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Eugène Delacroix), *Liberty Leading the People* (detail), 1830, Louvre

21-03
EUGENE DELACROIX

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE WWW.SHAFE.UK

- This is Section 21 on Romantic art and this talk is on the French artist Eugene Delacroix, the leading figure of the French Romantic movement.
- He revolutionized painting with his use of colour, dynamic composition, and emotional intensity. A dramatic departure from the restrained Neoclassical style. His expressive brushwork and daring use of complementary colours laid the groundwork for future generations of artists, such as Vincent van Gogh, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Paul Cézanne, who celebrated his work and his visionary style.

NOTES

- **Vincent Van Gogh** expressed his admiration for Delacroix in several letters. In a letter to his brother Theo dated 3 May 1889, he wrote: “Certainly colour is progressing primarily under the influence of the impressionists, even when they go astray, but already **Delacroix had reached more completeness** than they.” ([Webexhibits][1]). Van Gogh also copied Delacroix's “Pietà” in 1889, indicating his deep respect for Delacroix's work. ([Vincent van Gogh][2])
- **Pierre-Auguste Renoir** acknowledged Delacroix's influence on his early work. He once remarked: “In a few generations you can breed a racehorse. **The recipe for making a man like Delacroix is less well known**.” ([Pierre-Auguste Renoir][3])
- **Paul Cézanne** admired Delacroix's use of colour. He described **Delacroix's palette as “the most beautiful in France,”** highlighting his appreciation for Delacroix's mastery in colour. ([Facebook][4])

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Self-portrait with Green Vest*, 1837, 65 × 54.5 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Self-portrait with Green Vest*, 1837, 65 × 54.5 cm, Louvre Museum

- He was born on April 26, **1798**, in Charenton-Saint-Maurice near Paris, into a family already immersed in public life, with his **father serving as a diplomat under Napoleon**. Growing up during the Napoleonic era, Delacroix received **a privileged education**, which allowed him to develop his early talents as an artist against the backdrop of revolutionary France.[1][4][5][8]
- This self-portrait, painted around 1837, stands as a pivotal work created when the artist was approaching forty and at the height of his early success. At this time, Delacroix had firmly established himself with sensational Salon entries such as ***Liberty Leading the People*** and had begun to earn **major decorative commissions for French state buildings**. The **mid-1830s were thus a period of both public acclaim** and growing personal reflection for Delacroix, as he shifted from youthful artistic ambition towards a deeper contemplation of his craft and position in the art world.
- The decision to paint this self-portrait can be seen **both as a declaration and as a self-examination**. Portraiture, especially the self-portrait, was relatively rare in Delacroix's career; when he did turn to it in 1837, he chose to **depict himself not working** or in dramatic pose, but turned halfway towards the viewer, quietly composed. The choice of the green vest, with its rich Romantic colouring, contrasts with the otherwise somber tonality and draws attention to the artist's face—a face marked by alert, intelligent eyes and a measured, knowing

expression. Rather than the tormented Romantic often associated with his more dramatic works, Delacroix **here projects quiet confidence, self-restraint, and intellect**.

- Delacroix's intent with *Self-portrait with Green Vest* seems to be a **statement of what it meant, in the Romantic era, to be a modern painter**. He offers himself as an equal to poets and statesmen, not just a craftsman but a **thinker and creator**. The intense gaze, dignified pose, and controlled brushwork reveal an artist conscious of his achievement and status, but also one expressing introspection and individuality—an embodiment of the **Romantic ideal of the creative, independent mind**.

BIOGRAPHY

- Eugène Delacroix was born on April 26, **1798**, in Charenton-Saint-Maurice near Paris, into a family already immersed in public life, with his father serving as a diplomat under Napoleon. Growing up during the Napoleonic era, Delacroix received a privileged education, which allowed him to develop his early talents as an artist against the backdrop of revolutionary France.[1][4][5][8]
- In **1816**, Delacroix entered the atelier of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, a prominent Classicist teacher in Paris. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, encountering Romantic and Neoclassical artistic trends and befriending the young Théodore Géricault. Géricault's masterpiece, *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-19), left a deep impression on Delacroix, shaping his commitment to powerful, emotionally charged subject matter.[3][6][7]
- Delacroix's first major public showing was in **1822** at the Salon, with "The Barque of Dante," which was purchased by the state, establishing his initial fame. This turbulent, colour-rich work set him apart as an innovator of the new Romantic sensibility, focusing on drama and dynamic movement through vivid contrasts and emotional content.[5][6]
- In **1824**, Delacroix exhibited "Scenes from the Massacres at Chios," a forceful statement inspired by contemporary events in Greece and imbued with both modern urgency and sensuous painterly technique. The painting divided critics but won a medal and confirmed Delacroix as a leader of the Romantic movement.[6][7][5]
- The July Revolution spurred Delacroix to paint his most renowned work, "Liberty Leading the People" (**1830**), a passionate allegory of revolutionary ideals embodied by a heroic female figure. Bold and politically charged,

this painting became an enduring symbol of the fight for freedom and sealed Delacroix's reputation.[5][6]

- A diplomatic mission allowed Delacroix to travel to Morocco in **1832**, an experience that profoundly shaped his art. Struck by the light, colour, and life of North Africa, he sketched and painted tirelessly, recording local customs and scenes that invigorated his palette, as seen in "Women of Algiers in their Apartment" (1834), and laid the groundwork for dozens of Orientalist works throughout his career.[7][5]
- **1833–1850s**
- Returning to France, Delacroix began a series of major decorative commissions for public buildings, including the Palais Bourbon and the Library of the Palais Bourbon, and later the Saint-Sulpice Church. These projects demonstrated his brilliance in handling large-scale schemes and his ability to blend allegory, mythology, and expressive colour across vast surfaces.[7][5]
- **1855–1857**
- Despite his singular achievements, Delacroix had to wait until the Exposition Universelle of 1855 to receive widespread official recognition, highlighted by his award of the grand medal of honour. In 1857, he was finally elected to the Institut de France, marking a late but significant validation of his pioneering career.[5]
- **1863**
- Delacroix's final years were marked by ill health and continued toil, especially on the frescoes at Saint-Sulpice. He died on August 13, 1863, in Paris, leaving behind a legacy of innovation in colour, composition, and painterly expression—a titan of French Romanticism whose influence extended to generations of later artists.[2][5]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Mademoiselle Rose,* 1817-1824, 81 × 65 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Mademoiselle Rose,* 1817-1824, 81 × 65 cm, Louvre Museum

- In **1816**, aged 18, he entered the atelier of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, a **prominent Classicist teacher** in Paris. He studied at the **École des Beaux-Arts**, encountering Romantic and Neoclassical artistic trends and **befriending the young Théodore Géricault**. Delacroix was a model for one of the figures in Géricault's masterpiece, *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-19) and it left a deep impression on him, shaping his commitment to powerful, emotionally charged subject matter.
- **Mademoiselle Rose** is the presumed model for this early painting commonly titled "Mademoiselle Rose" or "Seated Nude," completed around 1820–1822 when Delacroix was in his early twenties. While her full identity remains uncertain, sources suggest she was a professional artists' model who posed for Delacroix and his **English friend Richard Parkes Bonington** during their formative years in Paris. An anecdotal letter from Delacroix, written during this period, mentions Mademoiselle Rose's presence in the studio and hints that she worked for several artists.[1][6]
- At the time he painted this he was still a student at the **École des Beaux-Arts** and it shows his early attempts to master the human figure, revealing influences from both **academic tradition and a growing Romantic sensibility**. The **freshness and candour** with which Rose's body is rendered—**naturalistic, direct, unembellished**—demonstrate his interest in truthfulness over classical

idealism, a hallmark of emerging Romantic art.[2][6][1]

- As for his later personal life, he never married and left no known descendants. Throughout his life he was discreet about intimate relationships. There were persistent rumours linking him to **various models** and muses remain largely unsubstantiated. **Mademoiselle Rose** appears to have played **a strictly professional but important role** and an indication of the independent, sometimes solitary, life he led.[6][1][2]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Dante and Virgil in Hell*, also known as *The Barque of Dante,* 1822, 189 × 241 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Dante and Virgil in Hell*, also known as *The Barque of Dante,* 1822, 189 × 241 cm, Louvre Museum

- This is *The Barque of Dante* also known as *Dante and Virgil in Hell* (1822). It was his **first major work displayed at the Salon**, it reflects the **dramatic influence of Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*** and his developing **Romantic style**, focusing on **intense emotion and dramatic compositions**.
- It was his **breakthrough as a major artist** at the age of 24. He worked non-stop to have the painting ready for exhibition at the Salon. He had recently finished his formal studies and was trying to establish himself within the Parisian art world. So it is a declaration of his emerging Romanticism and a bid for recognition as one of the movement's leading talents.[1][2][5]
- The influence of Géricault is evident in the treatment of the bodies and emotional intensity of the tormented souls struggling in the water. Both works use dynamic composition and swirling, muscular figures to heighten a sense of drama; in particular, Delacroix was influenced by Géricault's ability to capture the raw, collective agony of humanity in crisis. However, Delacroix's approach to colour—using **vivid reds for Dante's robe** and contrasting **blues and whites for Phlegyas and Virgil**—announces his distinctive development of Romantic colourism.[2][4][1]
- The scene depicted is from **Canto VIII of Dante's *Inferno*.** Dante and his guide Virgil are being ferried across the infernal **River Styx** by the **boatman Phlegyas**

(pronounced "FLEJ-uhs" with the first syllable rhyming with “ledge,” and the second syllable very short), en route to the **burning City of Dis**, gateway to the lower circles of Hell. The surrounding waters, churning with **the damned**, represent the **circle of the Wrathful**. The Wrathful are souls condemned for their uncontrollable anger and violent behaviour during their earthly lives. We see **Dante clings fearfully to Virgil**, who steadies him in the turbulence. The painting visually contrasts **Virgil’s classical calm** with **Dante’s horror**, while the tortured souls evoke both physical and psychological torment—a Romantic preoccupation.[4][5][1][2]

NOTES

- The Wrathful, punished in the Fifth Circle of Hell in Dante’s "Inferno," are souls condemned for their uncontrollable anger and violent behaviour during their earthly lives. They are active sinners who gave way to rage, hostility, and vengeful actions, often leading to grievous harm against others. Unlike the passively wrathful, called the Sullen, who harboured anger internally and brooded in silence, the Wrathful openly expressed their fury, sometimes through physical violence or destructive outbursts.
- In Hell, their eternal punishment reflects their earthly sins: they are condemned to fight and tear at one another in a muddy, swampy marsh known as the River Styx. This ceaseless combat is a grim mirror of the rage that consumed them when alive. The Wrathful lash out in blind fury but have no release or resolution since their anger is meaningless and endless. Meanwhile, the Sullen lie submerged beneath the surface of the Styx, silently choking on their bottled-up rage, unable even to express their fury in words.

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Orphan Girl at the Cemetery,* 1824, 65.5 × 54.3 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Orphan Girl at the Cemetery,* 1824, 65.5 × 54.3 cm, Louvre Museum

- *Orphan Girl at the Cemetery* was painted around 1823–1824. It shows a **young orphaned girl grieving alone in a desolate cemetery**. The painting captures her somber emotional state as she looks upward with tearful, expressive eyes, conveying a profound sense of loss and vulnerability, possibly searching for divine comfort or answers in her suffering. The gloomy cemetery setting—with broken crosses, darkened skies, and bare trees—enhances the melancholic atmosphere, underscoring themes of abandonment and isolation.[1][2][3][4][6]
- This work is **believed to be a preparatory study** for Delacroix's later monumental painting, ***The Massacre at Chios*** (1824), as the orphan girl figure bears compositional and emotional similarities to female figures in that large-scale work, yet it also stands powerfully on its own as an intimate portrayal of sorrow. It reflects Delacroix's Romantic interest in **human emotion, tragedy, and the portrayal of vulnerability**, evoking a deep empathy in viewers.[4][5][6][7][1]
- Critically, the painting has been admired for its **masterful use of colour, subtle shading, and delicate rendering of the girl's expression and body language**. Delacroix applies a muted palette of browns, greens, and greys that intensifies the painting's mournful mood, while the detailed treatment of the girl's skin and posture reveals an emerging command of emotional realism. Critics appreciate how **Delacroix avoids sentimentality**, instead offering a sincere and

humanising image of grief that aligns with Romantic ideals of individual experience and emotional depth.[2][3][5][6][1]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Massacre at Chios,* 1824, 419 × 354 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Massacre at Chios,* 1824, 419 × 354 cm, Louvre Museum

- **A controversial and bold depiction of a contemporary event**, showcasing the **suffering of Greek civilians during the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire**. It was inspired by contemporary events in Greece and imbued with both modern urgency and sensuous painterly technique. The painting divided critics but **won a medal** and confirmed Delacroix **as a leader of the Romantic movement**.
- It portrays the **brutal Ottoman massacre** on the Greek island of Chios (pronounced "**Kee-os**"). Chios was a prosperous northeastern Aegean island, whose population suffered a **horrific reprisal** by Ottoman forces in **April 1822** during the Greek War of Independence. Around **three-quarters of the 120,000 inhabitants were killed, enslaved, or died of disease**, sparking an international outcry against Ottoman barbarity.[1][3][7]
- The work was not commissioned work but a **personal artistic and political statement** showing his sympathy for the Greek independence cause and his horror at the atrocities. **Displayed at the Salon of 1824**, the painting **shocked contemporary viewers** who were unaccustomed to such a **raw and unheroic depiction of suffering and defeat** in history painting. The pathos in the depiction of an **infant clutching its dead mother** had an especially powerful effect, although this detail was condemned as **unfit for art by Delacroix's critics**. Critics found the lack of a heroic figure and the cold, passive

presentation of the suffering bodies **unsettling and even repellent**. The rough brushwork and emotional directness broke from Neoclassical ideals, causing mixed, often negative critical reception initially.[3][4]

- Delacroix was **influenced** by the compositional style of his friend Géricault and his *The Raft of the Medusa*, especially in the pyramidal grouping of figures. As for models, exact identities are not well documented, though many figures likely drew from studio models and earlier figure studies, including his preparatory *Orphan Girl at the Cemetery*.[11][12][1][3]
- **Significantly, after viewing John Constable's *Haywain*** at the 1824 Salon, Delacroix **revisited parts of the painting**, especially reworking the **landscapes with a more vivid** and naturalistic treatment of light and colour, reflecting Constable's influence on his palette and approach to atmosphere. This melding of emotional content with naturalistic landscape elements pushed 19th-century painting in a new direction.[4][3]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, 1826, 213 × 142 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, 1826, 213 × 142 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux

- Delacroix's painting *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* (1826) commemorates the tragic **Third Siege of Missolonghi** during the **Greek War of Independence against Ottoman rule**. The name Missolonghi is pronounced "**Mee-so-lohn-yee**." In 1825–1826, the city, after a **long and devastating siege by Ottoman forces**, saw its **starving and diseased Greek defenders** attempt a **desperate mass breakout**, which ended in massacre. Thousands of Greek fighters and civilians were killed, and the city was left in ruins. The event became a **symbol of heroic resistance** and sacrifice for Greek independence, stirring sympathy throughout Europe.[1][2][6]
- Delacroix's painting centres on the **allegorical figure of Greece personified as a lone young woman** wearing traditional Greek costume. Her **bare chest and outspread arms** convey both **vulnerability and powerful mourning** as she kneels upon the rubble of her ruined city. Beneath the block she kneels on **emerges the hand of a dead victim**, symbolizing loss and martyrdom. Behind her, **an Ottoman soldier plants a flag**, signifying the occupation and oppression. The female figure evokes **Christian iconography of the Virgin Mary** mourning Christ, thus elevating Greece's suffering to a sacred level. Her lone presence emphasizes isolation, tragedy, and the heavy human cost of war, while evoking empathy and calls for intervention from the Western

world.[2][4][6][1]

- Critically, **the painting was praised for its emotional power and dramatic allegory**. It was seen as a compelling political statement aligned with European Philhellenism—the movement supporting Greek independence. Delacroix's vivid colour palette and expressive brushwork enhanced the dramatic impact, helping contemporaries grasp the suffering behind abstract political events. The work remains **one of the most celebrated images of the 19th-century Romantic movement's** engagement with current events and human rights struggles.[3][4][6]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Death of Sardanapalus,* 1827, 392 × 496 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Death of Sardanapalus,* 1827, 392 × 496 cm, Louvre Museum

- Delacroix painted *The Death of Sardanapalus* in 1826–1827, at the **age of 29**. By this time, he had **already gained recognition** for dramatic works like ***Dante and Virgil in Hell*** (1822) and ***The Massacre at Chios*** (1824), but this painting marked a bold, controversial turning point in his career. The subject **derives from Lord Byron's 1821 tragedy *Sardanapalus***, itself based on the **ancient Assyrian legend** recorded by Greek historian **Diodorus Siculus**, about the last king of Assyria who, **facing imminent defeat, ordered the destruction of his treasures, concubines, and servants before killing himself**.[1][2][4][5][6]
- Delacroix chose this subject due to its dramatic potential and its alignment with **Romanticism's fascination with violence, exoticism, and chaos**. Unlike the restrained and moralising Neoclassical style dominant at the time, Delacroix's work abandons orderly composition and idealized figures. Instead, *The Death of Sardanapalus* is an orgy of tumultuous movement, vibrant colour, and emotional intensity, with twisting bodies, scattered jewels, and a king who coolly observes the destruction around him while reclining on a sumptuous red bed.[2][4][1]
- At this stage, Delacroix was well known **but still pushing artistic boundaries**. The painting **shocked and divided critics** with its wild composition, graphic depiction of violence, and refusal to conform to academic expectations. One contemporary critic condemned it as "**the fanaticism of ugliness**." It was so controversial that it was **removed from public display for many years** after its

initial showing at the Salon of 1827.[4][1]

- The painting's innovative use of colour, including blues and greens on flesh tones and its vignette lighting focusing viewers on the central chaos, inspired later modern painters. Today, it is **hailed as a signature masterpiece of French Romanticism** and a forerunner of Impressionist colour techniques.[5][1][4]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Liberty Leading the People*, October to December 1830, 260 × 325 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Liberty Leading the People,* October to December 1830, 260 × 325 cm, Louvre Museum

- **Delacroix's most famous painting**, depicting an allegorical figure of **Liberty leading the French people during the July Revolution of 1830**.
- It was painted in late 1830 as a passionate response to the July Revolution that had just **overthrown King Charles X and ended the Bourbon Restoration** in France. The work was **not commissioned** but created from Delacroix's desire to **record and commemorate the heroic uprising** he had witnessed firsthand in Paris. In a letter to his brother dated October 21, 1830, he wrote "**My bad mood is vanishing thanks to hard work. I've embarked on a modern subject—a barricade. And if I haven't fought for my country at least I'll paint for her**." [1][2][3]
- Liberty is shown as a **bare-breasted woman wearing a Phrygian cap**—an emblem of freedom—leading a diverse crowd of revolutionaries over the barricades amid the chaos and carnage of battle. Liberty, sometimes **identified** with the **national personification Marianne**, holds the tricolour flag, symbolizing the ideals of the Revolution: **liberty, equality, fraternity**. Around her, Delacroix includes figures from different social classes: workers, students, and bourgeois citizens united in common cause.[2][5][1]
- Critically, *Liberty Leading the People* **initially received mixed responses**. Some conservatives regarded it as **subversive and politically dangerous** due to its **glorification of popular revolt** and its depiction of violence. The **exposed**

breast of Liberty, recalling classical nudes, **scandalized portions of the public** and critics who found it provocative. Despite censorship hurdles—the painting was **temporarily removed from public display**—it was **eventually purchased by the French government** in 1831.[3][4][1][2]

- Over time, the painting has become **one of the most iconic symbols of revolution** and democratic struggle in Western art, celebrated for its powerful composition, vibrant colour palette, and its blend of modern political events with classical allegory. Today, it hangs in the Louvre and continues to inspire as an emblem of popular uprising and the enduring human quest for freedom.[5][1][3]
- The painting inspired **Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's *Liberty Enlightening the World***, known as the **Statue of Liberty** in New York City, which was given to the United States as a gift from the French a half-century after *Liberty Leading the People* was painted

NOTES

- The French government bought the painting in 1831 for 3,000 francs with the intention of displaying it in the throne room of the Palais du Luxembourg but it was too controversial and was returned to Delacroix who stored it at his aunt's house. After the Second Republic was established following the revolution of 1848 it was exhibited briefly in that year, and then during the Second Empire in the Salon of 1855. The recently established Third Republic finally acquired the painting in 1874 for the collection of the Musée du Louvre in Paris.

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Women of Algiers,* 1834, 180 × 229 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Women of Algiers,* 1834, 180 × 229 cm, Louvre Museum

- Delacroix painted ***Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*** in 1834 following a **diplomatic journey to North Africa** in 1832, during which **he visited Algiers**, then under Ottoman rule. His trip exposed him to the **vibrant culture, architecture, and people of the region**, including **a rare opportunity to enter a harem**—the secluded domestic space traditionally reserved for Muslim women. This firsthand experience deeply influenced Delacroix and inspired him to create one of his most iconic Orientalist works.[1][2][6]
- The painting shows **four women within a richly decorated room**, dressed in loose, flowing robes and adorned with gold jewellery. The composition balances a sense of intimacy and separation; **the women appear pensive and somewhat detached**, conveying **the complexity of harem life beyond Western fantasies of sensuality and exotic pleasure**. The presence of a **black servant**, positioned somewhat apart, highlights **racial and social hierarchies** embedded within the setting. Delacroix rendered the textures of fabrics, the interior's intricate patterns, and the women's expressions with great care, blending ethnographic observation with imaginative interpretation.[3][1]
- *Women of Algiers* was not commissioned but was **exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1834**, where it elicited **mixed critical responses**. Some **praised it for its audacity, vigour, and mastery of colour**, with critic Gustave Planche calling it "**the most brilliant triumph**" of Delacroix's career at that point. Others

debated its exotic subject matter and stylistic boldness, reflecting **tensions around Orientalism** and Romanticism in French art circles.[1][3]

- The painting's **influence extended for generations**, inspiring figures such as **Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir, and Picasso**, who reinterpreted its themes in the 20th century. Today, the work resides in the Louvre and stands as a landmark in Delacroix's engagement with cultural encounter, colour innovation, and ethical representation in Orientalist painting.[2][5][6][1]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Convulsionists of Tangier,* 1837-38, 95.6 × 128.6 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Convulsionists of Tangier,* 1837-38, 95.6 × 128.6 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art

- *Convulsionists of Tangier* was based on his **observations during a diplomatic trip** to Morocco in **1832** when he visited **Tangier**. The painting depicts members of the **Isawiyya brotherhood**, a Moroccan Sufi religious sect known for their ecstatic devotional practices involving physical convulsions, trance-like states, and rhythmic movements believed to bring spiritual purification and divine connection.[1][7][8]
- Delacroix **captures a moment** of intense religious fervour and collective ecstasy. The figures **contort their bodies** dramatically, with vivid gestures and expressive faces, all rendered with Delacroix's characteristic lively brushwork and vibrant palette. The composition conveys the **chaotic energy and spiritual intensity** of the ritual, contrasting sharply with European religious practices and emphasizing the exoticism of North African faith through a Romantic lens.[9][1]
- He did not paint this **scene immediately**, he created **multiple sketches** and watercolours based on memory and his notes from the trip before producing **this large oil canvas several years later**. The painting is not documented as having been commissioned but rather reflects Delacroix's enduring fascination with the culture he encountered and his desire to convey the drama and spirituality of the experience.[1]
- Critically, *Convulsionists of Tangier* was appreciated for its vivid energy and masterful colour, though it also elicited debate about Delacroix's Orientalist

portrayal of non-Western religious practices. The work is considered an important example of Delacroix's ability to balance **ethnographic detail with Romantic imagination**, contributing to the 19th-century European **artistic interest in North African cultures and "exotic" subjects**. It is now housed in the Minneapolis Institute of Art and stands as a significant testament to Delacroix's travel-inspired creativity. [3][8][9][1]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Jewish Wedding in Morocco*, 1839, 105 × 140 cm, Louvre Museum

- ***Jewish Wedding in Morocco*** (circa 1839–1841) shows a lively scene from a **traditional Jewish wedding ceremony** in Moroccan culture. The painting shows a rich, colourful interior filled with family members and musicians engaged in celebration, capturing the intimate and communal spirit of the event. Women and men are gathered in separate groups, reflecting cultural customs, and the artist gives particular attention to the **vibrant costumes and intricate details** that portray the distinctiveness of the Jewish-Moroccan community.[1][2][3]
- Delacroix painted this work **after his 1832 diplomatic journey to North Africa**, where he spent time in Morocco including Tangier, but he did not live there permanently. The wedding scene was **inspired by his sketches, notes, and memories** from his travels, as well as from attending actual social and religious events, including possibly a **wedding of his Moroccan Jewish friend's family**. His detailed observations and empathetic portrayal demonstrate an effort to move beyond the Orientalist fantasy trope, instead offering a respectful, nuanced representation of a minority culture within the Islamic Moroccan society.[3][5]
- The painting was exhibited at the Salon of 1841, **likely commissioned or financially supported by the Duke of Orléans**, who **purchased and donated it to the Musée du Luxembourg**. It later transferred to the Louvre, where it

remains a celebrated example of Delacroix's Orientalist genre scenes.[4]

- Critics praised *it* for its **atmospheric effects, masterful use of light and shadow**, and the **vivid emotional range** portrayed, from joyous dancing to contemplative observers. Rather than focusing on academic or heroic subjects, Delacroix here demonstrates Romanticism's embrace of vibrant daily life and cultural diversity, enriching French art with his visionary and colourful interpretation of Moroccan Jewish traditions.[2][1][4]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Sultan of Morocco,* 1845, 377 × 340 cm, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Sultan of Morocco,* 1845, 377 × 340 cm, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse

Moulay Abd-er-Rahman, Sultan of Morocco, leaving his palace in Meknes, surrounded by his guard and his main officers

- This is one of his **most ambitious Orientalist works**, drawing on **his famous 1832 visit to Morocco** during a French diplomatic mission. The painting **portrays Sultan Abd al-Rahman ben Hicham** (pronounced "Ab-dull Rah-man ben Hee-shamm") **of Morocco** leaving his palace in Meknes (pronounced "meck-ness"), mounted on a richly decorated horse and surrounded by his guards and principal officers. Delacroix uses grand scale and a dramatic composition to emphasise the sultan's authority and regal presence, placing him elevated on horseback above his entourage, who stand on foot to highlight his singular power.[1][2][4]
- Delacroix's depiction goes beyond mere portraiture to construct a **narrative of political legitimacy and sovereign dignity** during a **time of tension** between **France and Morocco**. His attention to **cultural specificity**—from the **architecture** of the palace walls to the diverse **costumes** of the figures—reflects his commitment to geographic and ethnographic accuracy. At the same time, the monumental composition and theatrical lighting enhance the sultan's grandeur and command.[2][4]
- Delacroix **painted this work over a decade** after his visit, revisiting sketches and memories of the event. It was exhibited as a **major history painting at the**

Paris Salon of 1845 and displayed in a prominent location at the Louvre, testifying to its importance in his oeuvre and its political resonance.[5][2]

- **Interest in the Orient in France** at this time was part of a broader cultural and political movement called **Orientalism**, fueled by **French colonial ambitions** in North Africa, particularly Algeria. Delacroix's paintings offered the French public a vivid view of the exotic and politically significant landscapes and peoples of the region. His work contributed to **shaping European perceptions of North Africa**, blending ethnographic detail with Romantic dramatic flair to satisfy curiosity and imperialist narratives.[4][2]
- Today, *The Sultan of Morocco and His Entourage* is considered a **pivotal work in both Delacroix's career and the Orientalist genre**, housed at the Musée des Augustins de Toulouse as a monumental testament to 19th-century cross-cultural engagement.[1][4]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople,* 1840, 81 × 99 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople,* 1840, 81 × 99 cm, Louvre Museum

- *The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* (1840) illustrates a **defining and brutal episode from the Fourth Crusade** (**1202–1204**), when **Crusaders diverted from their initial mission to reclaim Jerusalem and instead sacked the Christian Byzantine capital, Constantinople**. **Commissioned by King Louis-Philippe** in 1838 for his new historical galleries at **Versailles**, this monumental painting captures the moment after the Crusaders have gained entry into the city, led by **Baldwin I of Flanders**.[1][2][3][4]
- Delacroix emphasizes both the **triumph and tragedy** of the event by juxtaposing **weary, guilt-laden Crusaders** on horseback with the **prostrate, desperate inhabitants of Constantinople**, many of whom beg for mercy or lie dead on the streets. The painting's theatrical lighting and vivid colours highlight the dramatic tension between victors and victims, while architectural elements frame the scene and allude to the city's former grandeur. The composition balances chaos with order, reflecting Delacroix's mastery in combining Romantic expressiveness with referential nods to Renaissance and Baroque influences, such as Paolo Veronese.[2][3][4][1]
- Politically, the painting reflects complex 19th-century French attitudes. By commemorating a **pivotal crusade largely orchestrated by French forces** yet depicting the conquest as a somber, troubled moment, **Delacroix avoids glorifying war**, instead inviting meditation on the human cost of violence and

imperial ambition. This nuanced portrayal aligns with his earlier work, *The Massacre at Chios*, offering a critique of conquest and suffering.[4][5]

- **Critics were divided** upon the painting's 1841 Salon exhibition. Some, like *Le Constitutionnel*, criticized its complex composition and darker tones, while others, including **Charles Baudelaire, praised its abstract qualities and emotional depth**. Over time, *The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* has been **recognized as one of Delacroix's significant historical canvases**, embodying the Romantic spirit's engagement with history and moral complexity.[1][2][4]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Shipwreck of Don Juan,* c. 1840, 135 × 196 cm, Louvre Museum

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Shipwreck of Don Juan,* c. 1840, 135 × 196 cm, Louvre Museum

- *The Shipwreck of Don Juan* (c. 1840) depicts a **dramatic and harrowing scene from Lord Byron's epic poem *Don Juan*** detailing the **aftermath of a shipwreck** in the Mediterranean Sea. In the painting, Don Juan and a handful of shipwreck survivors cling to a small boat amidst turbulent waves, evoking themes of **human vulnerability** and the struggle for survival **against nature's overwhelming forces**. The composition's chaotic arrangement and tightly packed figures express claustrophobia and desperation.[1][2][3]
- The painting relates to Théodore Géricault's earlier masterpiece ***The Raft of the Medusa*** (1818–1819), both visually and thematically. Both works depict **shipwrecks** featuring groups of **distressed survivors** grappling with death, fate, and human endurance. However, while Géricault's work is based on a recent contemporary political scandal, **Delacroix's references a literary event**, allowing him more poetic and imaginative freedom. The swirling brushwork and vibrant colours in Delacroix's painting evoke Romanticism's emphasis on emotion and nature's sublime power, rather than detailed narrative or historical accuracy.[2][5][6][7]
- Critically, *The Shipwreck of Don Juan* elicited **mixed responses** when exhibited at the 1841 Salon. Some praised Delacroix's dynamic composition and expressive colour, recognising its **intensity and innovative handling of figures and space**. Others found the **chaotic arrangement confusing and** the subject

matter **too dark or morbid** compared to prevailing tastes. Over time, **appreciation for the painting has grown**, with modern critics valuing it as a significant Romantic exploration of human crisis and the sublime.[7][8][2]

- Today, it remains a powerful testament to Delacroix's fascination with dramatic narrative, the sea's terrifying majesty, and the complexity of human emotion in the face of disaster. It shares with *The Raft of the Medusa* a place among the Romantic era's **most evocative maritime tragedies**.[3][1]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Collision of Moorish Horsemen,* 1844, 81.3 × 99.1 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Collision of Moorish Horsemen,* 1844, 81.3 × 99.1 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

- *Collision of Moorish Horsemen* was painted between 1843 and 1844, during **the mature phase of his career** when he had **firmly established himself** as a leading French Romantic artist. This period followed **his influential 1832 journey to Morocco**, which left a lasting impression on his style and subject choices. **His fascination with North African culture** and dramatic scenes of conflict deeply influenced his work at this time.[1][2]
- *Collision of Moorish Horsemen* depicts a **chaotic and violent moment** during a **ceremonial cavalry exercise** that Delacroix witnessed at the court of **Sultan Abd-er-Rahman of Morocco**. According to Delacroix's own account, these military drills involved **riders galloping at high speed, firing shots, and suddenly stopping, which occasionally caused horses to collide and fight each other violently**. The painting captures this tension and energy with swirling motion, rearing horses, and entangled figures rendered through fluid brushwork and vivid colour contrasts.[2][7][1]
- Delacroix represents not only a **violent encounter** but the spectacle of **exotic martial culture**, emphasizing drama, colour, and movement over precise narrative clarity. This work continues his engagement **with "Orientalist" themes** that fascinated European artists and audiences in the 19th century. The painting **evokes the romanticised view of the "exotic" Moorish or North African world**, shaped by colonial and cultural politics of the era.[2]

- Critically, *Collision of Moorish Horsemen* was appreciated for its **technical mastery** and vibrant expression of dynamic conflict, **contributing to Delacroix's reputation** for innovative use of colour and energetic compositions. It is part of a broader body of work inspired by his Moroccan travels and is held in high regard in collections such as the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.[1][2]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Christ on the Sea of Galilee (Christ Asleep During the Tempest)*, c. 1841, 45.7 × 54.6 cm, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Christ on the Sea of Galilee (Christ Asleep During the Tempest)*, 1841, 45.7 × 54.6 cm, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri

- Although Delacroix was not primarily focused on religious subjects **he did paint several notable works with biblical themes**, including *Christ on the Sea of Galilee* (c. 1841). This painting depicts the New Testament story where Christ and his disciples face a violent storm on the sea; while the **disciples panic fearing death**, **Christ remains peacefully asleep**, symbolizing faith amid chaos. Delacroix's multiple versions of this theme emphasize the drama and pathos characteristic of Romanticism, highlighting human vulnerability and divine serenity.[1][3][4]
- Delacroix's interest in religious subjects was **more about exploring intense emotion**, spirituality, and universal human struggles **rather than religious dogma**, aligning with the Romantic movement's values. The theme allowed him to display his mastery of composition, colour, and light to evoke mood and narrative tension, with the contrast between the turbulent sea and the calm figure of Christ being especially striking.[4][5]
- There is no clear evidence suggesting Delacroix painted *Christ on the Sea of Galilee* with the specific **intent to compete directly with Rembrandt**. However, Delacroix **was well aware of the legacy of Old Masters like Rembrandt**, whose powerful use of chiaroscuro and emotional depth influenced many 19th-century painters. Delacroix's approach to biblical subjects can be seen as part of

a broader Romantic reimagining of classical and religious themes, emphasizing colour, movement, and expressive brushwork over the profound chiaroscuro of Rembrandt.[1][4]

- **Vincent van Gogh notably admired Delacroix's work on this theme**, particularly praising his symbolic use of colour and emotive impact.[4][1]

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Lion Hunt,* 1855, 57 × 74 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *The Lion Hunt,* 1855, 57 × 74 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden

- Despite his singular achievements, Delacroix had to wait until the Exposition Universelle of 1855 to receive widespread official recognition, highlighted by his award of the grand medal of honour. In 1857, he was finally elected to the Institut de France, marking a late but significant validation of his pioneering career.
- Delacroix often painted hunting scenes and animals fighting. This work is part of a lion hunt series he painted in the 1850s. The subject reflects a fascination for exoticism and the culture of the Muslim countries in North Africa. During a visit to Morocco in the 1830s, Delacroix had studied and made sketches of the landscape, horses and hunters on horseback – themes that were later used when he painted his lion hunts. These dramatic scenes, with their energetic compositions and warm hues, convey the new aesthetic ideals of the time.

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Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Jacob Wrestling the Angel,* 1853-61, mural in the Chapel of the Holy Angels, Church of Saint-Sulpice, Paris

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Jacob Wrestling the Angel,* 1853-61, mural in the Chapel of the Holy Angels, Church of Saint-Sulpice, Paris

- *Jacob Wrestling the Angel* was **commissioned in 1849** as part of a series of **murals** for the **Chapel of the Holy Angels** in the **church of Saint-Sulpice**, Paris. It forms **one of three large biblical works** intended to decorate this chapel, alongside *The Expulsion of Heliodorus* and *Saint Michael Defeating the Devil*. **The commission came late in Delacroix's career**, during the latter half of his life when he was increasingly engaged in monumental religious and public works.[1][2][4]
- (CLICK) The painting depicts the dramatic biblical episode from **Genesis 32**, where **Jacob wrestles with a mysterious angel overnight**, a struggle symbolizing spiritual trial and divine testing. Delacroix emphasizes the confrontation's physicality and emotional intensity, contrasting the solid, muscular figure of Jacob with the lighter, ethereal angel. The landscape serves not only as a setting but also as a poetic and spiritual backdrop, with light filtering through trees to highlight the scene's symbolic meaning of endurance, faith, and transformation.[2][1]
- **Critics generally praised it** for its dynamic composition, expressive brushwork, and evocative emotion, with some considering it **one of Delacroix's masterpieces** in religious art. However, **the project took many years to complete**, as **Delacroix's failing health** and other commitments delayed the mural's execution until 1861, shortly before his **death**, making it **one of his last**

significant works.[4][1][2]

- The work reflects Delacroix's **mature style**, combining Romantic dramatism with naturalistic detail and profound spirituality. It stands as a testament to his ability to interpret biblical narratives with modern sensibilities and emotional depth, bridging tradition and innovation in 19th-century religious art.[7][2]
- **He died in the winter of 1862-3 from a severe throat infection aged 65**. He realised he was dying and wrote a will leaving a gift for each of his friends, **enough money for his trusted housekeeper to live on** and he asked for everything in his studio to be sold. He was a productive artists. **9,140 works are attributed to him** including 853 paintings, 1525 pastels and water colours, 6629 drawings, 109 lithographs, and over 60 sketch books.

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21-02
EUGENE DELACROIX

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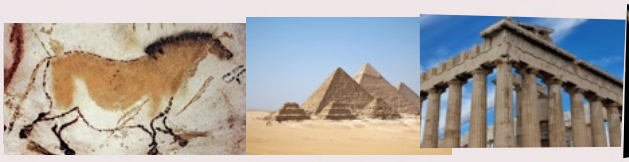
Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People* (detail), 1830, Louvre

- Eugène Delacroix was a pioneer of French Romanticism and a towering figure of 19th French art. He influenced later artists Vincent van Gogh, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Paul Cézanne. Cézanne famously said: "**We all paint in Delacroix's language**."
- The **major Delacroix retrospective** at the Louvre and Metropolitan Museum in 2018, confirmed his status as an innovator who reshaped European art.
- Thank you for your time and attention and I look forward to giving my next talk in the series.



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