

A Free Course on the History of Western Art

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20-05
JEAN-AUGUSTE-
DOMINIQUE INGRES

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Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres
(1780–1867), *The Valpinçon Bather*,
1808, 146 × 98 cm, Louvre, Paris

- This is Section 20 on Neoclassicism and this talk is on the French artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Ingres and Jacques-Louis David were the **two pillars of French Neoclassicism** and Ingres was David's student.
- **Neoclassicism** (c. 1760-1830) emphasized reason, objectivity, and classical ideals, and drew inspiration from ancient Greece and Rome art. It was replaced by **Romanticism** (c. 1800-1850) which focused on emotion, individualism, imagination, and the power of nature.

NOTES

Neoclassicism (c. 1760–1830)

- Rationality, order, logic, and restraint. It was a reaction against the decorative extravagance of the Baroque and Rococo styles.
- The art, literature, and philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome.
- Idealized historical themes, classical mythology, and moralising scenes. Artists often depicted figures as idealized versions of themselves.
- Clear, intentional lines, mathematical harmony, and perfectly balanced compositions. Brushstrokes were often invisible, creating a smooth, polished surface.
- A focus on form, structure, and universal human experiences. Writers aimed to provide instruction as well as pleasure.

Romanticism (c. 1800–1850)

- Emotion, subjectivity, and imagination. It emerged as a reaction against the perceived unemotional logic of Neoclassicism.

- Medieval and Baroque periods, as well as folklore, nature, and the exotic.
- Contemporary and personal experiences, landscapes, and dramatic events. It embraced the imperfect and emotional aspects of life.
- Emphasized drama and movement with visible brushstrokes, evoking a sense of raw energy and emotion.
- A focus on individuality and inspiration, celebrating the power of the human spirit. Key concepts included the "sublime," evoking awe and dread.



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), *Self-Portrait a 24 Years*, 77 x 61 cm, Conde Museum, Chantilly, France

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), *Self-Portrait a 24 Years*, 77 x 61 cm, Conde Museum, Chantilly, France

- Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres was born on August 29, 1780, in Montauban, France, to Joseph Ingres, a decorative artist and sculptor, and Anne Moulet. Early exposure to art within the family fostered his talent, and by 1791, he was studying at the Académie Royale de Toulouse. These years formed the core of his academic foundation, with classical discipline and drawing at the heart of his curriculum.
- Ingres was **keenly aware of his many talents from a young age** and, as a student, was known to practice violin obsessively. In fact, he sometimes claimed he could have become a celebrated musician instead of an artist—so much so that his friends would joke the violin was his true “mistress,” and his self-portrait subtly flaunts the proud, slightly dramatic air of a young virtuoso.
- Ingres’s abilities led him to Paris, where he **joined the studio of Jacques-Louis David**, France’s leading Neoclassical painter. Here, Ingres absorbed the rigorous draftsmanship and intellectual approach that would define his art. In 1801, **he won the prestigious Prix de Rome** for “The Ambassadors of Agamemnon in the tent of Achilles,” an early sign of his ambition and mastery.

BIOGRAPHY

- **1780** — Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres was born on August 29, 1780, in Montauban, France, to Joseph Ingres, a decorative artist and sculptor, and Anne Moulet. Early exposure to art within the family fostered his talent, and by

1791, he was studying at the Académie Royale de Toulouse. These years formed the core of his academic foundation, with classical discipline and drawing at the heart of his curriculum.

- **1797** — Ingres's precocity led him to Paris, where he **joined the studio of Jacques-Louis David**, France's premier Neoclassical painter and an ardent supporter of academic ideals. Here, Ingres absorbed the rigorous draftsmanship and intellectual approach that would define his art. In 1801, he won the prestigious Prix de Rome for "The Ambassadors of Agamemnon in the tent of Achilles," an early sign of his ambition and mastery. Funding shortages and political disruption meant he did not leave for Rome until 1806 where he stayed until 1820.
- **1804** — The year of this self-portrait, Ingres is 24 and already making a name in Paris's competitive art world. The painting's strong contrasts, clean lines, and introspective mood reveal not only Ingres's technical prowess but also his struggle for recognition. This work foreshadows the clarity and psychological depth of his later portraits. The sense of ambition is palpable—his gaze challenging, the pose self-possessed, setting the tone for a career that would oscillate between controversy and acclaim.
- **1820** — He returned from Rome.
- **1834-1841** — After his triumphant return to Paris and a period as a fashionable portraitist, Ingres was appointed director of the French Academy in Rome in 1834 and he held the position until 1841.
- **Later years** — Throughout his life, Ingres laboured to balance his own strict concept of classicism with evolving tastes and fashions. Whether in Rome, Florence, or Paris, Ingres's passionate belief in line over color and his unwavering commitment to the traditions of Raphael would see him admired and criticized in turns. His portraits, like this early self-image, capture not just likeness but the complex psychology of sitter and artist alike, revealing Ingres's lasting fascination with identity and form.

COMPARISON WITH DAVID

Training, Influence, and Shared Foundations

- **David as Mentor:** Ingres entered David's studio in Paris in 1797, absorbing his teacher's devotion to classical form, clarity, moral gravity, and the hierarchy of history painting. David, master of works like Oath of the Horatii and The Death of Marat, set the academic standard for neoclassical ideals—balance, order, stoic emotion, and the "noble simplicity" of form.

- **Neoclassical Lineage:** Both strove for line over color, celebrating the clarity and discipline of drawing above painterly effects. Their grand manner history paintings—public, didactic, and often political—shared similar compositional rigor and allusions to the art of antiquity.
- **Divergences in Style and Artistic Goals**
- **Idealism vs. Idiosyncrasy:** While David idealized the body with an emphasis on believable, monumental anatomy, Ingres took the principle of idealization further, exaggerating and distorting anatomy for expressive, sensual, and linear effects. Ingres' women—most famously the elongated Grande Odalisque—embody a sinuous grace that goes beyond nature, while David's forms remain rooted in anatomical logic and narrative drama.
- **Subject Matter:** David's oeuvre focused on heroic, moralistic, and historically weighty themes, often with a strong, didactic intent. Ingres began in this tradition but soon expanded into portraiture and the exotic, often infusing his figures with ambiguity, interiority, or even psychological vulnerability—departing from David's emphasis on moral strength and action.
- **Personal Innovations:** By the time of his maturity, Ingres championed his own take on classicism: prioritizing pure line, flattened space, and a static, sometimes enigmatic approach. His art hints at both the influence of Italian Renaissance masters and a proto-modern sensibility, paving the way for later artists who reveled in expressive distortion—Picasso, Matisse, and others trace debts to his innovations.
- **Critical and Historical Legacy**
- **Art Historical Impact:** David was the revolutionary standard-bearer for Neoclassicism, influencing not only Ingres, but an entire generation of artists who responded to his call for art to serve public virtue and exemplum virtutis (examples of virtue). Ingres, in turn, became the principal defender of line and draftsmanship against the rising tide of Romanticism, especially as embodied by Delacroix.
- **Enduring Contrasts:** David's works are celebrated for their clarity, psychological tension, and monumental narrative force; Ingres's for their refinement, imaginative elongation, and psychological subtlety. Where David strives for heroic spirit, Ingres courts sensuous beauty and formal experimentation within the classical canon.
- **Synthesis**

- In summary, Ingres revered David, mastering the elder's teachings before transforming them—subverting anatomical “truth” for expressive effect, moving from strict narrative to ambiguous portraiture, and setting the stage for modernism. David represents the Neoclassical ideal at its height. Ingres both preserved that legacy and quietly unraveled it from within, subtly shifting the arc of Western art.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

- 1. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres
 - French: ZHAN oh-GOOST doh-mee-NEEK ahn-GREH
 - Emphasis on the final syllable of “Ingres” in French.
- 2. Napoleon I
 - French: na-po-LEH-on
 - Nasal “on” at the end.
- 3. François Buron
 - French: frahn-SWA by-ROHN
 - Nasal ending on both names.
- 4. The Oath of the Horatii (Les Serments des Horaces)
 - Horatii: oh-RAH-tsee-ee
 - Horace in French: “Orace” is sometimes pronounced o-RAHS depending on context.
- 5. The Valpinçon Bather
 - Valpinçon: val-PAHN-sohn
 - Nasal vowels: “in” = ah[n], “on” = ohn.
- 6. Oedipus and the Sphinx
 - Oedipus: EE-di-pus (classical English)
 - Sphinx: sfinks
- 7. Jupiter and Thetis
 - Jupiter: JOO-pi-ter
 - Thetis: THEE-tis
- 8. Angelica (Ruggiero Rescuing Angelica)
 - Angelica: AN-juh-LEE-kuh
- 9. Ruggiero

- roo-JEH-roh
- Italian soft “g” like English “j.”
- 10. Grande Odalisque
- French: GRAHND oh-da-LEESK
- “Odalisque” is pronounced with emphasis on the last syllable.
- 11. Madame Moitessier
- French: ma-DAM mwah-TESS-yay
- 12. Baronne de Rothschild
- French: ba-RON duh ROH-tshild
- “Rothschild” often retains Germanic pronunciation in French: ROH-tshild.
- 13. Belvedere Torso (for reference in Oedipus and the Sphinx)
- Italian: bel-veh-DEH-reh TOR-so
- 14. Iliad
- English: ILL-ee-ad



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Bonaparte, First Consul*, 1803/4, 226 × 144 cm, Musée des beaux-arts de Liège, Curtius Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Bonaparte, First Consul*, 1803/4, 226 × 144 cm, Musée des beaux-arts de Liège, Curtius Museum

- By 1804, Ingres was **striving for official recognition**. This **portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte as First Consul** presents a powerful leader modelled on Roman emperors, tightly composed and steeped in symbolism. The rigid geometry and simplified forms echo classical statuary, asserting both Bonaparte's authority and Ingres's allegiance to Neoclassicism.
- Creating portraits for powerful patrons was a necessity for the young artist, as it provided both income and status. Ingres's approach set his work apart from contemporaries, favouring linear precision and cool detachment. Napoleon is depicted devoid of narrative background, yet his authoritative expression and regal pose speak volumes.
- Legend has it this portrait so flattered Napoleon that some courtiers whispered **Bonaparte looked almost divine**. The interesting thing is that Ingres had **never actually met Napoleon** when he painted it—he **based the face entirely on engravings and previous portraits**. The result? Napoleon's nose is notably more Roman than reality, setting a fashion for "**imperial noses**" among French noblemen for a decade.
- Through such commissions, Ingres **began to build his reputation**. However, his unwavering classicism was already drawing mixed reviews—a harbinger of the challenges he'd face as artistic fashions shifted toward Romanticism.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonaparte,_First_Consul



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Napoleon on his Imperial throne*, 1806, 259 × 162 cm, Musée de l'Armée

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Napoleon on his Imperial throne*, 1806, 259 × 162 cm, Musée de l'Armée

- This is a few years later and shows Napoleon as Emperor. It is so over the top that it looks like a parody to modern eyes.
- The work's rigid symmetry, hierarchical composition, and frontal pose recall medieval and Byzantine icons. Sitting in splendour upon his throne, Napoleon is surrounded by imperial regalia—the sceptre, laurel wreath, and ceremonial robes evoking ancient Rome.
- This painting **marked a turning point**. Ingres, at 26, produced a grand, almost static vision of authority, prioritising line, symbol, and invariable expression over dynamic movement. The French Salon recoiled, criticising the archaism and lack of warmth. Yet, Ingres saw himself as **upholding the noble traditions** of history painting.
- Ingres was so obsessed with capturing imperial grandeur that his depiction of Napoleon was sometimes **mocked as a "Byzantine icon"** rather than a modern portrait. Napoleon himself reportedly found the flamboyant robes and scepter "a bit much." The painting drew so much scorn at the Salon that Ingres later admitted he "wept with rage" at the critics' "barbaric" lack of taste.
- The controversy exposed the rift between academic ideals and emerging Romantic sensibilities, a conflict that would shape Ingres's career.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_I_on_His_Imperial_Throne



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière*, 1806, 100 × 70 cm, Louvre Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière*, 1806, 100 × 70 cm, Louvre Museum

- Exhibited at the Salon of 1806, this portrait of Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière (pronounced "mah-duh-mwah-ZEL kah-roh-LEEN ree-VYER") underscores Ingres's fidelity to classicism. The sitter's delicate pose, diaphanous dress, and luminous skin are rendered with almost sculptural clarity. Subtle distortions—elongated neck, stylised features—signal Ingres's focus on idealization over strict naturalism. The slightly awkward pose is intentional and is used to emphasise her youth and purity.
- **Critics in 1806 found the painting cold and archaic**—a response that **deeply affected Ingres**, who strove for harmony between nature, ideal, and tradition. It is now generally seen in the light of tragedy as she died within a year of this portrait.
- When Caroline's parents saw the finished portrait, her mother is said to have exclaimed, "**She is prettier than that!**" But Ingres stood his ground, insisting the grace of the sitter was in her poise and delicate features. Posterity has favoured Ingres's ethereal, elongated version—real or imagined—over any contemporary likeness.
- Ingres's technical skill shines in his handling of textures and fabrics. At this time, the artist was based in Paris **but would soon move to Rome**, where classicist influences would flourish.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mademoiselle_Caroline_Rivière



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Portrait of Madame Devauecy*, 1807, 76 × 59 cm, Condé Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Portrait of Madame Devauecy*, 1807, 76 × 59 cm, Condé Museum

- This was painted just after Ingres moved to Rome in 1806 (finally able to take up his Prix de Rome), the “Portrait of Madame Duvauecy” (pronounced "mah-DAM duh-voh-SAY") captures an **urbane, sensual sitter**, rendered by an artist absorbing Italian Renaissance art. The **cool, enamel-like finish** and exaggerated grace reflect the **influence of Raphael, whom Ingres idolised**.
- Her languid pose and the play of light on her gown show his **growing command of portraiture**. The work was also a financial necessity as he struggled to finance his stay abroad and **relied on portraits for support**.
- Duvauecy was **famous in Roman society**, partly **for her wit**. During a sitting, she noticed Ingres’s careful, almost mathematical approach to every fold in her dress and said, “**Monsieur Ingres, are you measuring me for a dress or for a painting?**” The **artist’s precise style soon became the envy** (and inside joke) of Rome’s fashionable elite.
- Despite the difficulties, Ingres’s Roman years (1806–1824) would be the foundation of his artistic identity, cementing his belief in classical line and idealized form. In 1813 he married Delphine Ramel from a respectable French family living in Rome. They had several children although not all survived.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Duvauecy

<https://apollo-magazine.com/ingres-perfectionism-orleans-patrons-chantilly/>



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Valpinçon Bather*, 1808, 146 × 98 cm, Louvre, Paris

- “The Valpinçon Bather” marks **Ingres’s creative breakthrough** during his first years in Rome. The painting radiates serenity: a nude woman, back turned, is enveloped in a warm, soft light. The marble-like smoothness of the skin and the curvilinear outline reveal Ingres’s preoccupation with pure form.
- At the time, **such frank studies of the nude were rare in French art outside mythological contexts**. Ingres’s distillation of the human figure, his poetic sensuality, and the attention to surface all attest to his independent spirit. Critically, this work established his lifelong pattern: seeking inspiration in the Renaissance yet innovating subtly.
- At a private viewing in Rome, one wag declared the bather’s back was “**so smooth, so icy, she must be a statue pretending to bathe.**” Ingres’s passion for ideal, marble-like flesh led to **many rumours that he actually avoided real models** for this canvas, preferring ancient sculpture for reference. When this painting was later exhibited in Paris, critics complained that the figure’s **back was too long and anatomically “incorrect.”** Ingres, unfazed, replied that he was not bound to mere anatomy but to the “**truth of art,**” meaning the poetic and ideal truth he found in beauty. **This elongation would reappear in his later nudes**, most famously in *La Grande Odalisque*, whose three extra vertebrae became a notorious talking point
- The painting’s title comes not from Ingres but from the **19th-century collector Paul Valpinçon**, in whose family it remained for decades before entering the

Louvre. At the time of painting, Ingres was living in modest quarters in Rome, financially constrained but spiritually invigorated by his proximity to the masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance. The serenity of *The Valpinçon Bather* reflects that moment in his life: a young artist in self-imposed exile, quietly shaping a vision of beauty that defied immediate fashion. Ingres would return to the motif of the female nude throughout his life, each time refining his vision and **his vision came to define French Neoclassicism for the next half-century.**

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Valpinçon_Bather



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Oedipus and the Sphinx*, 1808, 189 × 144 cm, Louvre Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Oedipus and the Sphinx*, 1827, 105.5 × 87 cm, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

- **Begun in Rome and finished nearly two decades later**, *Oedipus and the Sphinx* is a statement of his historical ambitions and classical myth becomes a setting he used for dramatic narrative observed through his elegant line. In this story Oedipus is poised and contemplative as he confronts the monstrous Sphinx at the gate of Thebes.
- Thebes was terrorised by a monstrous creature — the Sphinx — part woman, part lion, often with wings. She would stop travellers and pose a riddle: **“What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?”**
- Those who failed to answer were killed. The Sphinx’s riddle refers metaphorically to the stages of human life: crawling as a baby, walking upright as an adult, and using a stick in old age. Oedipus solved the riddle with the correct answer — **“man”** — the Sphinx was defeated and, according to most versions, threw herself from a cliff. The encounter is observed by a herald from Thebes shown in the background.
- This victory cleared the way for Oedipus to enter Thebes, where he would unknowingly fulfil the tragic prophecy: killing his father and marrying his mother.
- Ingres originally submitted this painting to Paris while in Rome, only for the

critics to pan it for “**weak lines and unsatisfying drama.**” Stung, he pulled the canvas back years later and **expanded it.**

- **Sigmund Freud later kept a print of the painting in his office**, convinced its psychological undertones (the riddle, destiny, and mother-son tragedy) mirrored the complexities of the human mind.
- (CLICK) This smaller, reworked version from 1827 is now in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. The Sphinx is larger and turns away perhaps at the point when he has just uttered the correct answer. By 1827 France's Romantic fascination with the exotic had grown since Napoleon's Egyptian campaign.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oedipus_and_the_Sphinx_\(Ingres\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oedipus_and_the_Sphinx_(Ingres))

<https://art.thewalters.org/object/37.9/>



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Jupiter and Thetis*, 1811, 324 × 260 cm, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, France

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Jupiter and Thetis*, 1811, 324 × 260 cm, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, France

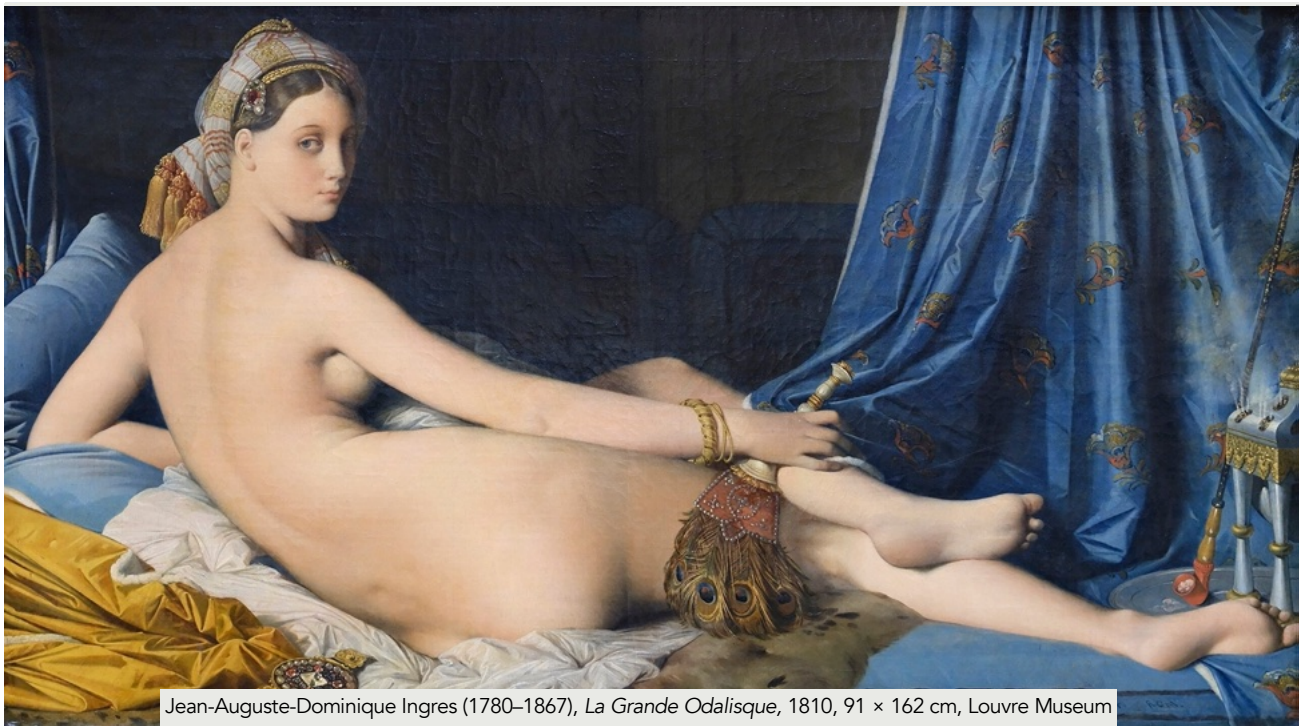
- Created in Rome, *Jupiter and Thetis* is a monumental statement of Neoclassical ambition. The **supreme god, Jupiter, looms** monumentally over the **supplicant Thetis**. Ingres emphasizes the contrast between the massive, immobile god and the fragile, elegant nymph. The subject comes from Homer's *Iliad*. The sea-goddess Thetis, mother of Achilles, ascends to Mount Olympus to plead with Jupiter (Zeus in Greek myth) to intervene in the Trojan War on behalf of her son.
- His colossal body and impassive face convey his divine immutability. Thetis, small by comparison, bends toward him in a serpentine curve, her gesture both imploring and sensual. She places her hand upon his knee, a traditional sign of supplication in Greek ritual.
- Critics commented on the overt sensuality as being in conflict with the depiction of ideal beauty and others criticised Jupiter's colossal proportions and thought his head was too small for his body and his lower body, feet and thighs too large. They also thought Thetis's arms were too long. Ingres defended the painting saying that a god's intellect was so vast his head did not require physical exaggeration, and that artistic truth lay in harmony, not anatomy.
- Some critics found the rigid stylisation too cold, and they even described it as "Gothic", then a pejorative term for anything deviating from accepted neoclassical norms. This early division of opinion haunted much of his career: he was revered by some as a guardian of classical ideals and derided by others for what they saw as mannered distortion and eroticism.

- Despite all the criticism Ingres was fond of the painting and kept it in his studio for many years until it was eventually purchased by the French state in 1834. Some sources say the French state had previously bought the painting but returned it to the artist because it was considered too controversial.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jupiter_and_Thetis

<https://www.fujibi.or.jp/en/collection/artwork/01112/>



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *La Grande Odalisque*, 1810, 91 × 162 cm, Louvre Museum

- *La Grande Odalisque* (1814) is perhaps his **most famous and controversial nude**. It was **commissioned by Napoleon's sister**, Queen Caroline Murat of Naples, it depicts an odalisque — **a concubine or member of a harem** — reclining on sumptuous fabrics, her body turned away but her head twisted to meet the viewer's gaze. She is adorned with pearls, a jewelled headpiece, and a peacock-feather fan, bathed in cool light that emphasises the porcelain smoothness of her skin.
- (CLICK) The work reflects the early **19th-century French fascination with Orientalism**, fuelled by **Napoleon's Egyptian campaign** (1798-1801) and a **growing taste for the exotic** in art and literature. Ingres was not concerned with ethnographic realism as his interest was pure formal invention. **He elongated her spine and distorted her anatomy** to achieve an undulating, serpentine rhythm — a choice that would become the most commented-upon feature of the painting.
- When the painting was exhibited at the 1819 Paris Salon (five years after its completion), critics were quick to pounce on the **"anatomical errors."** One reviewer calculated that she appeared to have three extra vertebrae; another quipped that her back was **long enough to "fry an omelette on."** Ingres, unruffled, insisted that beauty in art was not a matter of literal truth but of ideal harmony, and that the elongation gave the figure elegance and grace.
- An amusing detail is that **Ingres had never seen a harem**; his "Orient" was

largely imagined from travellers' accounts, engravings, and imported textiles. The **peacock fan and turban were props**, and the blue drapery echoes the cool tones of Renaissance Venetian painting rather than any authentic Middle Eastern palette.

- At the time of painting *La Grande Odalisque*, Ingres was **still living in Rome, financially precarious** but artistically ambitious. The commission from Queen Caroline was a significant opportunity, though the fall of Napoleon's empire meant the painting never reached Naples as intended. It was acquired by a French count who displayed it in the Salon of 1819.
- Though divisive at first, the work later **became a touchstone of 19th-century art**, admired by Delacroix and later by modernists for its bold distortion of form. Today, *La Grande Odalisque* is seen as a **turning point** where Ingres fused **Neoclassical precision with the sensuality** and subjectivity that would **influence later Romantic and even Surrealist art**.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_Odalisque



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Ruggiero Rescuing Angelica*, 1819, 147 x 190 cm, Louvre Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Ruggiero Rescuing Angelica*, 1819, 147 x 190 cm, Louvre Museum

- ***Ruggiero Rescuing Angelica*** (1819) is based on an episode from *Orlando Furioso*, the 16th-century chivalric epic by Ludovico Ariosto. The story is set in a fantastical world of knights, sorcerers, and mythical beasts. Angelica, the beautiful princess of Cathay, has been captured and chained naked to a rock as a sacrifice to a sea monster, bottom right. The **Saracen knight Ruggiero** (pronounced "roo-JER-ro"), mounted on his winged **hippogriff**, a combination of eagle and horse, he swoops down to rescue her.
- In 1820, Ingres returned to Paris after 14 years in Rome, hoping to win public favour at the Salon. This work was displayed at the Paris Salon the previous year and it was part of a calculated push to show that he could handle large-scale, crowd-pleasing subjects. The bright colours, exotic armour, and winged beast drew on both Renaissance precedent and the contemporary taste for the Romantic and the fantastical.
- Ingres had **no experience painting horses**, let alone a winged one. He studied equestrian engravings and even borrowed a stuffed eagle's wings from a Roman taxidermist to imagine the hippogriff's anatomy. A friend later joked that the creature looked as though it had "**flown straight from a heraldic shield.**"
- The **critical reception** at the 1819 Salon was **mixed**. Admirers praised the **vivid narrative and Angelica's beauty**, noting that Ingres's linear precision lent unusual elegance to what might have been a chaotic scene. **Detractors complained that the figures were stiff and that the sea monster resembled a**

decorative fountain spout more than a creature of terror. Some faulted Ingres's cool, enamel-like surfaces for muting the drama — an old criticism dating back to his early mythological works.

- The work was later purchased by Louis XVIII—his first acquisition by a public institution—signaling a gradual shift in Ingres's fortunes. It was acquired by the Comte de Blacas, the French ambassador to the Vatican, on behalf of Louis XVIII and installed in the Palace of Versailles's Throne Room in 1820.

REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Freeing_Angelica_\(Ingres\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Freeing_Angelica_(Ingres))



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Vow of Louis XIII*, 1824, 421 × 262 cm, Montauban Cathedral

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Vow of Louis XIII*, 1824, 421 × 262 cm, Montauban Cathedral

- *The Vow of Louis XIII* (1824) is one of Ingres's **most celebrated history paintings**, commissioned by **Louis-Philippe, then Duke of Orléans**, who later became King of the French. The painting depicts a pivotal moment in French religious and political history: **King Louis XIII, on his knees before the Virgin Mary**. The vow was a demonstration of the monarch's piety and a reaffirmation of Catholic influence in France, a subject imbued with both political and spiritual significance.
- At the time of painting, **Ingres had returned to Paris after his long Roman residency**. He was determined to reassert himself in the Salon milieu, and this commission offered an opportunity to **demonstrate mastery** of history painting, the genre considered the pinnacle of academic art. The Duke of Orléans purchased the work immediately upon completion, pleased that it combined rigorous classical form with a devotional subject that resonated with contemporary political and religious ideals.
- After four long years of work, **Ingres personally escorted the painting to Paris by road**. As the story goes, he refused to let it be tied to the roof of the carriage for fear of rain, he sat pressed against the enormous rolled-up canvas and occasionally stopping at inns so he could unroll it to check for "accidental creasing." The painting, miraculously, arrived immaculate.
- Ingres's meticulous attention to detail in ceremonial costume is shown by the fact that he had several royal uniforms delivered to his studio and measured

every fold and medal to ensure absolute accuracy. His assistants joked that he was treating the king's garb with more care than many kings would their own coronation robes.

- The critical reception was **broadly positive**, with reviewers praising the painting's **compositional clarity, the purity of line, and the dignified restraint of the figures**. Some detractors, however, noted a **stiffness in the figures' postures**, claiming the emotional effect was "cool" compared to more dynamic Romantic works of the same era. Nevertheless, *The Vow of Louis XIII* **solidified Ingres's reputation** as one of the foremost history painters of his generation and exemplified his lifelong commitment to line, order, and classical ideals. The completion of *The Vow of Louis XIII* for Montauban Cathedral in 1824 was a turning point. This vast altarpiece interprets the king's dedication of his kingdom to the Virgin Mary—a theme echoing both political loyalty and spiritual devotion.
- The paintings acclaim **ended years of marginalisation**, securing a **stream of public commissions and enthusiastic patrons**.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Vow_of_Louis_XIII



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Apotheosis of Homer*, 1827, 386 × 512 cm, Louvre Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Apotheosis of Homer*, 1827, 386 × 512 cm, Louvre Museum

- Commissioned for the **newly established Musée Charles X**, *Apotheosis of Homer* is his **grandest statement about the lineage of Western art**. The ancient poet, **Homer, is enthroned** in classical majesty, surrounded by a **pantheon of artists, poets, and philosophers**—a “family tree” of culture. You can see Apelles, Raphael, Sappho, Dante Alighieri, Shakespeare, Alexander the Great, Michelangelo, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and even Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- The French state’s wished to celebrate the enduring influence of classical culture. The subject is symbolic rather than narrative: **Homer, if he existed, is crowned by the personification of Victory** while surrounded by a pantheon of illustrious figures from literature, philosophy, and the arts. He is **conventionally shown blind** to symbolise his poetic vision comes from inspiration rather than literal sight. The vast tableau unites the classical and the modern in a timeless allegory of artistic achievement.
- Ingres had recently returned from Rome and was **now firmly established in Paris** as a master of line and neoclassical composition. He approached this painting with **meticulous planning**, producing **numerous preparatory sketches** to position each figure harmoniously while maintaining clarity and grandeur.
- An anecdote often told is that Ingres **invited contemporary artists and intellectuals to sit as models** for some of the figures, blurring the line between myth and modern homage. According to some **he even placed himself** in the

composition — the figure **looking out behind Raphael** although other sources say it is **Sappho**, the female ancient Greek poet. The two seated female figures below Homer are personifications of the Iliad and the Odyssey, the major epics of Homer, the poet or group of poets.

- **Critical reception at the Salon was mixed** but **generally favourable**. Admirers praised the clarity of design, the purity of line, and the monumental sense of order, seeing it as a culmination of classical ideals. Critics, however, sometimes found the **figures stiff** or the allegorical arrangement **overly academic**, noting that the painting prioritised formal harmony over emotional immediacy. **Satirical journals poked fun at the “celebrity cameo” aspect**, likening the gathering of historical and contemporary geniuses to a **formal dinner party** of the greats.
- Despite some reservations, *The Apotheosis of Homer* **secured Ingres’s reputation** as the leading exponent of Neoclassical history painting in France. It exemplifies his lifelong commitment to line, clarity, and the elevation of art through classical ideals, influencing generations of painters and cementing his status in the French academic tradition. Ingres is said to have **hidden tiny references** to artists he adored in the line-up—so much so that decades later, scholars were still uncovering “secret cameos” of Renaissance luminaries amid the Olympian crowd.
- The painting’s conceptual ambition cemented **Ingres’s reputation as the leader of Neoclassicism—as Romanticism surged around him**.

DEPICTED PEOPLE

Homer

Herodotus

Aeschylus

Sophocles

Euripides

Menander

Demosthenes

Apelles

Raphael

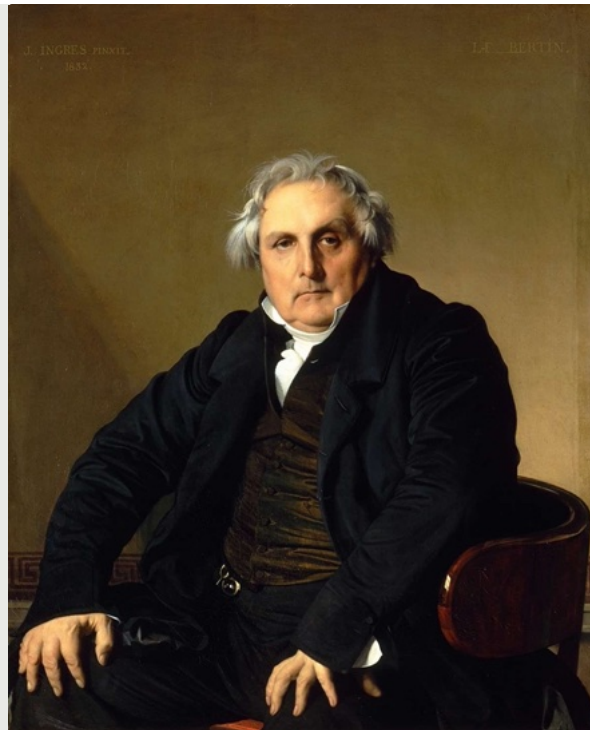
Sappho

Alcibiades

Virgil
Dante Alighieri
Horace
Peisistratos
Lycurgus of Athens
Torquato Tasso
William Shakespeare
Nicolas Poussin
Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux
Pierre Corneille
Jean Racine
Molière
François Fénelon
Cassius Longinus
Luís de Camões
Christoph Willibald von Gluck
Alexander the Great
Aristarchus of Samothrace
Aristotle
Michelangelo
Phidias
Pericles
Socrates
Plato
Hesiod
Pindar
Aesop
Jean de La Fontaine
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

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Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Portrait of Monsieur Bertin*, 1832, 116 × 95 cm, Louvre Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Portrait of Monsieur Bertin*, 1832, 116 × 95 cm, Louvre Museum

- This mature portrait epitomises Ingres’s unique ability to render **both surface and psychology**. Louis-François Bertin, **newspaper magnate and symbol of the new bourgeoisie**, leans forward, hands planted, gaze penetrating.
- Gone are the idealisations of Ingres’s earlier portraits; instead, the painting **presents raw energy and commanding personality**, achieved through crisp drawing, luminous flesh, and relentless realism. Yet, the linear rhythms and geometric design recall Ingres’s classical foundations.
- Bertin was a powerful newspaper mogul known for his **bluntness**. During the many sessions, Bertin reportedly **grew bored and would bang his fist**, declaring, “**Ingres, hurry up!**” Ingres retorted, “**Monsieur, nature takes time.**” The tense standoff shows in Bertin’s claw-like hands—ready to spring out of the frame!
- This portrait won **immediate acclaim** and is today renowned as a touchstone of modern portraiture, bridging the worlds of academic tradition and critical realism.

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Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867),
The Spring, 1820 until 1856, 163 × 80 cm,
Musée d'Orsay

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Spring*, 1820 until 1856, 163 × 80 cm, Musée d'Orsay

- Though begun in the early 1820s, Ingres completed “The Source” over three decades later in 1856, exemplifying his lifelong revisiting of earlier themes. The painting—an iconic standing nude pouring water—fuses purity, sensuality, and allegory.
- Drawing on motifs from Greek antiquity and Renaissance predecessors, Ingres bathes the figure in a cool, ideal light. The linear precision and timeless calm have made the image a symbol of Neoclassical aspiration.
- An amusing anecdote from the painting’s creation concerns Ingres’s notoriously slow process. He frequently abandoned and returned to the work, making numerous preparatory sketches over decades. Friends noted that the artist would become so absorbed in achieving perfect contour lines that he sometimes forgot to complete the background or even the model’s face until years later.
- When it was finally exhibited, the nude’s impossible perfection sparked both **admiration and disbelief**. One witty critic declared, “**She’s no more real than Venus on a half-shell or your best dream on a long, hot night.**” Rumour claims Ingres based her features on an **old love**, adding a secret melancholy to her serenely beautiful expression.
- “The Source” embodies Ingres’s belief in universal beauty, merging the antique and the modern in a single, emblematic female form.

- His lifelong focus on beauty and the nude gave rise to speculation about affairs outside marriage and he moved in circles where extramarital liaisons were common. Letters and contemporary accounts so imply discreet affairs, but Ingres's personal discretion has left little concrete evidence.

REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Source_\(Ingres\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Source_(Ingres))



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Turkish Bath*, 1862, 108 × 110 cm, Louvre Museum

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *The Turkish Bath*, 1862, 108 × 110 cm, Louvre Museum

- Ingres's ***The Turkish Bath*** (1862), is the apex and crowning achievement of his lifelong fascination with the **female nude** and the **allure of the Orient**. Painted when he was around **82 years old**, this oil painting depicts a large group of women reclining, lounging, and interacting in a circular composition reminiscent of a **harem bathhouse** or hamam. The painting's **sensuality and erotic undertones**, combined with its idealized, curvilinear forms, mark it as a bold and imaginative synthesis of earlier themes Ingres had explored throughout his career.
- Interestingly, **Ingres never traveled to the Near East**. Instead, his vision of the Turkish bath was **fuelled by vivid imagination** and literary sources, especially **the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu**, the English ambassador's wife, who described the female baths she had witnessed in the Ottoman Empire around **1716**. Ingres's notebook contained copied extracts from her letters, which he likely studied around 1817, decades before painting the work. This literary influence infused the painting with both a sense of mystery and the allure of the forbidden.
- The painting was **initially rectangular** when **completed around 1859** and once **purchased by Prince Napoleon**. However, it was **so scandalous** for the prudish Princess Clotilde, the prince's wife, that the painting **was returned to Ingres**. He then **transformed it into a circular or "tondo" format**, which heightened its rhythmic composition of intertwined nude figures, emphasizing flowing lines

and arabesques rather than anatomical truth.

- He used models to pose individually as well as earlier sketches of the nude, including the famous **Valpinçon Bather**, who here appears as a **lute player** turned away from the viewer. **He also used mannequins and draped fabrics** to help imagine the complex overlapping poses so he could experiment with different arrangements without requiring a room full of live models.
- The painting's circular frame echoes Renaissance influences, particularly **Raphael**, whom **Ingres idolised**, underscoring the classical harmony underlying this seemingly decadent scene.
- Note that the **women's gazes rarely meet**, and communication seems limited to **gestures**, creating a **dreamlike**, almost isolated atmosphere among the assembled figures. **Feminist critics** have noted that the lack of mutual gaze creates **both power and vulnerability**: the women are independent in their own visual worlds, yet they are arranged to satisfy the male viewer's eye.
- In modern feminist literature, *The Turkish Bath* is frequently discussed in terms of the **objectification of the female body and the male gaze reinforcing patriarchal fantasies**. The work also contributes to harmful stereotypes by portraying Eastern women as passive, sexualized objects for a Western audience. Ingres' anatomical distortions have been described as a "sadistic distortion" to suit a sexualized narrative.

NOTES

- Sylvia Sleigh's *The Turkish Bath* (1973) parodies Ingres by gender-flipping the scene, depicting a group of male art critics posing in the same languid positions as Ingres' female figures. Sleigh aimed to comment on the objectification and conventional gender roles seen in Ingres' work.

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Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Self-Portrait*, 1864–5, 65.4 × 53.7 cm, Harvard Art Museum

- Late in life, Ingres painted himself with all the **medals and honours** he had earned—French Legion of Honour, the Prussian Order of Merit, and the Tuscan decoration—attesting to his international stature.
- By now, **Ingres was so celebrated that he wore every medal and decoration he owned for his final self-portrait**—so many, some friends joked he could “sink if thrown in the Seine wearing them.” At 84, he painted himself looking **decades younger**, inspiring Parisian wags to call him “**Monsieur Eternity**.”
- Here, the **84-year-old artist** presents a **strikingly youthful and well-dressed** image, his gaze confident, posture erect. The painting signals both pride in his accomplishments and anxiety about mortality. Ingres merges the roles of artist and statesman, underlining the transformation of the painter’s status over the 19th century.
- **Ingres died in Paris on January 14, 1867**. He left a legacy of discipline, idealism, and innovation, his work influencing **generations of artists from the Impressionists and Cubists** to the present day. He remains the last great champion of **academic classicism**—a custodian of tradition yet in **many ways the herald of modernity**.

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Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867),
The Spring, 1820 until 1856, 163 × 80 cm,
Musée d'Orsay

- Jacques-Louis David's rose from an aspiring Parisian boy to **the most influential neoclassical painter** of his time, closely intertwined with the **political dramas of revolutionary and Napoleonic France**. His major artworks and stylistic evolution reflect his deep engagement with the ideals and upheavals of his era. He is the last great Neoclassical artist whose work was replaced by French Romantic artist such as Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix.



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