Chapter 15

Drama and Light: Mannerism, the, Baroque, and Rococo
Mannerism

• The new generation of artists in Rome attempted to go beyond nature.
• Parmigianino creates a distorted space where naturalistic proportions are discarded at will – logic is abandoned as well, as in the column supporting nothing.
• Mary looks like an aristocratic figure, holding the infant Jesus at a cool distance.
• Mannerists felt that the human body was most elegant when posed to form the letter S (called the *serpentinata*).
The Counter-Reformation and Tintoretto

- During the Counter-Reformation artists are instructed by the church to create works that will entertain and electrify viewers.
- Tintoretto’s *Last Supper* plunges us into a deep, distorted space - he emphasizes the supernatural aspect of the subject with his mysterious lighting and ghostly angels.
- The everyday elements, like the servants and animals further accentuate the miraculous aspect of the scene.
The Baroque Period

• Everything was being reconsidered in the *Baroque Period* (c.1575-1750) – from the position of the earth in the universe, to the position of the individual in society
• People questioned authority in religion, in government, in science, in thought
• Descartes started his philosophical inquiry by doubting that anything existed
• Galileo using a telescope, declared that the earth was not at the center of the universe
• Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravity
The Baroque Period
El Greco

• Like Tintoretto, El Greco is sometimes classified as a Mannerist
• He visited Rome and was influenced by its Mannerists, especially their elongated, distorted figures
• But, his work is intensely emotional, and committed to the ideals of the Counter-Reformation
• El Greco often ignores reality, in favor of the creation of a spiritual world
The Baroque Period
Caravaggio and Naturalism

• In *The Supper at Emmaus* Caravaggio shows Christ and his disciples as real working-class people.

• The architecture is eliminated – we focus on the figures – they make dramatic gestures that almost seem to leap out of the picture and into real space.

• He chooses to illustrate the very moment of illumination – when his followers realize they are with the risen Christ.

• The stark lighting illuminates the face of Jesus and focuses our attention on the most important gestures and details.
Artemisia Gentileschi: The Spread of Tenebroso

- Artemisia Gentileschi (a female painter) depicts Judith, who after decapitating the tyrant Holofernes is leaving his tent.
- The drama is accentuated by the lighting – the source is the candle which casts a dramatic shadow on her face.
- The mood is suspenseful, as they appear to hear someone approaching.
- This is a painting in the tenebroso, or dark manner.
- Followers of Caravaggio who specialized in such night scenes were known as Caravaggisti.
The Baroque Period
Bernini

• Gianlorenzo Bernini’s *David* shows the hero at a specific moment – just before he releases the slingshot
• There is great dynamic energy, and an intense grimace of concentration on his less than ideal face
• The gaze is so intense, that the unseen Goliath becomes part of the work
• Bernini breaks down the barrier between art and the real world
Baroque Naturalism in Spain: Velazquez

- In *Las Meninas* by Diego Velazquez we see a moment in the life of the Spanish court.
- The King and Queen are reflected in the back mirror – we are honored by actually occupying their position.
- We see the artist as an important member of the court.
- Unlike the northern painters, Velazquez’s realism does not come from copying minute details – he captures the *impression* of realism through suggestive brushstrokes.
The Baroque Period in the North - Rubens

- The *Elevation of the Cross* was painted when Peter Paul Rubens returned to Flanders from a long stay in Italy.
- Using the rich color of the *Venetians*, the active, muscular figures of *Michelangelo*, and the dramatic lighting of *Caravaggio* – he creates a potent combination.
- The strong diagonal of the cross and the many directions of activity are brought to a dynamic equilibrium.
The Baroque Period in the North - Vermeer

- Protestant values and the patronage of middle-class merchants produced an art reflective of middle-class life in the Dutch Republic.
- In Jan Vermeer’s *Woman with a Water Jug* we see an everyday scene raised to a high artistic plane - he combines vivid realism (carefully observed textures) with idealism (simplification).
- The simple, geometric volumes of her head, the repetition of the curves, the cool blue light, all serve to create a quiet, harmonious, even spiritual image.
The Baroque Period in the North

Rembrandt

- Rembrandt van Rijn was commissioned to paint a company of officers – he surprised the 18 men, who had anticipated a traditional portrait (and had each paid equally)
- Instead, he creates an imaginative composition – some figures are featured, but others are hidden
- Even lighting is abandoned – he uses a dramatic *chiaroscuro*
- The result was impressive – but many were disappointed – his commissions decreased – but he will continue to insist on following his own vision
The Baroque in France

Poussin

- Nicolas Poussin was the leader of *Classicism* – though French, he lived in Rome and studied the art of the Renaissance along with ancient works.
- Poussin’s paintings were based on ideals, not naturalism.
- His figures are based on ancient sculptures and they are set in an idealized world.
The Baroque in France

Versailles

- The palace at Versailles combines *classical* and *Baroque* elements – the design expresses the king’s domination, even over nature

- The Hall of Mirrors filled with gold and silver furniture and jeweled trees, reflected the gardens and impressed visitors with the king’s majesty
The visual idea of love in a garden was especially popular in the France of Louis XV, where the court was dominated by the king’s mistresses, and intellectual life flourished in the salons of female hostesses.

Romantic love was a dominant theme in art.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard paints a scene of young aristocrats playing at love in an overgrown garden – the young girl is playing along with the game as she playfully kick off her slipper.