

Selected Artists

A Collection of Lives, Work, Creative Legacies
and their Achievements, up to the age of 35

Newbury u3a: Art History 1

Compiled by Jayne Hipkiss

2026

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Project Details

Newbury u3a celebrates its 35th anniversary in July 2026. To mark the occasion, each of the 75+ Activity Groups were encouraged to create materials where '35' could be the main feature.

Members of the **Art History 1** Activity Group decided to each prepare a document on an artist that they admired and present their achievements up to the age of **35**. Depictions of the artworks were to be included in each piece. Thirteen artists were selected and this work is documented here.

Art History 1 meets once per month and each member takes it in turns to present to the group on an artist that they admire, or on a theme (for example: Humour in Art) or arranges a trip to a gallery or exhibition (for example: the Martin Parr photography exhibition at the Fox-Talbot Museum in Lacock). A general discussion follows the presentation with, of course, refreshments!

We are a mix of artists and art enthusiasts with a very wide range of expertise and experience – from very little of either to accomplished artists and those with Art History degrees. We support those in the group who have exhibitions of their own artwork and those who curate art exhibitions for others. We are a friendly group with very diverse, passionate and often loud opinions about what is art, its merits and whether it appeals or not.

We don't always agree with each other, but we have a lot of fun doing so!

Banksy

Banksy at 35! (1973 -)

Banksy's exact birthdate remains officially unconfirmed, but he is widely believed to have been born around 1973 in Bristol. This makes him around 53 years old and was therefore likely to be aged 35 in 2008.

In 2008, Banksy organised The Cans Festival in London, visited New Orleans, three years after Hurricane Katrina hit the city, to paint a series of street murals. He also completed several other notable works.

Banksy's most well-known works from 2008 include:

THE CANS FESTIVAL (MAY 2008)



Cave Painting Removal - A prominent piece of stencil art left in the Leake Street Tunnel as part of a major street art exhibition Banksy organised underneath Waterloo Station.

NEW ORLEANS MURALS (AUGUST 2008)



Nola (also known as Girl with Umbrella) - An iconic stencil painted showing a young girl getting rained on from beneath her own umbrella. This piece was also released as a limited-edition screenprint later that year (see below).

Boy with a Fridge - Depicts a young boy flying a discarded refrigerator like a kite.



Abraham Lincoln - A satirical depiction of the former US President pushing a shopping cart and looking like a homeless person!

OTHER STREET MURALS



Bubble Slide Girl – An amusing piece painted in Hackney.

Choose Your Weapon - A very well-known mural painted in Bermondsey, featuring a figure in a hoodie walking a dog.



Very Little Helps - Painted on the exterior of a pharmacy in Islington, depicting children raising a Tesco carrier bag like a flag - a comment on corporate consumerism.



PRINTS AND ORIGINAL RELEASES



Nola, Orange Rain - Released as a set of limited-edition prints in various colour variations (White Rain, Grey Rain, Orange Rain, Yellow Rain).

Thomas the Tank Engine - Another original work attributed to 2008.



COMMENT

When one examines each of the above images in close detail and then looks at the considerable volume and variety of Banksy's work since then, one can see that he has developed considerably from a graffiti artist into a broader conceptual artist, and orchestrator of large-scale public interventions such as Dismaland (Weston-Super-Mare, 2015) and The Walled Off Hotel (Bethlehem, 2017).

Early Banksy works appeared to reject commercialism, yet today ironically his works can sell for several million pounds!

By Dermot de Courcy Robinson, June 2026

Bernini

Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598 – 1680)

Born in Naples on 7 December 1598, Gian Lorenzo Bernini was a polymath: a sculptor, architect, painter, designer and draughtsman, who from 1623, after the ascension of Urban VIII to the papal throne, was practically in command of the official art policy of the papacy.

Bernini was prolific in terms of his output and by age 35 had completed many works. These were predominantly sculpture as his main architectural works came later in his life. Highlighted below are several of the works he completed up to age 35.



The Goat Amalthea with the Infant Jupiter and a Faun (c.1609)

The goat, Amalthea, is a divine goat that fed the baby Zeus with its milk when Chronos' wife, Rhea, hid the child to save its life.

Work displays textural differences between the goat's fur, skin of the children, hair etc with a sense of lightness about the stone. Shows an interest in faces and mimicry.

Aeneas, Anchises, and Ascanius leaving Troy (1618 – 1619)

This life-size sculpture depicts a scene from the second book of Virgil's Aeneid with 3 generations of the same family was commissioned by Cardinal Scipione Borghese, the Pope's nephew (Pope Paul V).

It's a large single block carving showing great technical ability with the age differences being shown by the treatment of the subjects' skin: soft for the child, taut for the father and wrinkled and withered for the older man.





Saints Andrew and Thomas (1620s)

A tightly framed and dramatically lit composition using a palette of earth and flesh tones offset by a black background which has been influenced by Caravaggio.

Subjects shown engaged in discussion, contrasting youth and age.

Rape of Proserpina (1621 – 1622) – Detail

From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book V, this sculpture shows the moment Proserpina / Persephone is abducted by Pluto who takes her to the underworld to be his queen.

Pluto's effort to drag her away shows in the way his fingers dig into her flesh, giving the marble the texture of wax or other soft material.

Demonstrates Bernini's virtuosity.



Apollo and Daphne (1622 – 1625)

This sculpture shows the moment in which Daphne appeals to her father, a river god, to be saved from Apollo and he does so by turning her into a laurel tree.

Daphne is running away in terror, with an open mouth, looking back to Apollo while he comes across as calm and confident that he's going to get what he wants.

The sculpture captures the moment of the metamorphosis and you can see her hands turning into branches and leaves and her feet into roots, grounding her in the earth.

The piece was situated close to a wall between two doors so that as the viewer came into the room and moved around it, the story unfolded – starting with the view of Apollo and moving round to Daphne. A good example of Bernini's theatricality.

David (1623 – 1624)

Depicts David in the moment before the stone is thrown at the giant Goliath.



Bust of Cardinal Scipione Borghese (1632)

The Cardinal is shown in the act of speaking and moving, with his head turned slightly to one side; Bernini captures a passing moment rather than a static pose.

Bernini uses a polished surface to give a specific, almost tangible effect. The finish on the Cardinal's garment creates areas of highlight and shadow such that the spectator knows they can feel the sumptuous fabric with its sheen of satin just simply by looking at the bust. The depths of the folds in the fabric create shadows and cause the light to flicker so as to convey an impression of movement of the body underneath. The work is very tactile.

St Peter's Baldacchino (1624 – 1633)

An enormous sculpted bronze canopy over the high altar of St Peter's Basilica in Rome where the high altar was built over the tomb of St Peter.

Very much a fusion of architecture and sculpture and Baroque theatre, Bernini plays with light and space, developing the work into a theatre or stage set.

It's a monument to St Peter and a reference back to the origins of Christianity; also, to the Pope's personal insignia.



By Stephanie May June 2026

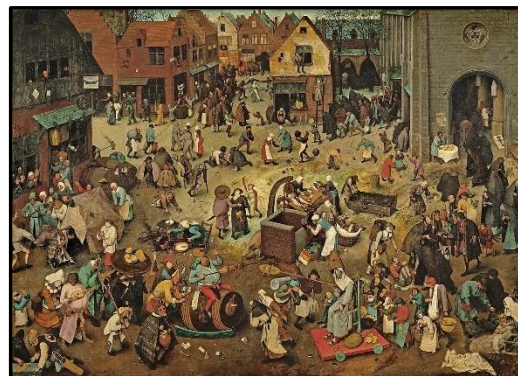
Breugel

Pieter Bruegel The Elder (1525/30 -1569)

Bruegel was born in Flemish Breda, at a time of extensive change in Western Europe. Humanist ideals from the previous century influenced artists and scholars. Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation in neighbouring Germany, which was accompanied by iconoclasm and widespread destruction of religious art. The Catholic Church viewed Protestantism and its destructive iconoclasm of art as a threat to the Church.

Pieter Bruegel specialised in genre paintings populated by peasants, often with a landscape element, though he also painted religious works. Making the life and manners of peasants the focus of a work was rare in painting in Bruegel's time, and he was a pioneer of genre painting.

His earthy, unsentimental but vivid depiction of the rituals of village life—including agriculture, hunts, meals, festivals, dances, and games—are unique windows on a



vanished folk culture, though still characteristic of Belgian life and culture today, and a prime source of iconographic evidence about both physical and social aspects of 16th-century life.

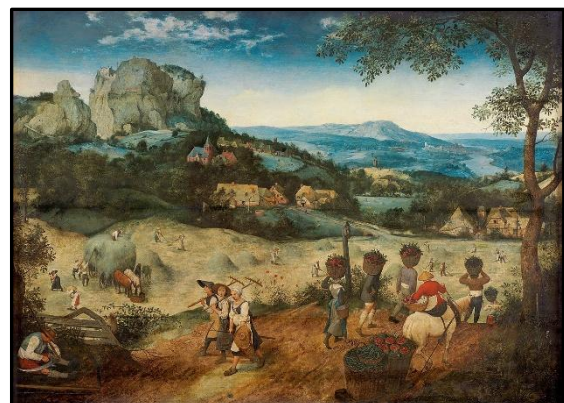
Bruegel often painted community events. In paintings like *The Peasant Wedding* (1566), above left, Bruegel painted individual, identifiable people, while the people in *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* (1559), above right, are unidentifiable, muffin-faced allegories of greed or gluttony.

I have chosen to focus on the 5 paintings (originally 6) that represent the seasons or labours of the year. It was common to see such representations in 'Books of Hours' – illuminated prayer books, that had depictions set in landscapes of the agricultural tasks, weather, and social life typical for that month.

His well-known set of landscapes with genre figures depicting the seasons are the culmination of his landscape style; the five surviving paintings use the basic elements of the world landscape (only one lacks craggy mountains) but transform them into his own style.



They are larger than most previous works, with a genre scene with several figures in the foreground, and the panoramic view seen past or through trees. The surviving five paintings are '*The Gloomy Day*' (1565) and '*The Hunters in the Snow*' (1565), both shown above: Then '*The Return of the Herd*' (1565) and '*The Hay Harvest*' (1565), shown below:



'The Harvesters' (1565).

The painting associated with April-May has been lost.

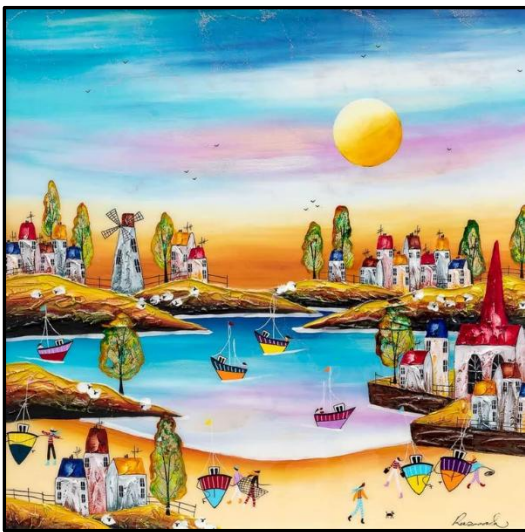
Each painting was around 3x5 feet and was an important commission for Bruegel as he was paid according to the size of the painting.

Bruegel died at a comparatively early age in 1569. The five paintings above were completed by the age of 35 (if you take 1530 as the year of his birth!).

His work has inspired films, poetry and novels.

I love the simplicity and vitality of these paintings, with village life in the foreground, stretching out to the far landscape. There is so much going on in each painting that you are drawn to wondering about their everyday lives and the times that they lived in.

I can see the influence of Bruegel in the contemporary art that I collect today. I have several original paintings and one commission from a Zimbabwe artist, now living in Dorset. Here you can see the landscape and the figures in the foreground going about their everyday business. These paintings are by Rozanne Bell. They are acrylic on canvas. The first example comes from the '*Harbour Scenes*' collection and the second which depicts some urban scenes. The one shown below left, is '*Penny Lane*'



By Jayne Hipkiss January 2026

Cezanne

Cézanne (1839-1906)

The artistic career of Paul Cézanne spanned more than forty years, from roughly 1860 to 1906, and formed a bridge between Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Cézanne was one of a trio with Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin that were underappreciated in their time, but who would have an incalculable effect on the art of the twentieth century, providing an inspiration for artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. Picasso would go so far as to call Cézanne "The father of us all". A prolific artist, he produced more than 900 oil paintings and 400 watercolours including many incomplete works.

Cézanne's early "dark" period [1861-70] was influenced by the works of French Romanticism and early Realism. Models were Eugène Delacroix and Gustave Courbet.



His paintings are characterized by a thick application of paint, high-contrast, dark tones with pronounced shadows, the use of pure black and other tones mixed with black, brown, grey and Prussian blue; occasionally a few white dots or green and red brushstrokes are added to brighten up, enlivening the monochrome monotony. The themes of his pictures from this period are portraits of family members or demonic-erotic content, reminiscent of his own traumatic experiences.

During this formative period, Cézanne's work oscillated between frenetic depictions of human suffering and quieter reflections on landscape and still life. *The Murder* (circa 1867–68), left, exemplifies his early interest in psychological intensity, while his landscape work hinted at a nascent desire to construct visual harmony. These experiments laid the groundwork for his eventual transition to Impressionism.

Cézanne's career took a pivotal turn in the 1870s thanks to his mentorship under Camille Pissarro. Under Pissarro's guidance, Cézanne shifted to brighter palettes and experimented with plein air painting, which became a hallmark of the Impressionist movement.

Their collaborative sessions in outdoor settings helped Cézanne refine his technique, exposing him to the subtleties of light and texture in nature. However, Cézanne's relationship with Impressionism remained cautious. While his works from this period, such as *House of the Hanged Man*, right (1873), reflect the movement's ethos, they also display his divergence. Cézanne was interested not just in capturing ephemeral beauty but in distilling it into enduring truths through solid structure and deliberate forms.



By Pauline Phillips, June 2026

Dutch Masters

The Golden Age of Dutch Art, when artists young and old flourished.

This was the period in the C17th when the Netherlands broke free from the Spanish/Hapsburg rule and influence, to become an independent maritime power.

The patronage and power of the Catholic church gave way to a Protestant way of thinking and living which focused on intimate family life and community business interests.

Artists reflected this in the work produced, using the rich and varied materials flowing through the ports.

Specialists in their fields, they answered the demands of an eager and wealthy buying public.....wonderous Flower studies, Still-life works, landscapes and Seascapes, and Portraits of their patrons and buyers.

Thomas de Keyser (1596 - 1667) was the famous painter of the single or group portrait. Aged just 30, he was commissioned to paint "*The Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths Guild*", to show their status and skills.

The four senior officers are arranged to have equal status, equal space in the picture, and equal refinement in the depiction of the tools of their trade.



Note the light illuminating their faces and hands, the delicate painting of the lacework, and the texture and nuance created out of the black fabric.

Pieter de Hooch (1629-1684) was but 34 when he painted "*Three women and a man in a courtyard*", showing the simple domesticity of a courting couple with two maids hovering in the background.



This indicates how a new understanding of perspective, aligned with a clear eye for detail, gives a brilliant sense of composition and completeness.

The painting glows from the tones of the fabrics, the warmth of the brickwork, and the benign shining of the sun.

Johannes Vermeer...not shown here...had produced, by his early 30s, pictures such as "*The Girl with the Pear Earring*" and "*The Kitchen Maid*" that captured the domestic life of mistress or maid with a clarity of light and colour.

This Age left a legacy of painting, work in gold and silver, furniture making, and even horticulture never seen before in such richness.

It created an environment for young artists to succeed and prosper.

By Ann Davidson, June 2026

Emin

Dame Tracey Karima Emin (1963 -)

Born 3 July 1963, Croydon, England

English mother of Romanichal descent and a Turkish Cypriot father. She was brought up in Margate, Kent, with her twin brother, Paul.

Her work has been analysed within the context of early adolescent and childhood abuse. She was raped at the age of thirteen whilst living in Margate and recalled “it’s what happened to a lot of girls”. Later she wrote in an article for the Evening Standard that she had “no memory of being a virgin”, citing numerous times she was raped as a young teenager.

In 1980-1982 she studied fashion at Medway College of Design and then in 1983-1986 went to Maidstone College of Art where she graduated with a First-Class BA in Printmaking. Her time at Maidstone was inspirational.

In 1987 she moved to London to study at the Royal College of Art where in 1989 she obtained an MA in Painting. She has no real affection for the place. Her degree show was relegated to the basement area which really upset her. The paintings were very large and only just fitted the space so couldn’t be viewed properly.

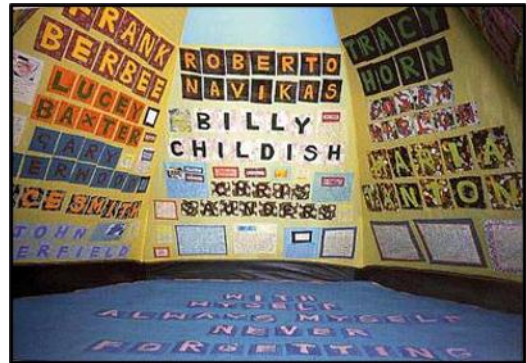
Tradition was for the graduates to leave a painting for the RCA collection. However, she changed her mind about which painting to leave. The first was a painting of her and her Nan. The one she actually left called ‘*Friendship*’ has on its recto an apology “Really sorry but I love my Nan to [sic] much to part with her ...”.

Emin says she is better represented in the collection by the reverse side of the painting.

The slight she felt with the way the RCA relegated her degree show to an inadequate space followed by the trauma of two abortions led her to destroy all the artwork she had produced in graduate school.

For the next few years she avoided painting, focusing on making small work, drawings, embroideries and undertaking schemes to make some money. This was a turbulent time recovering from trauma, breakdown, homelessness and huge debt.

Her efforts were rewarded when her now infamous work “*Every One I Have Ever Slept With*” 1963-1995, was exhibited in 1995 in a group show at the South London Gallery.



A small blue camping tent with the names of 102 people sewn onto the inner fabric.

It eventually achieved iconic status before it was destroyed in the 2004 Momart London Warehouse fire.



Following on from this came the installation “*My Bed*”, created in 1998.

This work caused considerable media furore when exhibited.

The work consists of her dishevelled bed surrounded by very personal bedroom objects.

The overall effect is still considered by many as shocking and distasteful.

Tracey Emin was 35 years old, and her career was about to take off.

By Jean Wallis, July 2026



Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy (1956 -)

Andy Goldsworthy is an internationally known Land Artist who was born in Cheshire in 1956.

He received a BA in Fine Arts at The University of Central Lancashire at the age of 22.

He moved to Cumbria, which became his creative home, where he still resides, aged 29.

He won the Northwest Arts Award when he was 23 and again when he was 25, and again when he was 26.

He won the Yorkshire Arts Award when he was 24.

He won the Northern Arts Bursary when he was 30, followed by a Scottish Arts Council Award when he was 31 and the Northern Electricity Arts Award when he was 33.

He was recognised for his extraordinary talent, vision, resilience, and imagination with an honorary degree from the [University of Bradford](#) at the age of 35.

These formative years in his distinguished career laid the foundation for a career that changed the way we view environmental art and indeed our perceptions of nature as a form of art.

Andy Goldsworthy makes sculpture in the landscape using the materials of nature, including stone, slate, wood, earth, water, snow, University of Central Lancashire trees, wool and much else besides.

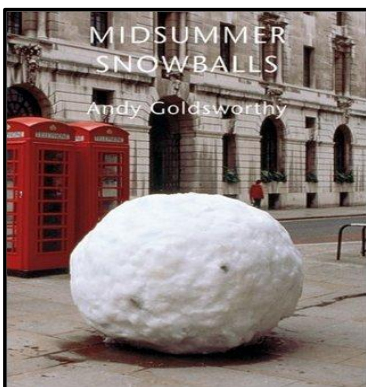
These are materials immediately to hand and the chance conditions of place, time, weather and season.

The now familiar forms of his art, arches, circles, domes, holes, lines, spheres, walls and spires and spirals, are powerful expressions of the patterns and rhythms of growth. They are attempts to understand the purpose of sculpture and through it the purpose of nature itself.

He so eloquently puts it, "A stone is passive, a witness to the place in which it sits; it is a focus, the core, the remains of something that was larger; its movement is one of erosion. A tree is an active part of its place, it makes that place richer and is an indication of the way something can change a place- in this respect it is a lesson to me about my own life as a sculptor, a tree is close to a gesture of a leaf or stone throw , but over a much longer span of time, during which it thrusts up and reached into space before decaying and dropping back to the ground."

The analogy here is between nature (tree) and man (the sculptor): roots/feet, trunk/body, branches/arms and hands, leaves/ the throw.

Below are examples of his many forms:



One example of his unique approach to exhibiting his work is when he was commissioned to have an exhibition in a Cork Street gallery. He and his works failed to appear until the afternoon before the preview whereupon he arrived with bags of clay which he then proceeded to fill the floor with and place a mirror on the ceiling facing out to the street.

The guests arrived looking somewhat mystified, then left, somewhat dissatisfied, leaving their numerous footprints embedded in the clay which could be viewed as reflected in the mirror to the outside to be seen by viewers on the street. That was in effect his show.

He has produced a plethora of books of photographs witnessing his ephemeral works which have sold successfully worldwide, as the photographs are the only evidence of the majority of his works.

Many of his works require low temperatures to survive including snow spheres and ice sticks.

The frailty of some of his pieces rarely survives an hour or two for example, his woollscapes, twig, thorn and leaf woven works.

Goldsworthy has exhibited extensively around the world, including the Egyptian room at the British Museum.



By Jim Crockatt, June 2026

Hogarth

William Hogarth (1697 – 1764)

William Hogarth painted *A Rake's Progress* in 1735:

The canvases were produced in 1732–1734, then engraved in 1734 and published in print form in 1735.^[2]

Its eight scenes tell the tale of spendthrift Tom Rakewell, who inherits his wealthy merchant father's fortune. He hurls the money away on luxurious living, paid-for sex and gambling and as a consequence is [imprisoned](#) in the [Fleet Prison](#). Some of the people who separate Tom from his money were real, well-known figures of the time and the episodes include a drunken scene at the notorious Rose Tavern in Drury Lane, known for its enticing 'painted beauties'. In the end, when Tom has thrown all his money away, he is confined in the Bethlem Royal Hospital for the Insane, known as Bedlam, where he dies. ^[3]



The original paintings are in the collection of [Sir John Soane's Museum](#) in London, where they are normally on display for a short period each day.

The Rake's Progress – In Prison

By Angela Sutton, January 2026

Holbein

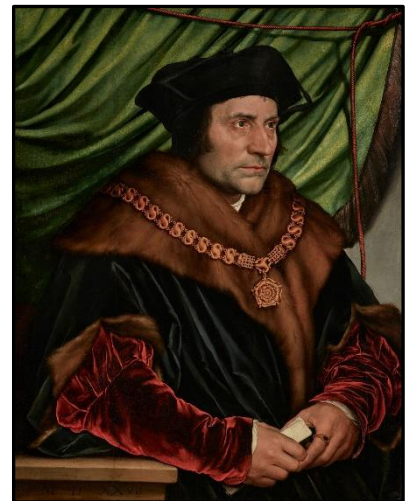
HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (1497- 1543):

Known now primarily for his portraiture, Holbein was a highly versatile, technically accomplished artist who worked in many media. Some of his prolific work was drawn into the political strategy of his patrons and used as propaganda at a time of major change and diplomatic manoeuvring for England.

Hans Holbein the Younger was born in 1497 or 1498 in Augsburg, a free imperial city in a strategic position. It was a major trading and industrial city and was a creative centre for the arts and printing. Hans and his elder brother Ambrosius received instruction from their father Hans and uncle Sigmund who together ran a large workshop, producing religious works, altarpieces, church windows and woodcuts. In 1514 the brothers went to Basel as journeymen painters and were apprenticed to Hans Herbster, Basel's leading painter. They worked for the humanist scholar Erasmus, among many other patrons.

Further work was undertaken in Lucerne and back in Basel, where Lutheranism was becoming influential. In 1523 Hans painted the first portraits of Erasmus who, in 1526, provided a letter of introduction to his friend Thomas More in England. With a 2-year leave of absence Holbein travelled to London.

More welcomed Holbein, commissioning an unusual multi-generational family portrait as well as a solo portrait. Holbein's skill was recognised and rewarded within the humanist circle that had ties to Erasmus and More. This included the rising Boleyn faction and Thomas Cromwell who, as Henry VIII's Secretary, controlled many aspects of government, including the artistic propaganda that would validate Henry as sovereign ruler, an emperor in his own kingdom and Christ's deputy on earth.





In the next few years, alternating between London and Basel, Holbein produced a huge amount of work in various media, to considerable acclaim.

In 1533 this culminated in *The Ambassadors* – a masterpiece of fascinating life-sized portraits with references to learning, religion, mortality and illusion, as measured against the grandeur of death. **He was 35.**

After the age of 35 he had another 10 years of very active work to come, including appointment as King's Painter and creation of the now destroyed *Whitehall Mural* and the portraits of Christina of Denmark and Anne of Cleves.



Legacy

Holbein stands head and shoulders above his predecessors and contemporaries in producing people who look out from the page and invite us to imagine their attitudes and feelings – what are they going to say?

His art was prized from very early on and the portraits in particular often remained in the families of those depicted. This contrasts with his work at court on pageants and other celebrations where huge canvases were destroyed after a single appearance.

His designs in metal and jewellery were highly prized, but the resulting works have not fared as well, perhaps because of fluctuating family fortunes and Civil War disruption.

He was challenged by working in a second language for much of his career and was in the midst of religious and political strife.

He stood at a crossroads in English history – he was present and creative in an intense society under the rule of a sovereign who regarded himself as God's deputy on earth.

He was valued sufficiently by Henry VIII to survive the fall of More, Cromwell and Anne Boleyn and the disappointment over Anne of Cleves.

He was instrumental in changing history. Would a different portrayal of Anne of Cleves have steered Henry away from pursuing the German alliances?

Most importantly for me, he had incomparable skill in depicting materials: silk, velvet, linen, fur and leather. Also, he left ample sketches so that we can examine his skill in preparation for portraiture. He was a truthful painter, right down to details such as Thomas More's stubble.

By Jane Read February 2026

Mackintosh

Charles Rennie Mackintosh

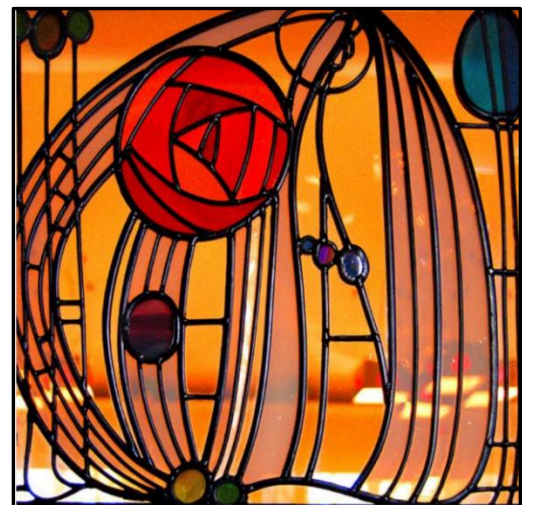
Charles Rennie Mackintosh was born in Glasgow on the 7th of June, 1868. The fourth child of a policeman and his wife Margaret Rennie. One of 11 children, he was born with a contracted sinew in his left foot which made him limp. At school he had difficulty reading and writing and today would probably be regarded as dyslexic but in the 1970's was regarded as slow. He left school at 15 and became articled to the architect John Hutchinson of Glasgow.



In 1884 he worked his way through a five-year apprenticeship to be an architect. He was also a regular evening student at Glasgow School of Art, where he acquired important skills as a designer and a watercolourist. The Glasgow Institute of Architecture decided to set up prizes, in the hope of stimulating some enthusiasm among the students. Mackintosh won two of the three prizes and was soon to win a national competition organised by South Kensington Museums which gained him a few lines in *The Building News*.

In 1890 Mackintosh won the Alexander Thompson travelling Scholarship for £60 with his design for a public hall. This prize money enabled him to make a tour of Italy, which he did, leaving Glasgow in March 1891 and arriving in Naples on the 5th of April. He kept a diary during his tour and produced a mass of drawings which he later entered an annual exhibition of the Glasgow School of Art Student Club.

Although Mackintosh was working within the conventions of formal architecture during the early 1890s, he began to work more freely as an artist, producing sketches, watercolours, posters and craftwork. An insatiable desire for experiment, particularly with organic images, led him to try to express an ideal or convey a message using symbolism.



He met a fellow apprentice Herbert McNair and they became great friends, both men attended evening classes at the Art School where both men became absorbed in new, experimental decorative styles. At the same time, two sisters Francis and Margaret Macdonald, day students at the school, were also exploring new ways of drawing and decoration.

Having seen the remarkable affinity of the four students, the head of the Art School decided they must be brought together. This creative alliance proved to be such a success that when their work was shown at the next school exhibition they were soon christened '*The Four*'.

Their decorative style was certainly indebted to the Pre Raphaelites, the Japanese and the English Arts & Crafts Movement.

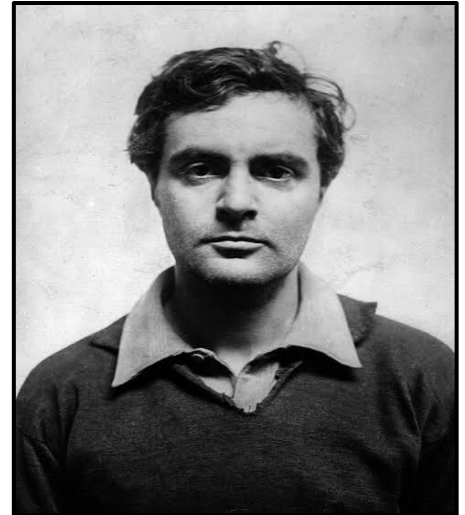
By Cynthia Walters July 2026

Modigliani

AMEDEO CLEMENTE MODIGLIANI (1884 – 1920)

Amedeo Modigliani was an Italian-born painter and sculptor, who worked mainly in France. He is best known for portraits and nudes, characterised by a surreal elongation of faces, necks, and figures — works that were not received well during his lifetime, but later became much sought after.

Sadly, the first 35 years of Modigliani's life were also the last 35 years of his life. He died from tubercular meningitis on 24th January 1920 at the tragically early age of 35.



Early Years

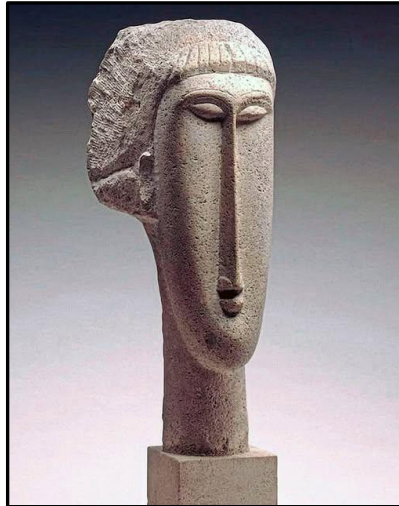
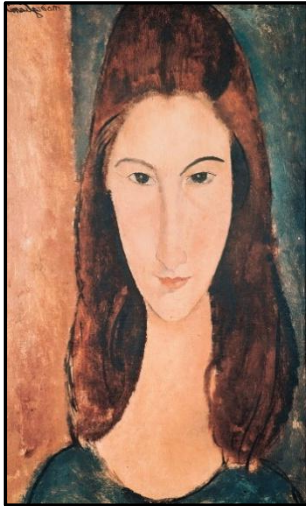
Modigliani was born into a Sephardic Jewish family in Livorno, Italy. His mother was from a family of intellectuals, and his father was a prosperous businessman. However, a year before the artist's birth in 1884, an economic downturn plunged the Modiglianis into bankruptcy. Ever resourceful, Modigliani's mother used her social contacts to establish a school and, along with her two sisters, made the school into a successful enterprise.

Modigliani had a close relationship with his mother, who taught him at home until he was 10. His early years were beset with health problems, including attacks of pleurisy, typhoid fever and tuberculosis. He suffered frequent bouts of TB for the rest of his life.

He is known to have drawn and painted from an early age, encouraged by his mother, who enrolled him with the best painting master in Livorno, Guglielmo Micheli, when he was just 14 years old. While with Micheli, Modigliani studied landscape, portraiture, still life, and the nude.

Life in Paris

After a period of four years studying in Venice, in 1906, Modigliani moved to Paris, then the focal point of the avant-garde, where he squatted in a commune for penniless artists in Montmartre. It was in Paris that he developed his own unique style, characterized by elongated proportions, mask-like faces, and almond eyes. He synthesised diverse inspirations, including classical Italian Renaissance, traditional African, Egyptian, and ancient Greek art and elements of avant-garde Parisian styles such as Cubism. He refused to be considered as belonging to any specific category, insisting on his difference.



During his early years in the city, Modigliani worked at a furious pace. He was constantly sketching, making as many as a hundred drawings a day. However, many of his works were lost—destroyed by him as inferior, left behind in his frequent changes of address, or given to girlfriends who did not keep them.

1917 Paris Show

The several dozen nudes Modigliani painted between 1916 and 1919 constitute many of his best-known works. This series of nudes was commissioned by Modigliani's dealer and friend Léopold Zborowski.

The show of 1917 was Modigliani's only solo exhibition during his life and is "notorious" in modern art history for its sensational public reception and the attendant issues of obscenity. The show was closed by police on its opening day, but continued thereafter, most likely after the removal of paintings from the gallery's street front window.

The 'Tragic Artist'

Inspired by his reading of erudite philosophical literature, Modigliani developed the belief that the only route to true creativity was through defiance and disorder. He became the epitome of the tragic artist, drinking heavily, using drugs and carrying on frequent affairs. While drunk he would sometimes shock onlookers by stripping himself naked at social gatherings.

Towards the end of his life, Modigliani's health deteriorated rapidly, and his alcohol-induced blackouts became more frequent. He died from tubercular meningitis on 24 January 1920, at the Hôpital de la Charité.

When Modigliani died, his 21-year-old partner, Jeanne Hébuterne, was eight months pregnant with their second child. Inconsolable, the day after Modigliani's death, she threw herself out of a fifth-floor window, killing herself and her unborn child.

Legacy

Since his death, Modigliani's reputation has soared. Nine novels, a play, a documentary, and three feature films have been devoted to his life.

His work has soared in value. In 2010, a painting of a nude by Modigliani, part of a series of nudes he created around 1917, sold for more than \$68.9m at an auction in New York.

In 2018 the 1917 painting *Nu couché (sur le côté gauche)* sold at Sotheby's in New York for \$157.2 million, setting a new auction house record at the time.



By Lesley Atkinson, July 2026

Picasso

PICASSO (1881 – 1973): A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Picasso: Spanish Artist. Genius of the 20th century

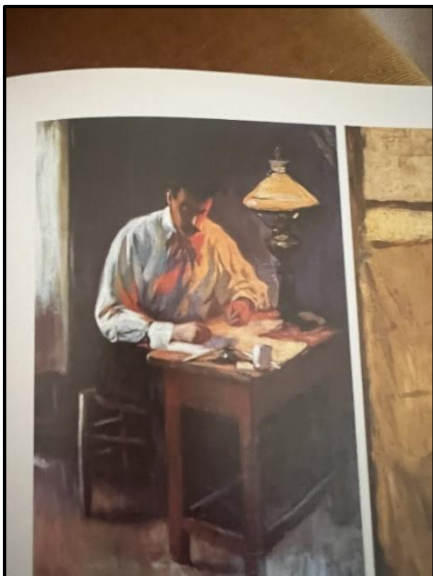
Picasso's father was an artist/teacher who taught Picasso as a child until age of 11, when the young Picasso outgrew his father.

Picasso's father gave up painting and gave him his brushes in recognition of his son's talents; Picasso was then drawing and painting like an old master.

THE ART OF HIS YOUTH 1898 -1901

Picasso needed to break away from his father's influence and leaving Madrid went to Barcelona in 1896. At this time, Barcelona was the centre of the avant- garde for the Spanish.

In 1896, he exhibited a painting called '*First Communion*' in the Third Arts and Crafts exhibition in Barcelona which was acclaimed by the critics and the public. This was a triumph and set him on the road to become a professional artist. This was a key period at 17 yrs old and full of confidence before he went to Paris in 1904. He soon engaged with many of what today is known as the French Impressionists, later known as the Post Impressionists, including Matisse, Braque, Monet, Manet, to name but a few- he also admired Renoir for his use of colour.



A painting that represented an early work related to this period is *Portrait of Josep Cordona (by Lamplight)*¹ Barcelona 1899.

To my mind, this picture beautifully captures the spirit of the sitter through the sense of light.

Picasso went through many different styles of painting. the most well-known periods were his *Blue* series of work (1901-1904) followed by a gentler series, *The Rose Period* (1904-1906).

Mother & Child

PRIS 1905 Gouache on canvas 90x70cms

SYNTHETIC CUBISM 1912-1915

This next major period of work is known as CUBISM. It was very radical and left Picasso at first alone, however he joined forces with Braque and together they developed Cubism.

Together, they inspired a handful of artists and together in 1911 exhibited in Paris, at the 'Salon de Refuses'. Amongst the artists were Leger, Delauney and Gleizes which put Cubism amongst mainstream art galleries. A concept that continues to inspire artists to the present day.



Later, a second exhibition known as 'Salon des Independants', led to many radical movements which resulted in great public enthusiasm and controversy. By 1905, we had *The Fauves*, creating scandals and challenging what to expect from art.

This is the narrative of Picasso always exploring and searching for new ways of seeing.

'Portrait of Ambroise Vollard'. Oil on Canvas 93x66cms
Paris Spring 1910

A good example of early Cubism depicting multiple views of the sitter (an important art dealer at that time).

Post age 35: 1916-1924

Picasso baffled his followers as he returned to a more classical and mainly figurative form of art. For me, the highpoint of his career was Cubism and 'Guernica' painted in 1939, perhaps amongst the most radical and profound scream of war which became internationally famous.

Before he turned 39, Picasso brought the power of the primitive/spiritual into western art

To quote Salmon Rushdie, "Without African art we would not have Picasso". (Desert Island Discs, 2025)

By Sydney Klugman, 2026

Ravilious

Eric Ravilious (1903 – 1942).

One of the most prolific and diverse artists of the 20th century Eric Ravilious (1903 - 42) was a commercial designer, and book illustrator, watercolourist, wood engraver, lithographer, muralist, designer of ceramics, furniture, textiles, wallpapers and glassware, and an official war artist of the Second World War.

Over his lifetime he engraved more than 400 illustrations, drew over 40 lithographic designs for books and publications and painted countless watercolours.

He considered painting to be his true vocation.



Ravilious attended the Royal College of Art and was befriended by Paul Nash who encouraged his wood engraving techniques but also his watercolours.

He was close friends also with Edward Bowden and the two of them became inseparable.

He married fellow student and model Tarzah Garwood. She was a talented artist, and they painted murals together, for high street shops and banks.

Ravilious had a passion for painting the countryside and he had his own exhibition at Zwemmers he showed 36 and 24 sold! People loved his sophisticated sense of pattern and ease, and the way he captured the light.

During 1936 Ravilious was introduced to Josiah Wedgwood V, owner of the ceramics company who had recognised a need for modernisation. He designed the commemorative mug for Edward VIII but then revised for George VI.

He produced a stamp to commemorate the Penny Black but sadly with the outbreak of war, it was scrapped.



He continued his landscape paintings which were very popular and he would sell for 15 guineas or more, in 1935.

His painting "*Tea at Furlongs*" was at the height of his career.



Then in 1939, he was commissioned to be a war artist and was killed three years later.

By Kathleen Ray, June 2026

Contributors:

With sincere thanks to the members of Newbury u3a Art History 1 who contributed their time, knowledge and skill to create this work.

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