are in the viewer’s space outside the picture plane. Other scholars have proposed that the mirror image reflects not the physical appearance of the royal couple in Velazquez's studio but the image of what is painted on the canvas.

More generally, Las Meninas can be understood as an attempt by Velazquez to elevate himself and his profession. At first painter to the king and as chamberlain of the palace, Velazquez was conscious not only of the importance of his court office, but also of the honor and dignity belonging to his profession as a painter. Throughout his career, Velazquez hoped to be ennobled by royal appointment to membership in the ancient and illustrious Order of Santiago. Because he lacked the required patents of nobility, he gained entrance only with great difficulty at the very end of his life and then only with the pope’s interjection. In the painting he wears the Order’s red cross on his doublet, painted there, according to legend by the king himself. The figures in the painting all appear to acknowledge the royal presence. Placed among them of equal dignity is Velazquez, face to face with his king. This painting hung in the personal office of Phillip IV, in another part of the palace.

The art of painting, in the person of the painter, was elevated to the highest status. This status was enhanced by the presence of the king, either in the person of the viewer or the reflected image in the painting itself. The painting was further elevated by the two large paintings that
appear in the dark above the doorway and mirror. The barely recognizable images have been identified as copies of paintings by Peter Paul Rubens that represents the immortal gods as the source of art.

**Flanders**

In the 16th century, Flanders was controlled by Hapsburg Spain. When Charles V died he, left the Spanish kingdoms, Italian and American possessions, and the Netherlandish provinces to his on legitimate son, Phillip II. Phillips repressive measures against the Protestants led the Northern provinces to break away from Spain and form the Dutch Republic. The Southern provinces remained under Spanish control, and they retained Catholicism as their official religion. The political distinction between modern Holland and Belgium reflects, more or less, this original separation, which in the Baroque period were not only religious but also artistic.

The Baroque art of Flanders (the Spanish Netherlands) retained close connections to the Baroque art of Catholic Europe, whereas Dutch schools of painting developed their own subjects and styles. This was consistent with their reformed religion and new political, social, and economic structure of the middle-class Dutch Republic.

Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) drew together the main contributions of the masters of the Renaissance (Michelangelo and Titian) and of the Italian Baroque (Carracci and Caravaggio) to synthesize in his own style the truly first pan-European manner. Ruben’s art was not a weak eclecticism but an original and powerful synthesis that ultimately had international influence.

Ruben’s was one of the most learned individuals of his time. He had an aristocratic education, courtly manners, diplomacy and tact. He knew many languages and was an associate of princes and scholars. He was a court painter to the dukes of Mantua, friend of the King of Spain and his advisor on art collecting, painter to Charles I of England and Marie de Medici, queen of France; and permanent court painter to the Spanish governors of Flanders. Patrons often trusted Rubens with important diplomatic missions. Scores of associates and apprentices assisted Rubens in turning out paintings numerous paintings for international clientele. In addition he functioned as an art dealer, buying and selling contemporary artworks and classical antiques. His many enterprises made him a very rich man, with a magnificent townhouse and a country chateau.

Rubens became a master in 1598, at age 21, and went to Italy two years later, where he remained until 1608. During these years he formulated the foundations of his style. Shortly after his return, he painted **Elevation of the Cross**, for the Church of Saint Walburga (later moved to Antwerp Cathedral). This triptych reveals Ruben’s interest in Italian art, especially Michelangelo, Tintoretto, and Caravaggio. The scene brings together tremendous straining forces and counter forces as heavily muscled men strain to lift the cross. Here Rubens has an opportunity to show foreshortened anatomy and the contortions of violent action reminiscent of Michelangelo’s work. Rubens placed the body of Christ on the cross as a dramatic diagonal cutting across the picture plane while inclining back into it. The whole composition seethes with power. The tension is emotional as well as physical. Strong modeling of light and dark,
which heightens the drama, marks Ruben’s work at this stage of his career; it gradually gave way to a much subtler color style. Rubens retained the vigor and passion of his early style throughout his career, although he modified the vitality of his work into less strained and more subtle forms, depending on the theme. The human figure, draped or undraped, male or female, freely acting or free to act in an environment of physical forces and other interacting bodies, was a theme that was a focus in Ruben’s art. This interest led Rubens to copy works of the great masters of antiquity and of Italy. Rubens stated: “I am convinced that in order to achieve the highest perfection one needs a full understanding of the [ancient] statues, nay a complete absorption of them.

Ruben’s interaction with royalty and aristocrats provided him with an understanding of the ostentation and spectacle of Baroque art that were appealing to those of wealth and privilege. Rubens reveled in the pomp and majesty of royalty. Likewise, those in power embraced the lavish spectacle that served the Catholic Church so well in Italy. The magnificence and splendor of such Baroque imagery reinforced their authority and right to rule. Among Ruben’s royal patrons was Marie de Medici, a member of the famous Florentine house and widow of Henry IV, the first of the Bourbon Kings of France. She commissioned Rubens to paint a series memorializing and glorifying her career. Between 1622 and 1626, Rubens, working with amazing creative energy, produced 21 huge historical-allegorical pictures designed to hang in the queen’s new palace, the Luxembourg, in Paris.

Perhaps the most vivacious of the series was the Arrival of Marie de Medici at Marseilles; the others are similar in mood and style. In this painting Marie has just arrived in France after a sea voyage from Italy. As she disembarks, surrounded by her ladies in waiting, she is welcomed by allegorical personification of France, draped in a cloak decorated with the fleur-de-lis (the floral symbol of French royalty). The sea and sky rejoice at her safe arrival - Neptune and the Nereids (daughters of the sea god Nereus) salute her, and a winged, trumpeting Fame swoops overhead. Conspicuous in the galley’s opulently carved stern-castle, under the Medici coat of arms, stands the impervious commander of the vessel. In black and silver, his figure is in sharp contrast with the rest of the swirling color. He wears the cross of a Knight of Malta, which may identify this as a ship belonging to that order. The only immobile figure in the composition, he could be the director of and witness to the lavish welcome.

Throughout Ruben’s career war was constant. As a diplomat he never ceased to promote peace. When commissioned in 1638 to produce a painting for Ferdiano II, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Rubens took the opportunity to express allegorically his attitude toward war. Rubens finished his artistic diatribe, Allegory of the Outbreak of War during the Thirty Years War. Rubens wrote his own explanation of the painting in a letter:

“The principal figure is of Mars, who has left the temple of Janus open (which according to Roman custom was closed in time of peace) and struts with his shield and his blood stained sword, threatening all peoples with disaster; he pays little attention to Venus, his lady, who, surrounded by her little love-gods, tries in vain to hold him back with caresses and embraces. On the opposite side, Mars is pulled forward by the Fury
Alecto with a torch in her hand. There are also monsters signifying plague and famine, the inseparable companions of war. Thrown to the ground is a women with a broken lute, as a symbol that harmony cannot exist beside the discord of war; likewise a mother with a child in her arms indicates that fertility, procreation, and tenderness are opposed by war which breaks into and destroys everything. There is furthermore an architect fallen backwards, with his tools in his hands, to express the idea that what is built in peace for the benefit and ornament of cities is laid in ruin and raised by the forces of arms...you will also find on the ground, beneath the feet of Mars, a book and a drawing on paper, to indicate that he tramples on literature and other refinements... the sorrowing women...clothed in black with a torn veil, and deprived of all her jewels and ornaments is unhappy Europe, which for so many years has suffered pillage, degradation, and misery affecting all of us so deeply that it is useless to say more about them.”

Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641) was the most famous of Ruben’s assistants that became one of his successors. Early on Van Dyck, the younger man, unwilling to be overshadowed by the undisputed stature of his master, left Antwerp, eventually settling in London, where he became the court portraitist to Charles I. Portraits became his specialty. He developed a courtly manner of great elegance that was influential internationally. In one of his finest works, Charles I Dismounted, the ill fated Stuart king stands in a landscape with the river Thames in the background. An equerry and a page attend Charles I. Although the king impersonates a nobleman out for a casual ride in his park, no one can mistake the regal pose and the air of absolute authority that his Parliament resented and was soon to rise against. Here, King Charles turns his back on his attendants as he surveys his domain. The king’s placement in the composition is extremely artful. He stands off center but balances the picture with a single keen glance at the viewer. Van Dyck even managed to portray Charles I in a position to look down on the observer. In reality, the monarch’s short stature forced him to exert his power in ways other than physical. Van Dyke's elegant style resounded in English portrait painting well into the 19th century.

Clara Peeters (1594-1657) was a Flemish artist who spent time in Holland and was a pioneer in the field of still life painting, laying the groundwork for future Dutch still life painters. She was particularly renowned for her depictions of food and flowers together, as well as, still lifes that included bread and fruit. Such still lifes became known as breakfast pieces. Still Life with Flowers, Goblet, Dried Fruit, and Pretzels, displays Peeters considerable skills.

The Dutch Republic
The ascendance of the Dutch Republic during the 17th century was largely due to economic prosperity; Amsterdam had the highest per capita income in Europe. It emerged as the financial center of the continent. The Dutch expertise on the open seas facilitated establishing colonies and trade routes around the world.

Spain and the southern Netherlands was Catholic and the northern Netherlands were mainly Protestant. The prevailing Calvinism demanded a rejection of art in churches, and thus artists
produced little religious art in the Dutch Republic at the time. Despite their Calvinist beliefs, the Dutch were truly tolerant people, and artists (often Catholics) did create religious art works.

**Frans Hals**

Dutch Baroque artists were esteemed for their skills in portraiture. Frans Hals (1581-1666) was the leading painter in Haarlem and made portraits his specialty. Portrait artists had relied heavily on convention - specific poses, settings, attire, etc - to convey the sense of the sitter. The artist’s goal was to produce an image appropriate to the subject’s station in life. With the increasing number of Dutch middle class patrons, the tasks for portraitists became more challenging. Traditional conventions were inappropriate and thus unusable, but also the Calvinists shunned ostentation, instead wearing subdued, uniform, dark clothing with little variation or decoration. Despite these difficulties, or perhaps because of them, Hals produced lively portraits that seem far more relaxed than the formulaic traditional portraiture. He injected spontaneity into his images and conveyed the personalities of the sitters as well. His manner of execution intensified the casualness, immediacy, and intimacy in his paintings. The touch of Hal’s brush was as light and fleeting as the moment when he captured the pose.

Hals also excelled at group portraits, which multiplied the challenges of depicting a single sitter. **Archers of Saint Hadrian** depicts one of many Dutch civic militia groups who claimed credit for liberating the Dutch Republic from Spain. Like other companies, the Archers met on their saint’s feast day in dress uniform for a grand banquet. The celebrations sometimes lasted an entire week, prompting an ordinance limiting them to “three or at the most four days.” These events called for a group portrait, and such commissions gave Hals the opportunity to attack the problem of adequately representing each group member while retaining action and variety in the composition. Earlier group portraits in the Netherlands were rather ordered and regimented images. Hals sought to enliven the depictions and the results can be seen in Archers. Here each man is both a troop member and an individual with a distinct personality. Some engage viewers directly, whereas others look away or at a companion; where one is stern and the other is animated. The uniformity of attire - black military dress, white ruffles, and sashes - does not seem to have deterred Hals from injecting spontaneity into the work. He used those elements to create a lively rhythm that extends throughout the composition and energizes the portrait.

Hals captured the character of straitlaced, devout Calvinist women in **The Women Regents of the Old Men’s Home at Haarlem**. Dutch women were given the primary role for taking care of the family and home. They populated the work force in the cities and were often educated. Among the more prominent roles that women played in public life were regents of charitable institutions - orphanages, hospitals, old age homes, and houses of correction. Hals depicts a group of stern, sensible, and determined women who take their responsibilities seriously. The women look out from the painting with expressions that range from dour disinterest to kindly concern. The somber palette contributes to the painting’s restraint. Although this painting may lack the vitality and spontaneity of other portraits by Hals, his unerring ability to capture the details of the individual sitters and their general cultural characteristics is truly impressive.

**Rembrandt Van Rijn** (1606-1669) Hal’s younger contemporary was widely recognized as the leading Dutch painter of his time. Rembrandt’s move from his native Leiden to Amsterdam
around 1631 provided him with a more extensive clientele, contributed to a flourishing career. In his portraits, Rembrandt delved deeply into the psyche and personality of his sitters. In the **Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulip**, he deviated further from the traditional group portrait than had even Hals. Rembrandt chose to portray the members of the surgeon’s guild (who commissioned the group portrait) clustered together on the painting’s left side. In the foreground the corpse that Dr. Tulip is in the act of dissecting. Rembrandt diagonally placed and foreshortened the corpse, activating the space by disrupting the strict horizontal, planar orientation found in traditional portraiture. Though the students wear virtually identical attire, their varying poses and facial expressions suggest unique individuals. Rembrandt produced this painting at age 26.

Rembrandt amplified the complexity and energy of the group portrait with his painting of 1642, **The Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq** better known as **Night Watch**. This title is a misnomer for the painting is not a nocturnal scene. Though Rembrandt used dramatic lighting, the darkness of the painting is due more to the varnish the artist used than the subject depicted.

This painting is one of many civic guard group portraits produced during this time period. It appears that Rembrandt was commissioned to paint the two officers, Captain Frans Banning Cocq and his lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch along with 16 members of this militia group (each contributing to Rembrandt’s fee). This work was one of six paintings commissioned from different artist’ around 1640 for the assembly and banquet hall of the new Musketeer’s Hall in Amsterdam. Some scholars have suggested that the occasion of the commissions was the visit of Queen Marie de Medici to the Dutch City in 1638.

Rembrandt captured the excitement and activity of the men preparing for the parade. Rembrandt's inventiveness was by this time becoming a conventional portrait format. Rather than present assembled men, Rembrandt depicted them scurrying about in the act of organizing themselves, thereby animating the image significantly. The prominent girl to the left of center is unidentified. The large canvas placed in the hall in 1642, was moved in 1715 to the Amsterdam town hall, where it was cropped on all sides, leaving us today with an incomplete record.

Rembrandt also created many religious artworks despite the Calvinist injunctions against religious art. The images were not the opulent, overwhelming art of Baroque Italy. Rather his art is that of a committed Christian who desired to interpret Biblical narratives in human, rather than lofty theological terms. The spiritual stillness of Rembrandt’s religious paintings is that of inward turning contemplation, far from the heavenly tumult of Bernini of Pozzo. Rembrandt portrays the humanity and humility of Jesus. His psychological insight and his profound sympathy for human affliction produced at the very end of life one of the most moving pictures in all religious art **Return of the Prodigal Son**. Tenderly embraced by his forgiving father, the son crouches before him in weeping contrition, while three figures immersed in soft shadow note the lesson of mercy. The light everywhere mingled with shadow, directs the viewer’s attention by illuminating the father and son and largely veiling the witnesses. It focus is the beautiful, spiritual face of the old man; secondarily; it touches the stern face of the foremost
witness. Return demonstrates the degree to which Rembrandt developed a personal style completely in tune with the simple eloquence of the Biblical passage.

The use of light was a hallmark of Rembrandt’s style. His pictorial method involved refining light and shade into finer and finer nuances until they blended with one another. Earlier painters’ use of abrupt light and dark changes gave way to the gradation seen in the work of Rembrandt and Velazquez. The dramatic effect of shape chiaroscuro was sacrificed for a greater fidelity to actual appearances. This technique is closer to reality because the eyes perceive light and dark as always subtly changing and not static.

Generally speaking, Renaissance artists represented forms and faces in a flat, neutral modeling light. They represented the idea of light, rather than the actual look of it. Artists, such as Rembrandt discovered degrees of light and dark, degrees of difference in pose, in the movement of facial features, and in psychic states. They arrived at these differences optically, not conceptually or in terms of some ideal. Rembrandt found that by manipulating the direction, intensity, distance, and surface texture of light and shadow, he could render the most subtle nuances of character and mood, both in persons and whole scenes. He discovered for the modern world that variation of light and shade, subtly modulated, could be read as emotional difference. In the visible world, light, dark, and the wide spectrum of values in between are charged with meanings and feelings that sometimes are independent of the shapes and figures they modify. Theater and photography have used these discoveries to great dramatic effect. Rembrandt carried over the spiritual quality of his religious works into his later portraits. The “psychology of light,” as some have said. Light and dark are not in conflict, they are reconciled, merging softly and subtly to produce a visual quietness. Their prevailing mood is that of tranquil meditation, of philosophical resignation, of musing recollection, a whole cluster of emotional tones heard only in silence.

In a self portrait produced late in life, light shines from the upper left of the painting and bathes the subjects face while leaving the lower part of the body in shadow. The artist depicted himself as possessing dignity and strength. The portrait can be seen as a summary of the many stylistic and professional concerns that occupied him throughout his career.

**Etching**

Many artists took up etching when it was perfected early in the 17th century. It was more manageable than engraving and allowed greater freedom in drawing the design. For etching, a copper plate is covered with a layer of wax or varnish. The artist incises the design into this surface with an etching tool, exposing the metal surface below, but not cutting into its surface. The plate is then immersed in acid, which etches or eats away at the exposed metal surface. The mediums softness gives greater carving freedom than woodcutters and engravers have working directly in their more resistant media of wood and metal. Prior to the invention of the lithograph in the 19th century, etching offered the greatest subtlety of line and tone.

If Rembrandt never painted, he still would be renowned, as he principally was in his lifetime, for his prints. Prints were a major source of income for him, and he often reworked the plates
so they could be used to produce a new issue or edition. This constant reworking was unusual within the context of 17th century print making practices. Christ with the Sick around Him, Receiving the Children (Hundred Guilder Print) is one of Rembrandt’s most celebrated etchings. The title by which the print is best known, Hundred Guilder Print, refers to the high price the work brought during Rembrandt’s lifetime. Like his other religious works, the print is diffused with abiding piety. Christ appears in the center preaching to the blind, the lame, and the young. On the left, a group of Jews heatedly discuss issues among themselves. The central theme here is Christ’s humility and mercy.

Rembrandt's genius is undisputed. He is revered as an artist of great versatility, as a master of light and shadow, and a unique interpreter of the Protestant conception of Scripture. Because of the esteem in which Rembrandt's work is held, his work and style have been the focus of forgers and copyists. To counteract this, a group of scholars has launched the Rembrandt Research Project, whose goal is to provide definitive identification of the hundred’s of works currently attributed to Rembrandt.

Judith Leyster (1609-1660) was a portraitist, like Hals, her teacher. She has depicted herself in this portrait as the artist. She allows the viewer to evaluate her skill, which is considerable. Though she painted many subjects, her specialty was genre scenes with a comical image like the one in the portrait. Leyster’s elegant attire distinguishes her as a member of a well to do family.

Dutch Landscape
In addition to portraiture, the Dutch avidly collected landscapes, interior scenes, and still lifes. Landscape scenes abound in Dutch Baroque art. Due to topography and politics, the Dutch had a unique relationship to the terrain, one that differed from those of other European countries. After gaining independence from Spain, the Dutch undertook an extensive land reclamation project that lasted almost a century. Dikes and drainage systems were everywhere across the landscape. Because of these efforts, the Dutch developed a direct relationship with the land. The marshy and swampy nature of much of the land made it less desirable for large scale exploitation, so the extensive feudal landholding system that existed elsewhere in Europe never developed in the provinces. Most Dutch families owned and worked their own farms, cultivating a feeling of closeness to the Dutch terrain.

Aelbert Cuyp (1620-1691) produced works of careful observation and deep respect for and understanding of the Dutch landscape. A Distant View of Dordrecht, with a Milkmaid and Four Cows, and Other Figures, often referred to as The “Large Dort,” reveals Cuyp’s substantial skills. The title indicates the location was important to the artist. Unlike the idealized landscapes in many Italian paintings, this landscape is specific. The church in the background has been identified as Grote Kerk in Dordrecht. The dairy cows, shepherds, and milkmaid refer to a cornerstone of Dutch agriculture - the demand for dairy products such as butter and cheese, which increased with the growth of urban centers.
Jacob Van Ruisdael (1628-1682) was one of the major Dutch landscape painters. In View from Haarlem from the Dunes at Overeen, van Ruisdael gives the viewer an overarching view of this major Dutch city. The specificity of the artist’s image - Saint Bavo Church in the background, with numerous windmills that refer to the land reclamation efforts, and the figures in the foreground stretching linen to be bleached (a major industry in Haarlem) - endows the painting with a sense of honesty and integrity. Yet this is primarily a landscape painting. The human element is portrayed small and miniscule so as to blend into the landscape. The horizon line is low, so the sky fills three quarters of the picture space. The landscape is illuminated by patches of sunlight braking through the clouds. Van Ruisdael not only captured specific and historic locations in his paintings, he imbued them with a quiet serenity that takes on an almost spiritual quality.

Jan Vermeer
The Dutch were also very fond of interior paintings depicting the lives of prosperous, responsible, and cultured citizens. The best known and highly regarded of these was Jan Vermeer (1632-1675) of Delft. Vermeer derived most of his income from his work and an innkeeper and art dealer. He painted no more than thirty five paintings that can be attributed to him. Vermeer’s paintings were small, luminous and captivating. Flemish artists of the 15th century had also painted domestic interiors, but they were often occupied by those of sacred significance. In contrast, Vermeer and his contemporaries composed, neat, quietly opulent interiors of Dutch middle class dwellings, with men and women and children engaging in household tasks or recreation. These commonplace actions reflected the values of a comfortable domesticity that had a simple beauty.

In The Letter, Vermeer ushers the viewer into a room of a well to do Dutch house. The drawn curtain and open doorway through which the viewer must peer, reinforces the viewer’s status as an outsider and affirms the scene’s spontaneity of the moment. The focus on the women emphasizes her role as the one responsible for the tranquility and order of the home. In The Letter, the woman of the house is not involved in cleaning and child rearing activities; her elegant attire suggests a woman of wealth. He lute playing seems to have been interrupted by a maid, who has delivered a letter. The missive is a love letter; Vermeer includes visual clues that would prompt this inference from a 17th century Dutch audience. The lute was a traditional symbol of the music of love, and the calm seascape on the back wall served as a symbol of love requited. In the book Love Emblems, published in Amsterdam in 1634, the author wrote, “Love may rightly be compared to the sea, considering it changeableness.”

Vermeer was a master of pictorial light. He could render space so convincingly that it appeared that the viewer was looking through a pane of glass at the actual scene. Historians are confident that Vermeer used as tools both mirrors and camera obscura, an ancestor of the modern camera based on passing light through a tiny pinhole or lens to project a image on the wall of a room or a screen. This does not mean that Vermeer simply copied the image. Instead these aids helped him obtain results he reworked compositionally, placing his figures and the furniture of a room in a beautiful stability of quadrilateral shapes. This gives his design a matchless classical serenity. This quality is enhanced by colors so true to the optical facts and
so subtly modulated that they suggest Vermeer was far ahead of his time in color science. **Close examination of Vermeer’s paints shows that shadows are not colorless and dark, that adjoining colors affect each other, and that light is composed of colors. Thus he painted reflections off of surfaces in colors modulated by others nearby.**

Vermeer’s, **Allegory of the Art of Painting**, depicts himself and his profession. Vermeer’s back is facing the viewer. He is dressed in historical Burgundian attire and is hard at work on a painting of a model portraying the attributes of Clio, the muse of history. The map of the provinces on the back way serves as another reference to history. The viewer is located outside the space of action. Some art historians have suggested that the light radiating from an unseen window on the left illuminates both the model and the canvas Vermeer is painting alludes to the light of artistic inspiration. The allegorical reading of this painting was affirmed when Vermeer’s window, wishing to retain this painting after the artist’s death, listed it in her written claim as “the piece... wherein the Art of Painting is portrayed.”

**Satirizing Dutch Life**  
**Jan Steen (1625-1679)** provided a counterpoint to Vermeer’s charm and beauty of Dutch domestic life. **The Feast of Saint Nicholas** depicted a household scene of Chaos and disruption. Saint Nicholas had just visited this residence, and the children are in an uproar as they search there shoes for the gifts from saint Nick. Some children are delighted, such as, the little girl clutching her gifts refusing to share. Others are disappointed - the boy on the left is in tears because he received a birch rod. A festive atmosphere reigns, which contrasts sharply with Vermeer’s decorum. Steen frequently used children’s activities as satirical comments on foolish adult behavior. The Feast of Saint Nicholas can be seen as alluding to selfishness, pettiness, and jealousy.

**Still Life**  
The prosperous Dutch were proud of their accomplishments and the popularity of still life paintings, particularly images of accumulated material wealth, reflected pride. These beautifully crafted images are both scientific in their optical accuracy and poetic in their beauty and lyricism. **Vanitas Still Life** by Pieter Claesz (1597/98-1660) reveals the pride Dutch citizens had in their material possessions, presented as if strewn across a table top or dresser. This pride is tempered by the ever present morality and humility central to the Calvinist faith. Thus, while appreciating and enjoying the beauty and value of the objects depicted, the viewer is reminded of life’s transience. This reminder consists of references to death. Paintings with such features are called Vanitas paintings; each feature is referred to as a **memento mori**. In **Vanitas Still Life**, references to mortality include a skull, timepiece, tipped glass and cracked walnut. All suggest the passage of time or a presence has disappeared; something or someone was here and now is gone. Claesz emphasized the element of time and showed his great skill by including a self portrait reflected in the glass ball on the left. But in an apparent challenge to the message of inevitable morality the Vanitas paintings convey, the portrait serves to immortalize the subject - in this case the artist himself.
Willem Kalf (1619-1693) in his painting, *Still Life with a Late Ming Ginger Jar*, reveals both the wealth Dutch citizens had accrued and the exquisite skills - both technical and aesthetic - of Dutch Baroque artists. Kalf was enamored by the lustrous sheen of fabric highlights glinting off reflective surfaces. His works present an array of ornamental objects, such as Venetian and Dutch glassware and the silver dish. Kalf’s inclusion of the watch, Mediterranean peach, and peeled lemon suggests these works, despite their opulence, served as vanitas paintings. In Still Life, Kalf also highlighted the expensiveness of Dutch Maritime trade through his depiction of the Indian floral carpet and the Chinese jar used to store ginger (a luxury item).

Like still life paintings, flower paintings were prominent in Dutch Baroque art. Because he did not live long, flowers often appeared in vanitas paintings. However, floral painting as its own genre also flourished. Among its leading practitioners was Rachel Ruysch (1663-1750). Ruysch’s father was a professor of botany and anatomy, which may account for he interest in and knowledge of plants and insects. She acquired an international reputation for he lush paintings such as *Flower Still Life*. In this image the lavish floral arrangement is so full of blossoms they seem to be spilling out f the vase. Ruysch carefully constructed her paintings. Here, she positioned the flowers so that they create a diagonal running from the upper right to the lower left and it offsets the opposing diagonal of the back edge of the table. Ruysch became famous for her floral paintings and still lifes. From 1708-1716 she served as court painter to the elector of Palatine in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Dutch Baroque art has a unique character that sets it apart from Italian Baroque in many ways. The appeal of Dutch Baroque art lies in both its beauty and serenity, as well as, in the insights it provides into Calvinist Dutch life and history.

**France**

The history of France during the Baroque period is essentially the culmination of increasing monarchical authority that had been developing for centuries. This consolidation of power was embodied in King Louis XIV (1661-1715), whose obsessive control determined the direction of French Baroque society and culture. Although its economy was not as expansive as that of the Dutch Republic, France became the largest and most powerful European country in the 17th century.

Religious conflicts caused great tension throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. After the Reformation, Protestants in France challenged royal authority, which results in a sequence of religious wars between Catholics and Protestants. In 1598, King Henry IV (1589-1610), issued the Edict of Nantes, which in effect decreed religious tolerance. Despite this edict, Protestants eventually were driven from the country.

In the early part of the century, the appeal of Rome enticed many French artists to study there. Fascination with both ancient Roman and Italian Renaissance cultures accounted for Rome’s allure. **Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665)**, born in Normandy, spent most of his life in Rome. There, inspired by its monuments and countryside, he produced his grandly severe and regular canvases modeled on the work of Titian and Raphael. He also carefully worked out a
theoretical explanation of his method, and was ultimately responsible for establishing classical painting as an important manifestation in French Baroque art.

Poussin’s *Et in Arcadia Ego (I, Too, in Arcadia, or Even in Arcadia, I [am present]);* was informed by Raphael’s rational order and stability and by antique statuary. Landscape, for which Poussin became very fond, provides the setting for the picture. The foreground is dominated by three shepherds, living in the idyllic land of Arcadia, who spell out an enigmatic inscription on a tomb as a statuesque female figure quietly places her hand on the shoulder of one of them. She may be the spirit, reminding these mortals, as does the inscription, that death is found even in Arcadia, supposedly a place of Edenic bliss. The countless draped female statues surviving in Italy since Roman times supplied the models for this figure. The youth with one foot resting on a boulder is modeled on Greco Roman statues of Neptune, the sea god leaning on his trident. The compact balanced grouping of the figures and the light, reserved, mournful, mood set the tone for Poussin’s art in its later phase.

In notes for an intended treatise on painting, Poussin outlined the “grand manner” of classicism, of which he became a leading exponent in Rome. Artists must first of all choose great subjects. “The first requirement, fundamental to all others, is that the subject and the narrative be grandiose, such as battles, heroic actions, and religious themes.” Minute details should be avoided, as well as all “low” subjects, such as genre - “Those who choose base subjects find refuge in them because of feebleness of their talents.” Clearly, these directives rule out a good deal of decorative art, as well as the genre scenes that were popular in the Dutch Republic.

Poussin represents a theoretical tradition in Western art that goes back to the Early Renaissance. It asserts that all good art must be the result of good judgment; a judgment based on knowledge. In this way, art can achieve correctness and propriety, two of the favorite characteristics of the classicizing artist or architect. Poussin praised the ancient Greeks who “produced marvelous effects” with their musical “modes.” He observed that the word “mode” really means the system, or the measure and form which we use in making something. It constrains us not to pass the limits; it compels us to employ a certain evenness and moderation in all things.” Such evenness and moderation are the very essence of French classical doctrine. In the age of Louis XIV, scholars preached this doctrine as much for literature and music as for art and architecture.

Among Poussin’s finest works is *Burial of Phocion.* As was typical, Poussin carefully chose his subject from the literature of classical antiquity. His source was Plutarch’s *Life of Phocion,* a biography of the distinguished Athenian general whom his compatriots unjustly put to death for treason. Eventually the state gave him a public funeral and memorialized him. In the foreground, the hero’s body is being taken away, his burial on Athenian soil initially forbidden. The two massive bearers and the bier are starkly isolated in a great landscape that throws them into solitary relief, eloquently expressive of the hero abandoned in death. The landscape’s interlocking planes slope upward to the lighted sky at the left. Its carefully arranged terraces bear slowly moving streams, shepherds and their flocks’ and’ in the distance, whole assemblies
of solid geometric structures (temples, towers, walls, villas, and a central grand sarcophagus). The skies are untroubled, and the light is even and revealing of form. The trees are few and carefully arranged, like curtains drawn back to reveal a natural setting carefully cultivated for a single human action. Unlike van Ruisdael’s *View of Haarlem*, this scene was not intended to represent a particular place and time. It was Poussin’s construction of an idea of a noble landscape to frame a noble theme. The *Phocion* landscape is nature subordinated to a rational plan.

The art of Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), was described as a softer version of the disciplined rational art of Poussin, with its sophisticated revelation of the geometry of landscape. Unlike the figures in Poussin’s paintings, those in Claude’s landscape tell no dramatic story, point out no moral, and praise no hero. The often appear as an excuse to do a landscape itself. For Claude, painting involved essentially one theme - the beauty of a broad sky suffused with the golden light of dawn or sunset glowing through a hazy atmosphere and reflecting brilliantly off rippling water.

The subject of his work often remains grounded in classical antiquity, as seen in *Landscape with Cattle and Peasants*. The figures on the right chat in animated fashion, on the left cattle relax contentedly. In the middle ground cattle amble away slowly. The fore, middle, and background recede in orderliness until all forms dissolve into a luminous mist. Atmospheric and linear perspective reinforce each other to turn a vista into a typical Claudian vision, an ideal classical world bathed in sunlight in infinite space. Even though there are many classical features in the landscape, Claude, like the Dutch painters, studied the actual light and the atmospheric nuances of nature. He recorded carefully in hundreds of sketchbooks the Roman countryside, its gentle terrain accented by stone pines, cypresses, and poplars, and by the ever present Roman ruins. he made these fundamental elements in his compositions. Travelers could understand the picturesque beauties of the outskirts of Rome in Claudian landscapes.

Claude preferred, and convincingly represented, the sun’s rays as they gradually illuminated the morning sky or, with their dying glow, set the pensive mood of evening. He matched the moods of nature with those of human subject’s. Claude’s infusion of nature with human feeling and his decomposition of nature in a calm equilibrium greatly appealed to the landscape painters of the 18th and 19th centuries.

**Louis Le Main**
Although classicism was an important presence in French art in the 17th and early 18th centuries, not all artists went that direction. Louis Le Nain (1593-1648), bears comparison to the Dutch. Subjects that in Dutch paintings were opportunities for boisterous good humor were treated with somber stillness by the French. *Family of Country People* expresses the grave dignity of a family close to the soil, one made stoic and resigned by hardship. The peasant’s lot, never easy, was miserable during the time Le Nain painted. The constant warfare (Family was painted during the Thirty Year’s War) took its toll on France. The anguish and frustration of the peasantry, suffered from the cruel depredations of unruly armies living off the country, often broke out in violent revolts that were savagely repressed. The family however is pious,
docile, and calm. Because Le Nain depicted peasants with dignity and subservience, despite their harsh living conditions, some scholars have suggested that he intended to please wealthy urban patrons with these paintings.

**Jacques Callot (1592-1635)** conveyed a sense of military life of the times in a series of etchings called *Miseries of War*. Callot worked almost exclusively in etching, and was widely influential in his own time and since. In the *Large Miseries of War* series, he coolly observed the details of life and death, presenting without comment images based on events he must have seen in the wars in Lorraine.

He depicted a mass execution by hanging in **Hanging Tree**. The unfortunates are thieves (identified by the text on the bottom). **Callot’s Large Miseries of War was among the first realistic pictorial records of the horrors of armed conflict.**

**Georges De La Tour**

Because of the prominence of religious issues and the value Catholics placed on the didactic capabilities of art, religious art did have a presence in France. **Georges De La Tour (1593-1652)** was well known for his religious imagery. His work suggests influence by Caravaggio that he may have learned of from the Dutch school of Utrecht. His *Adoration of the Shepherds* makes use of the night setting favored by that school. A group of humble men and women, coarsely clad, gather in a prayerful vigil around a luminous baby Jesus. Without the title this appears as a genre piece of peasant life. Nothing in the figures distinguishes them as the Holy subjects; no halos, angels, or stately architecture. The light is not spiritual, but material, coming from a candle. La Tour eliminated the dogmatic significance and traditional iconography of the Incarnation. Still these people reverently contemplate something they regard as holy. It is clear that the painting is readable to the devout of any religious bent whether they know the central mystery of the Christian faith or not.

The supernatural calm that pervades this picture is characteristic if La Tour’s work. He achieved this by eliminating motion and emotive gesture (only the light is dramatic), by suppressing surface detail and by simplifying body volumes. These stylistic traits are among those associated with classical art based on classical principles. Several apparently contrary elements meet in the work of La Tour; classical composure, fervent spirituality, and genre realism.

Perhaps the preeminent patron of the period was King Louis XIV. He was a master at political strategy and propaganda. He promoted his rule as divine right (belief in a king’s absolute power as God’s will), rendered Louis; authority incontestable. So full of himself was he that he adopted the nickname “**le Roi Soleil**” (the Sun King). Like the sun, Louis was the center of the universe.

Louis was a control freak. His desire to control extended to all realms of French life, even art. Louis and his principal advisor, Jean Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), were determined to organize art and architecture in the service of the state. No pains were spared to raise great
symbols and monuments to the king’s absolute power. The efforts to regularize taste were furthered by the foundation of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1648, which served to accelerate the establishment of French classical style.

The portrait of Louis XIV by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743) conveys the image of an absolute monarch. The king was 63 when this work was painted looks at the viewer with haughtiness and arrogance. Though only five-foot, four inches, Louis is portrayed as looking down at his subjects. Louis was insistent that the best artists be used to serve his needs. To accomplish this he maintained a workshop of artists that specialized in things such as faces, fabric, architecture, landscapes, armor and fur. Thus, many of the king’s portrait were group efforts.

The New Official French Taste
The first building project Louis and Colbert undertook was the closing of the east side of the Louvre court left incomplete by Lescot in the 16th century. Bernini was summoned from Italy to submit plans but his design was rejected when he wanted to tear everything and start over. He left in high indignation. Instead the east facade was collaboration among Claude Perrault (1613-1688), Louis Le Vau (1612-1670), and Charles Le Brun (1619-1690). The design is a brilliant synthesis of French and Italian classical elements, culminating in a new and definitive formula. The French pavilion system was maintained. The central pavilion is in the form of a classical temple front, and a giant colonnade of paired columns, resembling the columned flanks of a temple folded out like wings, is contained by the two salient pavilions at both ends. The whole is mounted on a stately basement, or podium. The designers favored an even roofline, balustraded and broken only by the central pediment, over the traditional French pyramidal roof. The emphatically horizontal sweep of the facade brushed aside all memory of Gothic verticality. Its stately proportions and monumentality were both an expression of the new official French taste and a symbol of centrally organized authority.

Versailles
Work of the Louvre hardly had begun when Louis XIV decided to convert a royal hunting lodge at Versailles, a few miles outside of Paris, into a great palace. A veritable army of architects, decorators, sculptors, painters, and landscape architects was assembled under the general management of Charles Le Brun, a former student of Poussin. In their hands, the conversion of a simple hunting lodge into the palace of Versailles became the greatest architectural project of the age - a defining statement of French Baroque style and an undeniable symbol of Louis XIV’s power and ambition.

Planned on a gigantic scale, the project not only called for a large palace flanking a vast park but also for the construction of a satellite city to house court and government officials, military and guard detachments, courtiers, and servants (undoubtedly to keep them all under the king’s close supervision. The town was laid out to the East of the palace along three radial avenues that converge on the palace structure itself; their axes, in a symbolic assertion of the king’s absolute power, intersected in the king’s bedroom. This room was actually an audience room, a
state chamber. The palace itself was more than a quarter mile long and was placed at right angles to the dominant East-West axis that runs through the city and park.

Careful attention was paid to each detail of an extremely rich decoration of the palace’s interior. The architects and decorators designed everything from wall paintings to doorknobs, to reinforce the splendor of Versailles and to exhibit the very finest sense of artisanship. Out of the hundred’s of rooms in the palace, the most famous is the Galerie des Glaces, or Hall of Mirrors, designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646-1708) and Charles La Brun. This hall overlooks the park from the second floor and extends along most the width of the central block. Although deprived of its original sumptuous furniture, which included gold and silver chairs and bejeweled trees, the Galerie des Glaces retains much of its splendor today. Its tunnel-like quality is alleviated by hundreds of mirrors, set into the wall opposite the windows that illusionistically extend the width of the room. The mirror, the ultimate source of illusion, was a favorite element of Baroque interior design. It also enhanced the dazzling extravagance of the great festivals Louis XIV was so fond of hosting.

The park of Versailles designed by Andre Le Notre (1613-1700), must rank among the world’s greatest artwork in both size and concept. Here an entire forest was transformed into a park. Although the geometric plan may appear stiff and formal, the park in fact offers an almost unlimited variety of vistas. The formal gardens near the palace provide a rational transition from the architectural forms to the natural ones.

For the Grotto of Thetis in the garden at Versailles, Francois Girardon (1628-1715) designed Apollo Attended by Nymphs. Both stately and graceful, the nymphs have a compelling charm as they minister to Apollo at the end of the day. The three nymphs in the background are the work of Thomas Regnaudin (1622-1706). Greco-Roman sculpture influenced the design of the figures, while Poussin’s figure compositions inspired the sculpture’s arrangement. The depiction of Apollo as a reference to Louis XIV as the “God of the Sun” was bound to assure acceptance at court.

After Le Vau’s death, Jules Hardouin Mansart, a grand nephew of Francois Mansart, completed the garden facade of Versailles palace and in 1698 received a commission to add a Royal Chapel to the complex. The chapel’s interior is essentially a rectangular building with an apse as high as the nave, giving the central space a curved Baroque quality. Large clerestory windows allow light to enter the interior, illuminating the precisely chiseled details. Pier supported arcades carry a majestic row of Corinthian columns that define the royal gallery. The decoration is restrained. The illusionistic ceiling decorations, added in 1708-1709 by Antoine Coypel (1661-1722), suggest the drama and complexity of Baroque art.

As a symbol of power and absolutism, Versailles is unsurpassed. It also expresses, in the most monumental terms of its age, the rationalistic creed - based on scientific advances - that all knowledge must be systematic and all science must be the consequence of the intellect imposed on matter. The whole stupendous design of Versailles proudly proclaims the mastery of human intelligence (and Louis XIV) over the disorderliness of nature.
Another of Hardouin-Mansart’s masterworks the *Eglise de Dome, Church of the Invalides* in Paris, also makes reference to Italian Baroque architecture. An intricately composed domed square of great scale, the church is attached to the veteran’s hospital Louis XIV set up for disabled soldiers of his many wars. Two firmly separated levels, the upper one pedimented, composes the frontispiece. The grouping of the orders and of the bays they frame is like Italian Baroque. The compact facade is low and narrow in relation to the vast drum and dome, seeming to serve simply as a base for them. The conspicuous dome is overpowering and like Italian Baroque in its dramatic magnitude. The dome is built of three shells; the lowest is cut off so that a visitor to the interior looks up through it to the one above, which is painted illusionistically with the *apotheosis* (deification) of Saint Louis, patron of France. The second dome, filled with light from hidden windows in the third, outermost dome, creates an impression of the open limitless space and brightness of the heavens. Below, the buildings interior is only dimly illuminated.

**England**

The absolute authority of the monarchy that prevailed in France was not found in England. Common Law and the Parliament kept royal power in check. In the 17th and 18th centuries England experienced the development of both limited monarchy and constitutionalism. The religious conflicts of the continent were not as contentious. The religious affiliations of the English included Catholicism, Anglicanism, Protestantism, and Puritanism (the English version of Calvinism). England took advantage of the opportunities offered by overseas trade that the Dutch did. England being an island country possessed a great navy.

English Baroque art does not have the focused character of either Dutch or Italian Baroque art. The one area of cultural production in which England made great strides was architecture, much of it incorporating classical elements.

The revolution in English building was primarily the work of one man, **Indigo Jones (1573-1652)**, *Architect to King James I and Charles I*. Jones spent considerable time in Italy. He greatly admired the classical authority and restraint of Palladio’s structures and studied his architectural treatise. Jones took many of Palladio’s basic design principles and applied them to his own work. The nature of this achievement is evident in the buildings he designed for his royal patrons, among them the *Banqueting House at Whitehall* in London. For this structure, a symmetrical block of great clarity and dignity, Jones superimposed two orders, using columns in the center and pilasters near the ends. The balustraded roof line, uninterrupted in its horizontal sweep, predates the Louvre’s facade by 40 years. While influenced by Palladio, Jones did not just copy him. For two centuries his influence was almost as authoritative in English architecture as was that of Palladio. Jones interior at Whitehall is adorned with several important Rubens paintings.

Until almost the present, the dominant feature of the London skyline was the majestic dome of *Saint Paul’s Cathedral*, the work of England’s most renowned architect **Christopher Wren (1632-1723)**, who was a mathematical Genius and skilled engineer whose work won Isaac
Newton’s praise. Wren was appointed professor of astronomy in London at age 25. Math led to architecture and Charles II asked Wren to prepare a plan for restoring the old Gothic church of Saint Paul. When proposed to remodel the building based on Roman structures. Within a few months the Great Fire of London, which destroyed the old structure and many other churches in 1666, gave Wren the opportunity to rebuild Saint Paul as well as other churches. Wren was influenced by Indigo Jones, French architecture from a trip there, and Italian Baroque from prints. He harmonized Palladian, French, and Italian Baroque features in Saint Paul’s. Wren’s work served as prototypes for later buildings in both England and in colonial America.

Later Baroque Art of the Early 18th Century

England
In 1705, while Saint Peter’s was being completed, the British government commissioned a monumental palace in Oxfordshire, Blenheim, for John Churchill duke of Marlborough. The palace was a reward for Churchill’s military victory over the French in 1704 at the Battle of Blenheim during the War for Spanish Succession. Designed by John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), Blenheim was one of the largest of the splendid country houses built during the period of prosperity resulting from Great Britain's expansion into the New World. At the time, a small group of architects associated with the aging Sir Christopher Wren was responsible for briefly returning Italian Baroque complexity to favor over the streamlined Palladian classicism of Indigo Jones. Vanbrugh was the best known of this group. Blenheim recalls Italian Baroque architecture. The design demonstrates Vanbrugh’s love of variety and contrast, tempered by his ability to create focus areas such as those found frequently in 17th century architecture. The tremendous forecourt, the hugely projecting pavilions and the extended colonnades simultaneously recall Saint Peter’s and Versailles. Baroque architects often sacrificed convenience for dramatic effect. Vanbrugh placed the kitchen some 200 feet from the majestic dining salon. His architecture pleased his patrons in the beginning, but even before Blenheim was completed, critics condemned what they considered its ponderous and bizarre qualities.

Germany
Italian Baroque influenced the ecclesiastical architecture of Southern Germany and Austria. One of the most splendid German buildings is the pilgrimage church of Vierzehnheiligen (fourteen saints) designed by Balthasar Neumann (1687-1753) and built near Staffelstein. Neumann traveled to Austria and Northern Italy and studied in Paris before returning home to become one of the most active architects in his native land.

Numerous large windows in the richly decorated and continuous walls flood the interior of Vierzehnheiligen with a bright, even and cheerful light. The sanctuary exhibits a vivacious play of architectural fantasy that retains the Italian Baroque’s dynamic energy but banishes all its dramatic qualities.

The complexity of the church is seen in it’s ground plan, which has been called one of the most ingenious pieces of architectural design ever conceived. The straight lines have deliberately been removed. The composition is made up of tangent ovals and circles, achieving a very
different effect with in the traditional outlines of a Gothic church (apse, transept, nave, and western towers). Undulating space is in continuous motion, creating unlimited vistas bewildering in their variety and effect. The church is a brilliant ensemble of architecture, painting, and sculpture, and music, dissolving the boundaries of the arts in a visionary unity.

The desire to achieve the unity of various artistic mediums propelled architects and artists in Germany and Austria to further explore the illusionistic capabilities of each medium. **Egid Quirin Asam (1692-1750)** created the group **Assumption of the Virgin** for the space above the altar in the monastery church at Rohr, Germany. Asam designed the church in collaboration with his brother **Cosmas Damian Asam (1686-1739)**. Influenced by Late Baroque architecture they saw on a trip to Rome, the brothers returned to Germany with a feel for illusionistic spectacle. The miraculous is made real before the viewer’s eyes, a spiritual vision materially visible. The Virgin is effortlessly borne aloft by angels, soaring to the glowing paradise above her, while the apostolic witness’s gesticulate in astonishment around her vacant tomb. The figures ascending to Heaven have gilded details that set them apart from those remaining on earth. The setting is a luxuriously ornamented theater. The scene is pure opera - an art perfected in the 18th century and very popular. Her sculpture dissolves into painting, theater, and music. Its mass is rendered weightless, its compact composition broken up and diffused.

**Italy**

The ceilings of Late Baroque palaces sometimes became painted festivals for the imagination. The master of such works, **Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770)**, was the last great Italian painter until the 20th century to have international impact. Of Venetian origin, Tiepolo worked for patrons in Austria, Germany, and Spain, as well as Italy. His bright cheerful colors and relaxed compositions were ideally suited to Late Baroque architecture. **The Apotheosis of the Pisani Family**, a ceiling fresco in the Villa Pisani at Stra in Northern Italy, shows airy figures fluttering through the vast sunlit skies and fleecy clouds, their forms making dark accents against the brilliant light of high noon. As the title indicates, Pisani family members are elevated here to the rank of gods in a heavenly scene that recalls the ceiling paintings of Correggio and Pozzo. While retaining 17th century illusionistic tendencies, Tiepolo softened the rhetoric and created pictorial schemes of great elegance and grace, unsurpassed for their sheer effectiveness as decor.

**Conclusion**

The art produced in the 17th and early 18th centuries was truly diverse, making the comprehensive summary of the Baroque period impossible. Each country encountered a different set of historical challenges, and even within country boundaries a wide variety of forms emerged. Drama and complexity were hallmarks of Italian Baroque art, Dutch Baroque art was characterized to a greater degree by restrained genre scenes, still life’s, and portraits produced for a growing class of merchant patrons. Despite the period’s lack of consistency in artistic development, its legacy was lasting. Many of the concerns of 17th and early 18th century artists, such as, direct observation, emotional intensity, and manipulation of light and color, laid the foundation for two styles that emerged in the late 18th century, Neoclassicism
and Romanticism. Further the influence of such artists as Caravaggio, Bernini, Velazquez, Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vermeer, among many others resonates in art to the present day.