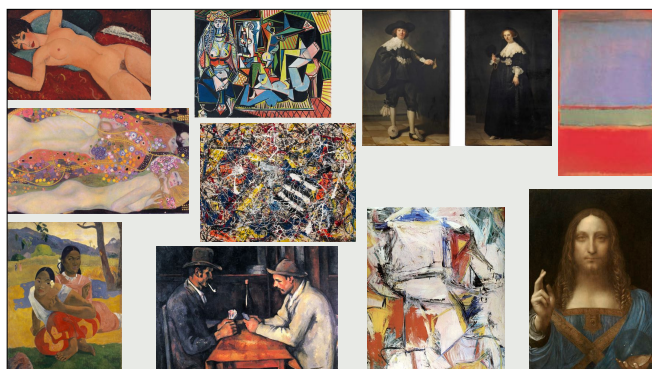




- Why is some art so expensive? Is it all a big con?

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- The talks are free and are given to a small group of people who are asked to make a voluntary contribution to charity. After the talk a recording may be uploaded to YouTube for free public access.
- The notes are based on information found on public websites including Wikipedia, Tate, National Gallery, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Khan Academy and the Art Story.
- If a talk uses information from specific books, websites or articles these are referenced either at the beginning of each talk or in the 'References' section of the relevant page. The talks that are based on an exhibition use the booklets and book associated with the exhibition.
- Where possible images and information are taken from Wikipedia under an Attribution-Share Alike Creative Commons License.
- If I have forgotten to reference any work then please let me know and I will add a reference or delete the information.



- These are the top ten works.
- There are a few artists that show us the world in a new way. With so many billions of images in the modern world this is difficult. Many people are very skilled at representing reality and copying other works accurately but very few can see the world and show it in a new way that enables us to see differently in new and exciting ways.
- But how do we recognise these special artists? There is a shortcut; look for those that are famous. In other words artists that many people, including art experts have decided is special. But how much is their work worth?
- That leads us to the art market. Art is a form of investment. If you like art and you are worth billions then spending hundreds of millions on a work makes sense if you are sure its value will increase. Historically the work of famous artists has increased faster than most other assets but it is a very risky investment. Some people can afford to take the risk, according to *Forbes* magazine there were 2,668 billionaires in 2022 so they and the largest museums are the target buyers.
- So, in a way the very high prices are misleading as they solely depend on the opinion of art experts and what others have paid for works of art. Some things have intrinsic value, like a house as you can live in it but the artworks I am showing you today are just a few cheap pigments smeared on a canvas. Their value depends on their uniqueness and what someone is willing to pay for them.
- So let's get started. There are many ways to define the top 10 most expensive artworks. I have simply taken my list of the top ten works from Wikipedia as of January 2022 and I go through them in reverse order. So let's start with Number 10...

NOTES

- The World's Most Expensive Art as defined by Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_expensive_paintings) as at January 2022. The list has now changed, as of July 2022 Rembrandt has come in at #10 with The Standard Bearer and Andy Warhol has come in #11 with Shot Sage Blue Marilyn pushing Modigliani down to #12.

1. Leonardo, Salvator Mundi
2. Willem de Kooning, Interchange
3. Paul Cézanne, The Card Players
4. Paul Gauguin, Nafea Faa Ipoipo (When Will You Marry?)
5. Jackson Pollock, Number 17A
6. Gustav Klimt, Wasserschlangen II
7. Mark Rothko, No. 6 (Violet, Green and Red)
8. Rembrandt, Pendant Portraits of Maerten Soolmans and Oopjun Coppit
9. Pablo Picasso Les Femmes d'Alger ("Version O")
10. Amedeo Modigliani, Nu couché

REFERENCES

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

#10



Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), *Nu couché* (*Red Nude or Reclining Nude*), 1917, 60 x 92 cm, private collection of Liu Yiqian (b. 1963)

#10

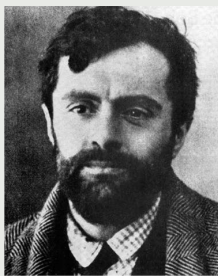
- On 9 November 2015 ***Nu couché*, sold at Christie's in New York for US\$170.4 million.** It was sold to a **Chinese businessman**, Liu Yiqian (pronounced 'lew-e-chin') billionaire and art collector, who is alleged to have paid for it using his American Express card. This was the **second highest price** ever paid for a work of art at the time. Liu Yiqian left school at 14 to help his mother sell handbags on the street and he worked for two years as a taxi driver before making his fortune buying shares in the new unlisted companies formed in the 1990s.
- How did this painting come about? In 1917 the Polish dealer **Léopold Zborowski** (pronounced 'bor-ov-ski') provided Modigliani with both a space and paid models so he could embark on his great series of nudes. Zborowski paid him **15 Francs a day, and the models 5 Francs** to pose in an apartment just above his own at 3 Rue Joseph Bara.
- The nudes dominate the canvas, filling the frame with

stretching hands and feet, forearms and calves literally off of the edges of the canvas. Their nudity is **self-assured and proud, not cloaked in myth or allegory**.

- When the Parisian dealer Berthe Weill exhibited the works in the window of her gallery crowds gathered. When the exhibition opened **crowds gathered** to witness the strikingly-real works, and traffic began to build up outside. Across from gallery was a **police station** and an officer asked for the removal of the paintings to be removed as he considered them **indecent**. Weill refused and was taken to the chief of police. Some accounts say the gallery was closed and others say it remained open but **only sold two drawings** at 30 Francs each.
- Of the 22 reclining nudes in the series the majority are now found in museums and are unlikely ever to come onto the market.

NOTES

- On 14 May 2018 the 1917 painting *Nu couché (sur le côté gauche)* sold at Sotheby's in New York for \$157.2 million. This was the highest auction price in Sotheby's history.
- In total, Modigliani completed **22 reclining nudes** and



Photograph of Amedeo Modigliani in 1919



Photograph of Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) in his studio

Photograph of Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) in his studio

Photograph of Amedeo Modigliani in 1919

- Amedeo Modigliani had a tragic life. His birth coincided with the **financial collapse of his father's business** but his birth saved the family from ruin as, according to an ancient law, **creditors could not seize the bed of a pregnant woman or a mother with a newborn child**. The bailiffs entered the family's home just as his mother, Eugenia went into labour and the family protected their most valuable assets by piling them on top of her.
- Modigliani **drew from a very early age** and considered himself a painter before he began formal training. When he was **fourteen he was struck by typhoid fever** and in his delirium he said he wanted to see the paintings in the **Palazzo Pitti and the Uffizi in Florence**. His mother promised that she would take him to Florence as soon as he recovered. She fulfilled her promise and enrolled him with the best local painting master in his home town of Livorno, Guglielmo Micheli, where he studied from 1898 to 1900 (aged 14 to 16). He studied 19th-century Italian art and was influenced by the work of Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931, 'the Master of Swish'). He showed great promise but had to stop his studies because **he developed tuberculosis when he was 16**, a disease that eventually killed him and which he tried to hide all his life. It is said he drank heavily and took drugs to hide, **"the symptoms of his tuberculosis, which he kept a secret. Drunks were tolerated; carriers of infectious diseases were not."**

NOTES

- In 1901, he travelled to Rome and was influenced by the work of Domenico Morelli (1823-1901), a painter of

dramatic religious and literary scenes. Morelli was immensely influential in the second half of the nineteenth century in Italy and he rebelled against many of the conventions of academic painting. In the late 1850s he participated in discussions with the Macchiaioli ('mac-a-ee-oli'), a group of Italian artists, who pre-dated the Impressionists and who, like them, painted outdoors to capture natural light and colour. Macchiaioli is derived from the word 'macchia' which means a dash of colour or, more derogatively, stain and, like the word impressionist was originally a criticism of their work. The Macchiaioli did not make the same impact upon international art but were an important early influence on Modigliani. Modigliani however reacted against it and ignored their obsession with landscape and preferred to paint indoors and chose a palette closer to that of Cézanne than to the Macchiaioli.

BIO:MODIGLIANI

- Amedeo Modigliani (12 July 1884 - 24 January 1920, died aged 35 of tubercular meningitis). He was born in Livorno (on the Tuscan coast of Italy) to Sephardic Jewish family, his father was an engineer, timber merchant and also managed the family's metal mines and forests. His mother was from an intellectual and well established Sephardic family. Just before Modigliani was born the family went bankrupt and his birth saved the family from ruin as according to ancient law creditors could not seize the bed of a pregnant woman or the mother of a new-born child. His mother went into labour just as the creditors came into the house to seize their goods which his family piled on top of her bed to protect them from seizure. His bright and resourceful mother established a successful school and taught him at home until he was 10.
- Modigliani was beset with health problems as a child including pleurisy and typhoid fever and when he was sixteen tuberculosis which would eventually kill him. He had drawn from an early age and when he was 11 his mother wrote in her diary: "The child's character is still so unformed that I cannot say what I think of it. He behaves like a spoiled child, but he does not lack intelligence. We shall have to wait and see what is inside this chrysalis. Perhaps an artist?"
- When he was sick and feverish he dreamt of seeing Italian Renaissance paintings in Florence and despaired that he would die before seeing them. When he recovered his mother took him on a tour that included Naples, Capri, Rome and Amalfi, then Florence and Venice.
- On his return his mother enrolled him with the best painting master in Livorno, Guglielmo Micheli (1866-1926) and he worked there from 1898 to 1900. He was steeped in the styles of 19th century Italian artists, such as Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931). In 1901 in Rome Modigliani admired the work of Domenico Morelli. Micheli encouraged landscape painting en plein air but Modigliani never really took to it and preferred painting in the studio. His preferred subject was the nude which was where he demonstrated his greatest talent and it also fitted his attempts to seduce

the maid. His teacher's nickname for him was 'Superman' because he was always quoting Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

- In 1902 he enrolled for life drawing classes in Florence and a year later moved to Venice where he first smoked hashish and frequented less desirable parts of the city. This seems to have been partly the result of his interest in Nietzsche's radical philosophical notions and his belief that the only true creativity was through defiance and disorder. He also developed an interest in the writings of Charles Baudelaire and Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Symbolists.
- In 1906, aged 21, Modigliani moved to Paris, the centre of avant garde life. He moved there at the same time as the Italian artist Gino Severini (1883-1966) and the Spanish artist Jean Gris (1887-1927). He made friends with Jacob Epstein and planned to set up a studio together. Modigliani settled in Le Bateau-Lavoir, a commune for penniless artists in Montmartre, but he dressed like a wealthy person trying to slum it. When he first met Picasso, who at the time wore workmen's clothes, Modigliani said that even though he was undoubtedly a genius this did not excuse his uncouth appearance. Within a year, however, he had transformed from a dapper bohemian to an alcoholic, drug addicted vagabond and he set about destroying all his early work which he described as 'Childish baubles, done when I was a dirty bourgeois'. He may have drunk and taken drugs initially to hide his tuberculosis which few of his friends were aware of. It was a leading cause of death and was easily communicated and there was no cure so sufferers were often ostracized.
- From 1914 onwards his alcohol intake and drug taking increased and his tuberculosis reached an advanced stage. His behaviour stood out even in the Bohemian world he inhabited and he had frequent affairs, drank heavily and used absinthe and hashish. He would strip naked at social events and died in Paris aged 35, creating a legend and at the time he was almost as well known as Vincent van Gogh. His friend described him as pedestrian when sober but a master of living art when drunk and his death led to many, during the 1920s, trying to emulate his success through drink and drugs.
- When he first arrived in Paris he worked at a furious pace making a hundred drawings a day but most of these drawings are now lost either destroyed by Modigliani as inferior, left behind when he moved or given to girlfriends who threw them out. He was at first influenced by the work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) but later became fascinated by the work of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) before developing his own unique style.
- He never married and the first serious love of his life was the married Russian poet Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966). He met her in 1910 when he was 26 and she was 21 but the affair only lasted a year because she returned to her husband.
- In 1909, he returned home to Livorno sickly and tired but he soon returned to Paris where he rented a studio

in Montparnasse. He took a deep interest in sculptor and was introduced to Constantin Brâncuși and became his pupil for a year. Although a series of Modigliani's sculptures were exhibited in the Salon d'Automne of 1912, by 1914 he abandoned sculpting and focused solely on his painting, a move precipitated by the difficulty in acquiring sculptural materials due to the outbreak of war, and by Modigliani's physical deterioration. Modigliani painted a series of portraits of contemporary artists and friends in Montparnasse including Chaim Soutine, Pablo Picasso, Diego Rivera, Juan Gris, Jacques Lipchitz and Jean Cocteau.

- When World War One started in 1914 Modigliani volunteered but was refused because of his ill health. He was handsome and attracted many woman until Beatrice Hastings entered his life. She stayed with him for two years and was the subject of a number of paintings. When the British painter Nina Hammet arrived in Montparnasse in 1914 he introduced himself to her the evening she arrived and they became great friends.
- In 1916, Modigliani befriended the Polish poet and art dealer Léopold Zborowski and his wife Anna. Zborowski became Modigliani's primary art dealer and friend during the artist's final years, helping him financially, and also organizing his show in Paris in 1917.
- The several dozen nudes Modigliani painted between 1916 and 1919 were commissioned by Zborowski and have become his best-known works. The Paris show of 3 December 1917 was Modigliani's only solo exhibition during his life, and is notorious in modern art history for its sensational public reception and the attendant issues of obscenity. The show was closed by the scandalised chief of police on its opening day, but continued thereafter, most likely after the removal of paintings from the gallery's street-front window. *Nude Sitting on a Divan* is one of a series of nudes painted by Modigliani in 1917 that created a sensation when exhibited in Paris that year. *Nu couché* realized \$170,405,000 at a Christie's, New York, sale on 9 November 2015, a record for a Modigliani painting and placing it high among the most expensive paintings ever sold.
- In the spring of 1917 he was introduced to the beautiful 19 year-old art student Jeanne Hébuterne. Despite her Roman Catholic family's objections they were soon living together and he ended his relationship with Beatrice Hastings. Towards the end of the First World War, early in 1918, Modigliani left Paris with Hébuterne to escape from the war and travelled to Nice and Cagnes-sur-Mer. They would spend a year in France. During that time they had a busy social life with many friends, including Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Pablo Picasso, Giorgio de Chirico and André Derain. On the trip to Nice organised by Zborowski he produced many of his best known pictures although he only managed to sell a few. In fact, he sold few works during his life and those for little money which went immediately on funding his drinking and drug taking.
- In Nice Hébuterne gave birth to a baby girl called Jeanne (1918-1984) and in May 1919 they returned to

Paris. He got engaged to her and officially recognised his daughter but his tuberculosis became worse preventing their marriage. He quickly became worse and had blackouts and a neighbour found him delirious holding on to Hébuterne. He died on 24 January in hospital. There was an enormous funeral attended by the artistic communities of Montmartre and Montparnasse. Hébuterne was eight months pregnant when he died. She was inconsolable and was taken to her parents home but threw herself from their fifth-floor window. He family buried her in a separate cemetery and it was another ten years before they agreed to move her to rest beside him. His epitaph reads: "Struck down by Death at the moment of glory". Hers reads: "Devoted companion to the extreme sacrifice". He died destitute.

- Since his death, Modigliani's reputation has soared. Nine novels, a play, a documentary, and three feature films have been devoted to his life. Modigliani's sister in Florence adopted their daughter, Jeanne (1918–1984). As an adult, she wrote a biography of her father titled Modigliani: Man and Myth.

NOTES

- Sephardic Jews descended from Jews who lived in Spain or Portugal in the late fifteenth century or more broadly Jews of a West Asian or North African origin who nonetheless use a Sephardic style of liturgy.



Anon, photograph of *Jeanne Hébuterne*, aged 19, 1917
 Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), *The Head of Jeanne Hébuterne*, 1918, 46 x 29, private collection

- In 1917, he met the teenage French art student **Jeanne Hébuterne** (pronounced 'Jhan Ay-boo-turn') and they fell deeply in love. She became the most important person in Modigliani's life and he painted her more times than any other sitter although never nude.
- **When they met she was 19 and he was 33**, a change from his previous girlfriend Beatrice Hastings who was five years older than him. They quickly moved in together and lived in a ramshackle studio made from materials left over from the Exposition Universelle of 1889. It was on the top floor and the light was good and it had a view across the rooftops of Paris. Modigliani was thrilled about the space. They lived together; **she was the mother of their child and the two were engaged to be married**. The paintings show her in different guises, from a girlish figure with her hair tied back, to a self-assured pregnant woman. If Modigliani had by now found a distinctive way of working, in subtle ways, he continued to experiment.

The treatment of Hébuterne's features varies greatly in the works gathered here. He painted more pictures of her than anyone else, more than twenty, and they were his most coveted paintings.

- In the grip of addiction, with his health ever weaker, **Modigliani died in January 1920 at the age of 35.** Their relationship was intense but they only knew each other for **two and a half years** from mid-1917 to 1920. **She was so distraught that even though she was pregnant with their second child she committed suicide by jumping from a window.**

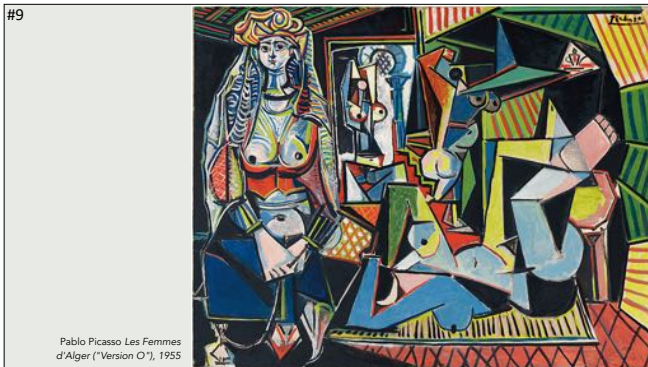
NOTES

- Jeanne Hébuterne (1898-1920, aged 21, 'Jhan Ay-boo-turn') was a French artist, best known as the frequent subject and common-law wife of the artist Amedeo Modigliani. She was described as gentle, shy, quiet, and delicate.

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Tate Booklet: Room 11: An Intimate Circle

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Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Les Femmes d'Alger* ("Version O"), 1955

#09

- This was one of a **series of 15 paintings by Picasso inspired by Eugène Delacroix's 1834 painting *The Women of Algiers in their Apartment*** (French: *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*). This is the final painting of the series. It was sold for \$179.4 million at Christies 11 May 2015, a record price for a painting sold at auction at the time.
- Picasso's friend and competitor Henri Matisse (1869-1954) had died in November 1954 and as a **homage to Matisse** he began a project that involved 100 studies and 14 paintings over a period of two months.
- So it was both a homage to Matisse and a celebration of the work of Eugene Delacroix who Picasso considered his predecessor in terms of colour and Orientalist subject matter. Picasso had been fascinated all his life with Delacroix's *Women of Algiers*.
- The Algerian War of Independence had started the previous November and Picasso was also responding to the violence of suffering.
- Let us look at the Delacroix and a Matisse and a Renoir inspired by Delacroix.

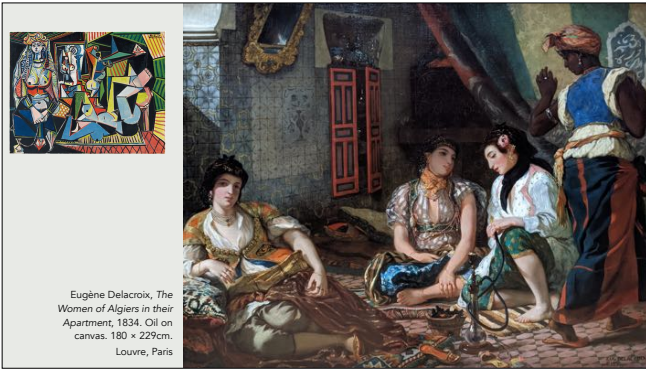
NOTES

- The 14 paintings that led to Version 'O' were called 'A' to 'N'.

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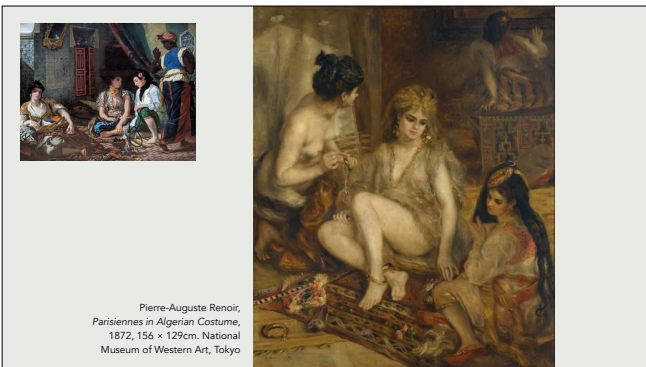
Eugène Delacroix, *The Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, 1834. Oil on canvas. 180 × 229cm. Louvre, Paris.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Parisiennes in Algerian Costume*, 1872. Oil on canvas. 156 × 129cm. National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo. Also inspired by Delacroix's *Women of Algiers*

- Delacroix painted two versions of *Women of Algiers* some 15 years apart and this is the first and best known version which is in the Louvre.
- The painting inspired many other artists including **Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin**. Paul Cézanne described Delacroix's intoxicating colour plays as "**All this luminous colour... It seems to me that it enters the eye like a glass of wine running into your gullet and it makes you drunk straight away**".
- Picasso used to visit the Louvre once a month to look at *The Women of Algiers* and when his partner Françoise Gilot asked him how he felt about Delacroix he said, "**That bastard. He's really good.**"
- It should also be mentioned that the same year Picasso painted multiple versions of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* which is possibly referenced by his use of the mirror.
- It has been praised for **not eroticising the harem and the Oriental woman** compared with artists, such as Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) with his *La Grand Odalisque* (1814) and *The Turkish Bath* (1862-3) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Parisiennes in Algerian Costume*, 1872, which show Oriental woman as sexual objects...

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



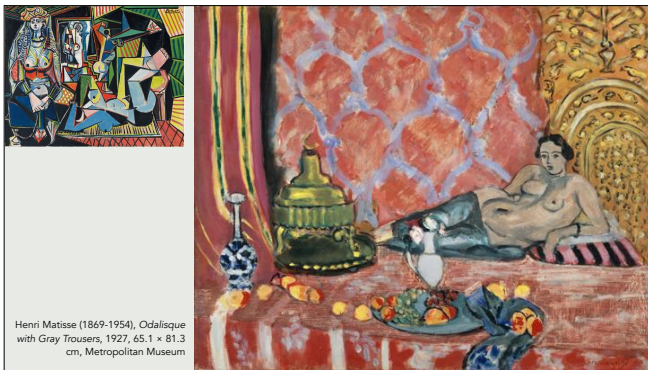
Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Parisiennes in Algerian Costume*, 1872. Oil on canvas. 156 × 129cm. National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo

- This is the Renoir; an example of a very popular type of painting in the nineteenth century. **Delacroix was a hero for Renoir** and he painted this as a homage to him. He described the Delacroix painting we have just seen as "**the most beautiful picture in existence**".
- Note that Renoir does not pretend this is an Algerian harem as he calls it Parisian women dressed up as Algerian women. This may have been a humorous reference to the fact that **Delacroix never entered a harem** and painted his picture in Paris using Parisian models.
- The woman on the right is holding up a mirror while the woman on the left is applying makeup using a brush. Someone has arrived at the door at the top and one reading is that a male client has arrived in a Paris brothel with an oriental theme.

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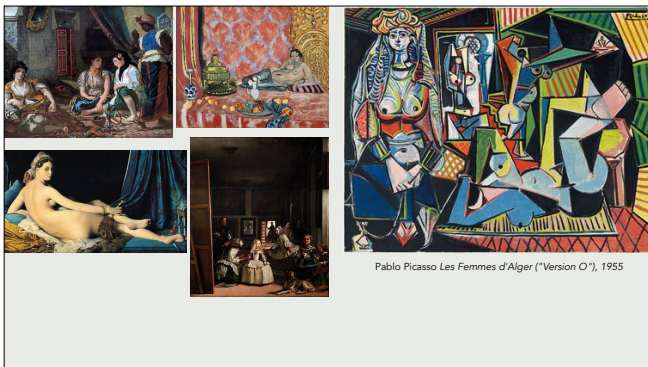
Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *Odalisque with Gray Trousers*, 1927, 65.1 × 81.3 cm, Metropolitan Museum

- There are obviously links with the works of Ingres and Delacroix but for Matisse the odalisque had a more practical benefit. He explained "**I paint odalisques in order to paint the nude. Otherwise, how is the nude to be painted without being artificial? But also, I know they exist. I was in Morocco. I saw them.**"

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<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/486920>



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Les Femmes d'Alger* ("Version O"), 1955

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), *Grande Odalisque* (also known as *Une Odalisque* or *La Grande Odalisque*), 1814, 88.9 × 162.56 cm, Louvre

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), *Las Meninas* (*Maids of Honour*), 1656-7, 318 × 276 cm, Prado, Madrid

- Picasso saw Matisse's odalisques as a gift and inspiration to him as an artist and we see the **luminous colour of Delacroix, the eroticism of Matisse** and Ingres's **Grande Odalisque** and the reference to the mirror and therefore the art of painting in **Las Meninas** by Velázquez.

#8

Rembrandt (1606–1669),
Pendant portraits of
Maerten Soolmans and
Oopjen Coppit, 1634, 208 ×
132 cm, Rijksmuseum and
Louvre (joint ownership)



Rembrandt (1606–1669), *Pendant portraits of Maerten Soolmans and Oopjen Coppit*, 1634, 208 × 132 cm, Rijksmuseum and Louvre (joint ownership)
Bought jointly by the Louvre and the Rijksmuseum in 2016 for \$180 million privately from Éric de Rothschild

#08

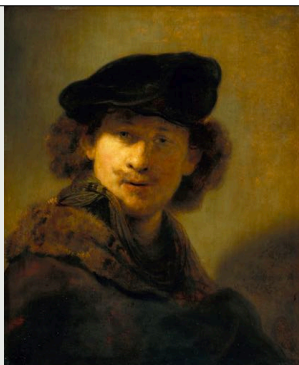
- A complete change as we arrive at number 8 in the top 10 most expensive paintings. It was bought **jointly by the Louvre and the Rijksmuseum** in 2016 for \$180 million privately from Éric de Rothschild.
- It is a pendant pair by Rembrandt painted in 1634 when he was 28 and at the height of his career. They are the **only full-length portraits by Rembrandt** and this **format was very rare in Holland** although common in Flanders and southern Europe. They may have chosen this format to reinforce their **high social standing** in Amsterdam.
- They married the year before, in June 1633. Maerten Soolmans (1613–1641, pronounced 'Martin soul-mans') was the son of a refugee from Antwerp but **Oopjen Coppit** (1611–1689, pronounced 'oh-pjen co-pit') whose from a **very wealthy family** and the most sought-after catch in the city.
- Rembrandt has united the two portraits by the black curtain and animated them by having him hold out a glove, a sign of fidelity and her coming down a step towards him.
- Black was the most fashionable colour at the time and was the most expensive cloth. Rembrandt was a master of light and the subtle differences between tones and textures. His satin-edged starched garment contrasts with the light silk, quilted satin and tulle ('tyool') of her dress.

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Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn
(1606–1669), *Self-Portrait with
Velvet Beret*, 1634, oil on oak
wood, 58.3 × 47.5 cm,
Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche
Museen zu Berlin

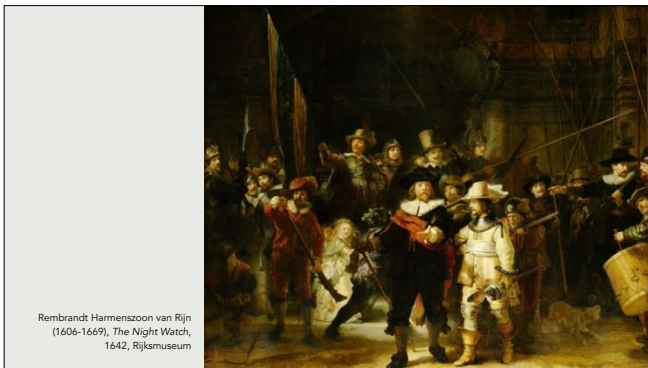


Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669), *Self-Portrait with Velvet Beret*, 1634, oil on oak wood, 58.3 × 47.5 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

- He painted this self-portrait the same year, 1634 when he was 28. It was also the year he married Saskia Uylenburgh who was above his station.
- Many artists paint self-portraits as the model is always available. However the art critic Kenneth Clark said that Rembrandt is "**with the possible exception of Van Gogh, the only artist who has made the self-portrait**

a major means of artistic self-expression, and he is absolutely the one who has turned self-portraiture into an autobiography."

- In this self-portrait he shows himself not as a gentleman but **as an artist as the beret was the painter's typical attributes**. He was born and trained in Leiden and had moved to Amsterdam in 1631, three years before this was painted. He specialised in portraiture and his dealer was Hendrick van Uylenburgh and he married his cousin Saskia three years later. Her father was a lawyer and had been a mayor.

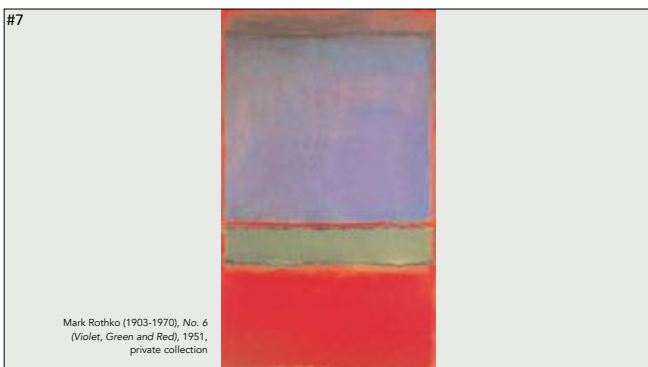


Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669), *The Night Watch*, 1642, Rijksmuseum

- **The most famous work by Rembrandt** at the Rijksmuseum is *The Night Watch*. It darkened over the years and became known as *The Night Watch* in the eighteenth century. However, it is not set at night and is more formally known as ***Militia Company of District II under the Command of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq***.
- It was the first painting of a **group engaged in an activity and that made it controversial** at the time. The members of the company expected their portraits to be shown with equal prominence and by showing about to march out Rembrandt has placed some of the members in the background where they cannot be seen as well.
- **The city of Amsterdam owns it and the current value is estimated to be over \$500 million** but it is not, of course, ever likely to come up for sale.

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Mark Rothko (1903-1970), *No. 6 (Violet, Green and Red)*, 1951, private collection
Sold for \$186 million in 2014 in a private sale to Dmitry Rybolovlev

#07

- Another big jump from Rembrandt back to modern art. This is *No. 6 (Violet, Green and Red)* by Mark Rothko.
- **The sale of this painting in 2014 was contentious** and it is a story that comes up again.
- It was privately bought for €140 million by the Russian billionaire **Dmitry Rybolovlev** (pronounced 'ree-bol-ov-lev'). He thought he had bought the painting through the Swiss dealer, **Yves Bouvier** (pronounced 'eve boov-e-ay') and he assumed the dealer was earning a standard commission from the sale. However, Bouvier had actually purchased the painting (from H.B. Paiker) for around **€80 million before selling it on to Rybolovlev for €140 million making a €60 million profit**.
- This made the Russian billionaire very angry and he accused Bouvier of having swindled €1.1bn from him through €2bn sales of 38 works over nine years. The Russian took him to court in six countries and shall hear

more about the outcome later.

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Mark Rothko (1903-1970), *Seagram Murals*, 1958-9, Tate *Black on Maroon*, 1958 (vandalised in 2012)

Donated to the Tate on condition they were hung in a darkened room near the Turner rooms.

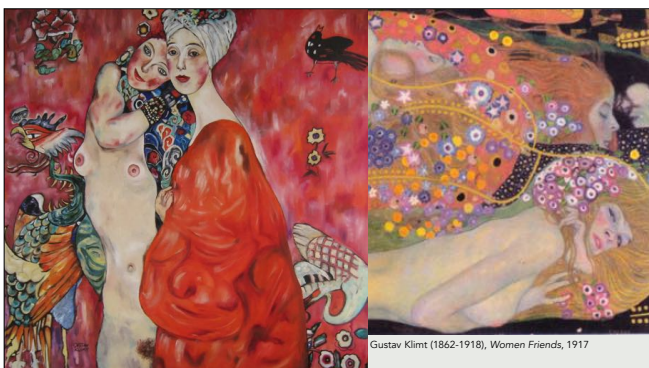
- Mark Rothko is a Latvian-American painter, born in 1903 in Latvia. He became one of the most important abstract expressionists, also known as colour field painting, from the 1950s and 1960s.
- This is one of nine paintings known as **Seagram Murals**. They were produced on commission for the Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York. After spending eight months producing them Rothko decided he would not supply them to the restaurant and returned the money he had been advanced. There is disagreement about the reason for this. Rothko's wife said he never knew it would become a restaurant but Philip Johnson, the buildings internal designer said he always knew.
- So why did he never deliver the paintings? By chance Rothko discussed the commission with a fellow passenger on a transatlantic journey to Europe and the passenger [John Fischer, editor of Harper's magazine,] wrote notes of the chat which he later published.
- Rothko told him he was painting large canvases for an expensive restaurant in the Seagram building, '**a place where the richest bastards in New York will come to feed and show off**'. He went on to say, '**I accepted this assignment as a challenge, with strictly malicious intentions. I hope to paint something that will ruin the appetite of every son of a bitch who ever eats in that room.**'
- On his return from Europe he had his first meal in the restaurant and was appalled by the prices. Immediately afterwards he cancelled the contract and returned the advance. It is possible he realised his plan to ruin the appetite of the customers would not work with the layout and scale of the restaurant and a clientele who would never even look at the paintings. He realised his art could not change anything and would just be decorative.
- Rothko had a **deep affection for Turner** and so he donated them to the Tate with certain specific conditions, such as the low light, the specific wall colour and located in a separate room next to the Turners. On the day in February 1970 that the paintings were being unpacked at Tate came the news that Mark Rothko had committed suicide in New York.

NOTES

- **Rothko** was a Russian Jew whose parents were middle-class intellectuals. Because of the anti-Jewish feeling in Russia and the fear that his sons were about to be conscripted into the army his father (named Rothkowitz) fled to America. Rothko was **very bright** but a **manic depressive**. He got a place at **Yale**, married, divorced and married again, separated in 1969. He returned to Europe where he saw **Michelangelo's Laurentian Library** and was moved by the feeling of enclosure which he said influenced the Seagram Murals. He committed suicide when he was 66 by using a **razor to cut open the veins** in his wrist and elbow and by taking anti-depressants. Rothko **hated people saying his paintings are beautiful** as he wanted something more than that. They are intended to **express deep emotions** and provide a window into a spiritual world. By the time of his death his work had become **massively successful** and sold for very high prices which he didn't like.
- **The Seagram Murals** consist of 12 layers of paint built up on bare canvas and painted very slowly with the help of two studio assistants. The technique enables the viewer to see faint under layers and shapes. They were created as a space, an environment, a place of contemplation. The colours Rothko uses are darker than those he has used previously ... blacks, maroons, dark reds. He said that he feared the day 'the black swallows the red.' The murals are Rothko's first series. For a series to be a series there needs to be a common theme to unite them and here it is the floating frame. The edges are soft and blurred and this fraying and feathering gives a feeling of the frames expanding and contracting, gently and breathing. For Rothko they weren't about the colours or technique but about feelings, such as tragedy, doom and ecstasy.
- Rothko said of Michelangelo's Laurentian library staircase, "**He achieved just the kind of feeling I'm after - he makes the viewers feel that they are trapped in a room where all the doors and windows are bricked up, so that all they can do is butt their heads for ever against the wall.**"
- One critic has seen letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the paintings. Rothko was Jewish, born in Dvinsk, Russia, (now Latvia), spoke Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian and English. He could be difficult but had a good deal of integrity. In New York in 1958 Rothko won a major commission to provide murals for the luxury Four Seasons Restaurant in the iconic Seagram Building. He was given a \$7,000 advance and produced some 30 works. He was delighted and set to work with real enthusiasm. Then he and his wife Mell dined in the restaurant and he withdrew the paintings and returned the advance. He told his assistant, 'Anybody who will eat that kind of food for those kind of prices will never look at a painting of mine.' There are several stories but basically it seems it was a question of artistic integrity. The Four Seasons was not the right home for his paintings.
- **Laurentian Library**. When he was in Europe Rothko saw the staircase that **Michelangelo** designed for the Medici Laurentian Library in Florence and he said this

inspired the murals, as they make the viewer feel they are trapped in a room where all the windows and doors have been bricked up. Rothko painted the panels three times before he was happy with the result. He wanted an oppressive effect, darker and more sombre than anything he had tried before. To create this feeling Rothko wanted his pictures to be shown in subdued light.

- **Pompeii.** The other influence mentioned by Rothko to John Fischer was Pompeii. In the Villa of the Mysteries he was struck by the use of surprisingly deep colours for a decorative scheme - black and red. He told Fischer that in the villa he sensed "a deep affinity" between the Seagram murals and the Roman wall paintings - "the same feeling, the same broad expanses of sombre colour". The other connection is that the fresco also decorates a dining room.
- **Tate bequest.** Rothko first mentioned the possibility of making a gift to the Tate in 1965 and discussed it with the Director Norman Reid many times during the next four years before making up his mind. He had a deep affection for England but was concerned his work would not be appreciated. The decisive factor was the thought that the pictures would be in the same building as Turner. The final selection of paintings was made towards the end of 1969 when he chose eight to accompany the one he had presented in 1968. He planned the arrangement himself with the aid of a mock-up of the space and he even supplied a sample of the wall colour he wanted. However, by a sad coincidence the pictures arrived in London on the very day of his suicide, and he was never able to see them in position.
- **The Seagram Building** on Park Lane, New York was designed by Mies Van der Rohe and Philip Johnson. However, The Four Seasons only had space for seven murals and Rothko painted 30 and it is not clear which ones were intended for the final selection. For his retrospective in New York in 1961 he identified five paintings Mural Sections 2-5 and 7. In 1969 Rothko bequeathed nine murals to the Tate which have been displayed almost continuously, in different arrangements, in the 'Rothko Room'. Five are titled *Black on Maroon* and four *Red on Maroon*. Three of the *Black on Maroon* are dated 1958 and the remainder 1959.
- **Vandalised.** In 2012, *Black on Maroon* was vandalised with a black marker pen and it took eighteen months and £200,000 to repair.

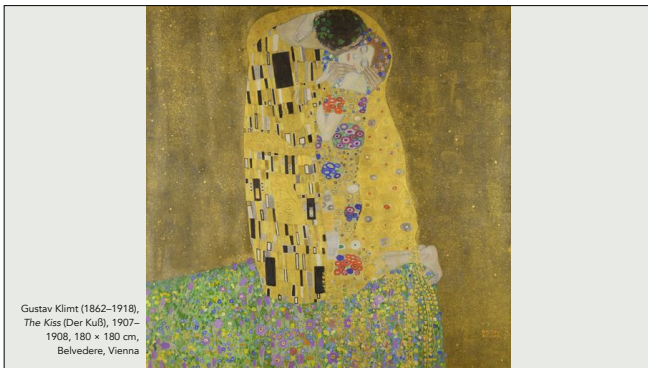


Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), *Wasserschlangen II* (Water Serpents II), 1907, 80 × 145 cm, private collection
 Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), *Women Friends*, 1917
 Sold privately in 2013 by Yves Bouvier to Dmitry Rybolovlev for \$183.8 million.

- This painting has been **involved in three controversies**. First although at the time it was seen to represent four water nymphs and so it was uncontroversial as they were mythological figures. However, it was also interpreted as a lesbian orgy of

four women. (CLICK) It is seen as a precursor to this painting *Women Friends* (1917) which show **lesbian relationships more openly**. (CLICK)

- Secondly, the ownership was disputed. It was first **owned by a Jewish woman, Jennt Steiner**, who lived in Vienna. When she was forced to flee it was **confiscated by the Nazis** and given to Gustav Ucicky (pronounced 'oo-chech-key'). When he died in **1961** it passed to his wife who put it **up for sale in 2012**. This brought it to the attention to the **heirs of Steiner** and it was **agreed the proceeds would be split 50/50**. It



Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), *The Kiss (Der Kuß)*, 1907–1908, 180 × 180 cm, Belvedere, Vienna

- 1907-8 was the year Gustav Klimt painted this famous portrait
- One of the masterpieces of Klimt's golden period and the work most loved by the public. It is an icon of the Jugendstil (the name for German and Viennese Art Nouveau). It is thought that Klimt and his companion Emilie Flöge (pronounced 'emelia flurga') modelled for the work, but there is no evidence or record to prove this.
- When he was 26 he was awarded **the Golden Order of Merit from the Emperor** and became one of the leading artists in Vienna. In 1892 his father and his brother died and his work became more personal. He **met fashion designer Emilie Louise Flöge** who became his **companion** until the end of his life. *The Kiss* (1907-08) is thought to be a picture of them as lovers. During this period he **fathered at least 14 children**.
- **The high point of his reputation** was associated with the use of gold leaf and the ***Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*** (1907) and ***The Kiss*** (1907–08).

BIO:KLIMT

- Gustav Klimt (1862-1918, died aged 55) was an Austrian symbolist painter and one of the leading members of the Vienna Secession. Klimt was born near Vienna and his father was a gold engraver and his mother had an unrealised ambition to be a musical performer. His two brothers also displayed artistic talent early on. At the Vienna School of Applied Arts **he lived in poverty** while he studied architectural painting from 1876 to 1883. His early work was conservative and academic and he revered the leading history painter in Vienna, Hans Makart.
- He formed the 'Company of Artists' with his brother and a friend and they **received many commissions** including painting murals in the Museum of Art History (Kunsthistorisches Museum).
- **In 1888 he received the Golden Order of Merit from the Emperor** and became an honorary member of both the Universities of Munich and Vienna. In 1892 both his father and his brother died and he had to assume some financial responsibility for the families. This tragedy also affected his artistic vision and his work became more personal.
- In the early 1890s he **met fashion designer Emilie**

Louise Flöge who became his **companion** until the end of his life. *The Kiss* (1907-08) is thought to be a picture of them as lovers. During this period he **fathered at least 14 children**.

- In 1894 Klimt was **commissioned** to create three paintings for the ceiling of the Great Hall of the University of Vienna. Not completed until the turn of the century, his three paintings, ***Philosophy, Medicine, and Jurisprudence*** were criticised for their radical themes and material, and were called "**pornographic**". They were **never displayed** and it was his last public commission. All three were **destroyed** when the retreating German army burned the Schloss Immendorf in 1945. His *Nude Veritas* (1899) further shook up the establishment.
- In 1897 a group of painters, sculptors and architects **formed the Vienna Secession** as a rejection of the conservative approach taken by the artistic establishment and the first president was Gustav Klimt. Its aim was to **encourage unconventional art** and hold exhibitions for local and foreign artists and all styles were encouraged. The government encouraged the group and gave them public land on which to build an exhibition hall. The group also published a magazine called 'Sacred Spring' (Ver Sacrum). The Berlin and Munich Secession movements had been founded earlier. Klimt remained in the group until 1908.
- Beginning in the late 1890s he went on holiday with the Flöge family and started painting landscapes on the shores of Attersee.
- In 1902, Klimt finished the ***Beethoven Frieze*** for the Fourteenth Vienna Secessionist exhibition.
- **The high point of his reputation** was associated with the use of gold leaf and the ***Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*** (1907) and ***The Kiss*** (1907-08) are examples of work that received positive criticism. His use of gold may have been inspired by his occasional visits to see the mosaics of Venice and Ravenna. His decorative work *Fulfilment* and *Expectation* in the dining room of Palais Stoclet were some of his finest decorative work.
- In 1905, Klimt created a painted Portrait of Margarete Wittgenstein, Ludwig Wittgenstein's sister, on the occasion of her marriage. Over the next few years he painted five portraits of society women wrapped in fur.
- In 1911 his painting ***Death and Life*** received first prize in the world exhibitions in Rome.
- In 1915 Anna, his mother, died. Klimt died three years later in Vienna on February 6, 1918, having suffered a

#5



Jackson Pollock, Number 17A, 1948, 112 x 86.5 cm, private collection

Jackson Pollock, *Number 17A*, 1948, 112 x 86.5 cm, private collection

- This painting by Jackson Pollock was purchased for \$200 million by **hedge fund manager Kenneth C. Griffin** in September 2015. It was then a record-breaking price and is now ranked 5th on the list of the most expensive paintings. It was lent to the Art Institute of Chicago.
- The painting is oil paint on fibreboard and is a drip painting, created by splashing paint onto a horizontal

surface. **It was painted a year after Jackson Pollock introduced his drip technique.** The piece was featured in the August 1949 edition of *Life* magazine that made Jackson Pollock famous.

NOTES

- Paul Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), known professionally as Jackson Pollock, was an American painter and a major figure in the abstract expressionist movement. He was well known for his unique style of drip painting. During his lifetime, **Pollock enjoyed considerable fame and notoriety; he was a major**



Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950, enamel on canvas, 266.7 × 525.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950, enamel on canvas, 266.7 × 525.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum

- Another example of Pollock's drip painting. It is one of the **largest of Pollock's paintings and has been called groundbreaking** by critics. He would lay an unprimed canvas on the floor and splash or drip enamel paints using brushes and syringes.
- There is something intrinsically appealing about Pollock's work that is perhaps explained by considering the mathematics of fractal geometry.

NOTES

- This painting was created in the fall of 1950 at the artist's studio in Springs1, New York, as a part of a collection of paintings he exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1951.

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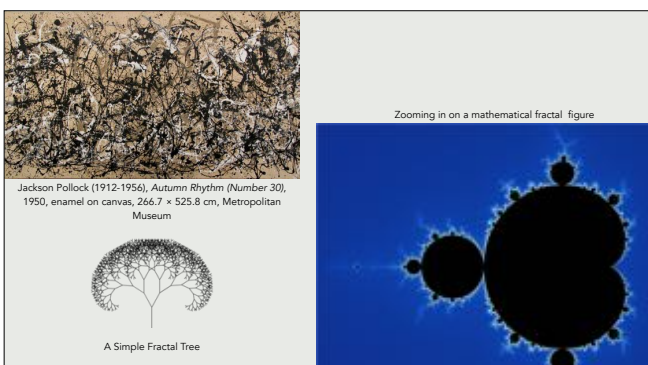
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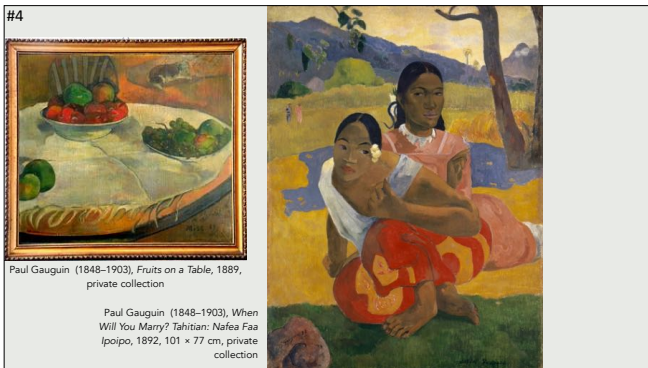
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- A fractal is a pattern that appears similar at different scales. In other words, as you zoom in you see more detail that has a similar pattern. Organic forms often are fractal, for example as you zoom in on a picture of the bare branches of a tree you see small branches and twigs with the same pattern. A line has one dimension and an area has two dimensions. A fractal has a dimension between 1 and 2 and a picture of a forest, like a Pollock painting, has a dimension of 1.8 to 1.9. Clouds have a fractal dimension of 1.3 to 1.33 and so on.

- Pollock built up his paintings layer by layer and mathematical analysis of each layer shows he increased the fractal dimension each time.
- A number of studies have examined the human response to fractals. For example, one study used a machine to create Pollock paintings, some with no fractal pattern and the other with a fractal pattern. Out of the 120 participants 113 (94%) preferred the fractal paintings.
- I am not saying Pollock was aware of fractal geometry but that he was unconsciously creating self-similar



Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), *When Will You Marry? Tahitian: Nafea Faa Ipoipo*, 1892, 101 × 77 cm, private collection

February 2015: acquired by Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani for Qatar.

#04

- Paul Gauguin is a contentious artist today because of his sexual relationships with young girls, his abandonment of his family, his violence and his racism.
- He found it difficult to sell his work when alive but **his fame began to grow shortly after his death** and many of his works were bought by a Russian collector and they are **now in the Pushkin Museum and the Hermitage**.
- This 1892 work, *When Will You Marry? (Nafea Faa Ipoipo)* became the world's third-most expensive artwork when its owner (the family of Rudolf Staechelin) sold it privately for US\$210 million in September 2014. **The buyer is believed to be the Qatar Museums.**
- The last word is from Gauguin himself who wrote just before he died, **"I have wished to establish the right to dare, the public owes me nothing, since my achievement in painting is only relatively good, but the painters - who today profit by this liberty - they owe something to me."** That is, above all, he dared to be different and he was right, he became very influential on later artists.
- Gauguin **first set sail for Tahiti on 1 April 1891**, the year before he painted this. His idea was to escape from **"everything that is artificial and conventional"** about European art. He found the capital was influenced by French and European culture and he could not afford the lifestyle so he moved to a bamboo hut 28 miles away. Many of his finest paintings date from this period 1891 to 1892. He sent nine paintings back to Paris and was told they were well received but in fact they had been unfavourably compared to van Gogh's work. Encouraged he returned with 70 works expecting to sell them but instead he lost his main dealer Durand-Ruel and was unsuccessful selling them himself. He returned in 1895 never to return to Europe again.
- There is an interesting story of how a valuable painting goes unrecognised. In 1970 one of Gauguin's paintings called *Fruits on a Table* (1889) was stolen in London. Five years later a Fiat employee bought it at a railway lost property sale for the equivalent of about £30 because he liked it. It was not until 2014 that the painting was discovered and it then had an estimated

value of about £30 million.

NOTES

- In 2014 the painting *Fruits on a Table* (1889), with an estimated value of between €10m and €30m (£8.3m to £24.8m), which had been stolen in London in 1970, was discovered in Italy. It had been bought, together with a work by Pierre Bonnard, by a Fiat employee in 1975, at a railway lost property sale, for 45,000 lira (about £32). The painting remained in the factory worker's kitchen until an art expert's evaluation in 2014. Under Italian law the factory worker could have a right to keep them if he could prove that he bought them in good faith. In December 2014 they were returned to him by a court in Rome. Simultaneously, the sole and universal heir of the original owner, Terence F. Kennedy, was found and has since made his claim to title.
- Gauguin never sold well in his lifetime but following two posthumous exhibitions (at the Salon d'Automne) in Paris in 1903 and 1906 his work started to sell, they had a powerful influence on French avant-garde art and on Pablo Picasso in particular.
- One small painting of Pau'ura (a fourteen year-old girl with whom he fathered two children) was sold for 150 francs to a naval officer and it was sold at Sotheby's in 2004 for \$39 million.

FIRST VISIT TO TAHITI (1891)

- By 1890, Gauguin had conceived the idea of making Tahiti his next artistic project. He raised money by selling a few paintings and holding a banquet and benefit concert. He visited his wife and children in Copenhagen for what turned out to be the last time and set sail on 1 April 1891 promising to return a rich man. His idea was to escape from "everything that is artificial and conventional" about European art.
- He was disappointed by the capital Papeete as it was much influenced by French and European culture and he could not afford the lifestyle. He moved to a bamboo hut 28 miles away and painted the Tahitian life. Many of his finest paintings date from this period such as *Fatata te Miti (By the Sea)*, *la Orana Maria (Ave Maria)* and *Vahine no te tiare (Woman with a Flower)*, all 1891. He sent *Woman with a Flower* to a friend in Paris and it was displayed at the Goupil Gallery. He read books on the old Tahitian culture and produced some 20 paintings and a dozen wood carvings of the way he imagined it. He sent nine paintings back to Paris and was told they had been well received but in fact they were unfavourably compared with van Gogh. He ran out of funds and encouraged by his apparent success in Paris he returned with 70 works. He needed state support to gain a free passage home and he was suffering from health problems which may have been early symptoms of cardiovascular syphilis.
- He wrote a travelogue called *Noa Noa* describing his experiences and he revealed he had married a 13 year-old girl called Teha'amana, who he called Tehura. She gave birth and in 1893 he left never to see her or the child again. She was the subject of a number of paintings including the celebrated *Spirit of the Dead Watching*.

RETURN TO FRANCE (1893)

- Back in Paris he continued to paint Tahitian scenes and an exhibition held by Durand-Ruel was a moderate success. He adopted an exotic persona wearing Polynesian dress, held a weekly salon and conducted a public affair with a teenager called Annah the Javanese.
- At this point disaster struck. For reasons we don't know he lost the patronage of Durand-Ruel, his main route to market which meant he did not have access to the American market which was starting to buy Impressionist works at elevated prices. He tried to hold an exhibition himself but it was not a success.
- Gauguin inherited 13,000 francs from his uncle but would only give his wife 1,500 francs. All hopes of a reconciliation with his wife vanished when they quarrelled over the money and neither visited the other.

RESIDENCE IN TAHITI (1895)

- Gauguin failed to raise funds for a return to Tahiti but a friend arranged a cheap passage there and he never saw Europe again. He returned at a low ebb because of critics who attacked his work and his disillusionment with the Paris art scene. He arrived three months later in September 1895 and spent the next six years living, apparently comfortably as an artist-settler near the capital Papeete. He had a steady but slow stream of sales to friends although at one point he had to take a desk job.
- In 1902 Gauguin's health began to deteriorate, his unhealed ankle became more and more painful until he had to take morphine. His sight was beginning to fail as well and he considered returning to Europe for treatment but a friend advised him to stay for the sake of his art and to keep his enemies silent. Noa Noa was finally published and he wrote some other essays. The written attacks on the governor, the bishop and the gendarmerie continued but by December 1902 his health was so poor he could hardly paint. He began an autobiographical memoir (Before and After) which he completed in two months. At the beginning of 1903 he began another attack on the gendarmerie but the allegations could not be substantiated and he was fined 500 francs and three months in prison for libel. He was in such great pain he resorted to morphine again and died suddenly on the morning of 8 May 1903 probably of a heart attack.

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Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?, 1897, oil on canvas, 139 x 375 cm (55 x 148 in), Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?, 1897, oil on canvas, 139 x 375 cm (55 x 148 in), Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

- In April 1897 he received news his favourite daughter Aline had died and that he had to vacate his house as the land had been sold. He took out a loan and built a much larger house with beautiful views of the sea. He had over extended himself and the bank threatened to foreclose. Failing health and pressing debts brought him to the brink of despair.
- At the end of the year he completed his monumental Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?, which he regarded as his masterpiece and final artistic testament (in a letter to Monfreid he explained that he tried to kill himself after finishing it).
- The painting shows three groups. The group on the right represent the beginning of life, the middle group the daily life of

young adulthood including a woman picking fruit as a reference to Eve, and the group on the left Gauguin wrote shows how "an old woman approaching death appears reconciled and resigned to her thoughts"; at her feet, "a strange white bird...represents the futility of words" or "the uselessness of vain words". So overall, from right to left it represents the cycle of 'birth-sin-death'. Outside the cycle the blue idol Gauguin said represents 'the Beyond'.

- It was exhibited with other paintings in Paris and was a mild success. He eventually sold *Where Do We Come From?* in 1901 for 2,500 francs. A Paris dealer, Vollard, agreed to pay Gauguin 300 francs a month against 25 unseen paintings a year and provide art materials.

BIO:GAUGUIN

EARLY LIFE (1848)

- He was born in Paris and his birth in 1848 coincided with revolutionary upheavals all over Europe. His father was a liberal journalist who was forced to flee France when the newspaper he worked for was suppressed. His mother was a socialist activist and the daughter of an engraver.
- Gauguin's idolised his maternal grandmother and kept her books with him all his life. She was the illegitimate daughter of an aristocratic Peruvian family that lived in Peru. When his father fled France he went to Peru in the hope of continuing his job as a journalist but he died en route. His mother with Paul and his sister were welcomed by the family and Paul lived a life of luxury with nursemaids and servants until he was six. His early impression of Peru "haunted him the rest of his life".
- His family fell from political power and his mother returned to France. She got a job as a dressmaker in Paris leaving Gauguin with his paternal grandfather.
- Gauguin was sent to local schools and then a prestigious Catholic boarding school. When he was 12 he transferred to a naval preparatory school and then signed on as a merchant marine. Three years later he joined the French navy for two years and when he was in India in 1867 he heard his mother had died.
- In 1871 he returned to Paris and a close family friend secured him a job as a stockbroker at the age of 23. For the next 11 years he was a successful businessman earning the equivalent of about £200,000 a year in today's money including the money he made dealing in the art market. In 1882 the Paris stock market crashed along with the art market and Gauguin decided to pursue painting full-time. During this 11 year period he was painting as an amateur and became a friend of Camille Pissarro and exhibited in the Impressionist exhibitions of 1881 and 1882 although the critics dismissed his work. His work was bought by the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel until the stock market crash in 1882.

Marriage (1873)

- In 1873, he married a Danish woman and they had five children and in 1884 after the market collapse he moved with his family to Copenhagen to become a tarpaulin salesman. He failed as he did not speak Danish and the chief breadwinner became his wife who gave French lessons to trainee diplomats. He tried to earn a living as an artist and moved with his family to Rouen but the venture was unsuccessful. They all moved back to Copenhagen but tensions grew in the marriage and his wife and her family asked him to leave and he returned to Paris in 1885 with his six year old son Clovis.

His Early Art Career (1886)

- He had no money and Clovis fell ill and Gauguin's sister paid for him to be sent to boarding school. He produced little work during this difficult period although *Women Bathing* introduced a theme he returned to later. He sold one painting and when George Seurat became leader of the avant-garde movement Gauguin rejected his Pointillist technique contemptuously and later in the year broke with his friend Pissarro.
- Gauguin spent the summer of 1886 in Pont-Aven in Brittany as it was cheap to live there. He dressed outlandishly and became a success with the young art students who flocked there. He made friends with the artist Charles Laval who accompanied him to Martinique and Panama the following year.
- He painted landscapes and nudes which were clearly indebted to Degas. An English illustrator called Randolph Caldecott produced naive drawings that influenced the young art students and Gauguin. The Symbolist subject matter and the use of pure colour is now called the Pont-Aven School. Gauguin became influenced by the art of Africa and Asia because of its mystical symbolism and vigour.

Martinique (1887)

- In 1887, after first visiting Panama Gauguin went on to Martinique for the summer accompanied by his friend Charles Laval. He suffered from dysentery and produced only about 12 paintings. He was excited by the exotic location and the natives on the island. His work at this period was brightly coloured, loosely painted and outdoors.

Vincent and Theo Van Gogh (1888)

- On Gauguin's return he exhibited his work and they were seen and admired by Vincent van Gogh and his art dealer brother Theo, whose firm Goupil & Cie was the leading art dealer for avant-garde art in Paris. Theo purchased three works and

introduced Gauguin to wealthy clients. Gauguin and Vincent became close friends and they corresponded perhaps helping Gauguin formulate his personal theory of art.

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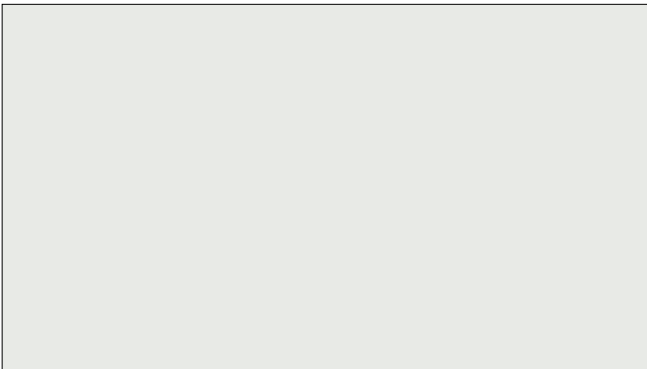
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#3



Paul Cézanne, *The Card Players*, 1892-96, Musée d'Orsay
3



#3



Paul Cézanne
(1839-1906), *The Card
Players*, c. 1894-5, 97 x
130 cm, private
collection

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, c. 1894-5,
97 x 130 cm, private collection

- It says 'private collection', but **some of you will be thinking but hold on I saw Cézanne *The Card Players* in the Courtauld or in the Musée d'Orsay, or at the Met in New York or in Philadelphia.** You are all right, Cézanne painted five versions over a few years and I will show you all five but first let me tell you about the sale of this one.
- In April 2011 the **Greek shipping magnate George Embricos sold this version to the State of Qatar by private sale.** The price is unknown but is **believed to be between \$250 and \$300 million.** At the time this was the highest price ever paid for a painting.
- Cézanne was adapting a **theme used by 17th-century Dutch and French artists** of card games often played by drunk and rowdy gamblers. Instead, Cézanne has **sombre, stony-faced and serious Provençal card players.** The players concentrate on their hands and there is no sense of fun, they have been described as 'human still life'.
- Let us look at all five...



Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), *The Card Players*, 1890-92, 134 x 181.5 cm, Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, c. 1894-5, 97 x 130 cm, private collection

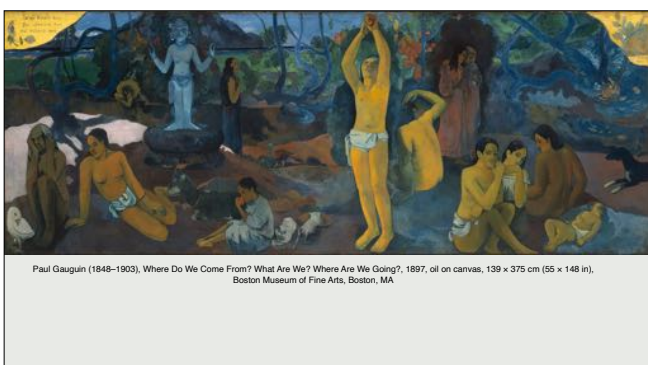
Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, 1890-92, 65.4 x 81.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, 1892-95, 60 x 73 cm, Courtauld Institute of Art

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, c. 1894-5, 47.5 x 57 cm, Musée d'Orsay

- They vary in size, number of card players and the setting and I have arranged them here in order of size. The largest is in Philadelphia then the one sold privately to the State of Qatar, then the one at the Met, the one at the Courtauld in London and finally, perhaps the one that is reproduced most often, the one in Paris at the Musée d'Orsay. It is the one at the Musée d'Orsay that he painted last.
- All five were painted in what is called his final period in the early 1890s. He also drew and painted numerous drawings and studies.
- It is thought the largest at the top left is the one he painted first. It has the most figures and the standing figure in the background creates a sense of depth and three-dimensions
- The next one he painted is the one below it at the Met. It is less than half the size and the composition has been simplified and condensed.
- The versions on the right are likely to be the final three he painted and the Musée d'Orsay version, bottom right, is the smallest, the most constrained, the most closely cropped and is likely to be the one he painted last.

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Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, 1897, oil on canvas, 139 x 375 cm (55 x 148 in), Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

- In April 1897 he received news his favourite daughter Aline had died and that he had to vacate his house as the land had been sold. He took out a loan and built a much larger house with beautiful views of the sea. He had over extended himself and the bank threatened to foreclose. Failing health and pressing debts brought him to the brink of despair.
- At the end of the year he completed his monumental *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, which he regarded as his masterpiece and final artistic testament (in a letter to Monfreid he explained that he tried to kill himself after finishing it).
- The painting shows three groups. The group on the right represent the beginning of life, the middle group the daily life of

young adulthood including a woman picking fruit as a reference to Eve, and the group on the left Gauguin wrote shows how "an old woman approaching death appears reconciled and resigned to her thoughts"; at her feet, "a strange white bird...represents the futility of words" or "the uselessness of vain words". So overall, from right to left it represents the cycle of 'birth-sin-death'. Outside the cycle the blue idol Gauguin said represents 'the Beyond'.

- It was exhibited with other paintings in Paris and was a mild success. He eventually sold *Where Do We Come From?* in 1901 for 2,500 francs. A Paris dealer, Vollard, agreed to pay Gauguin 300 francs a month against 25 unseen paintings a year and provide art materials.

BIO:GAUGUIN

EARLY LIFE (1848)

- He was born in Paris and his birth in 1848 coincided with revolutionary upheavals all over Europe. His father was a liberal journalist who was forced to flee France when the newspaper he worked for was suppressed. His mother was a socialist activist and the daughter of an engraver.
- Gauguin's idolised his maternal grandmother and kept her books with him all his life. She was the illegitimate daughter of an aristocratic Peruvian family that lived in Peru. When his father fled France he went to Peru in the hope of continuing his job as a journalist but he died en route. His mother with Paul and his sister were welcomed by the family and Paul lived a life of luxury with nursemaids and servants until he was six. His early impression of Peru "haunted him the rest of his life".
- His family fell from political power and his mother returned to France. She got a job as a dressmaker in Paris leaving Gauguin with his paternal grandfather.
- Gauguin was sent to local schools and then a prestigious Catholic boarding school. When he was 12 he transferred to a naval preparatory school and then signed on as a merchant marine. Three years later he joined the French navy for two years and when he was in India in 1867 he heard his mother had died.
- In 1871 he returned to Paris and a close family friend secured him a job as a stockbroker at the age of 23. For the next 11 years he was a successful businessman earning the equivalent of about £200,000 a year in today's money including the money he made dealing in the art market. In 1882 the Paris stock market crashed along with the art market and Gauguin decided to pursue painting full-time. During this 11 year period he was painting as an amateur and became a friend of Camille Pissarro and exhibited in the Impressionist exhibitions of 1881 and 1882 although the critics dismissed his work. His work was bought by the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel until the stock market crash in 1882.

Marriage (1873)

- In 1873, he married a Danish woman and they had five children and in 1884 after the market collapse he moved with his family to Copenhagen to become a tarpaulin salesman. He failed as he did not speak Danish and the chief breadwinner became his wife who gave French lessons to trainee diplomats. He tried to earn a living as an artist and moved with his family to Rouen but the venture was unsuccessful. They all moved back to Copenhagen but tensions grew in the marriage and his wife and her family asked him to leave and he returned to Paris in 1885 with his six year old son Clovis.

His Early Art Career (1886)

- He had no money and Clovis fell ill and Gauguin's sister paid for him to be sent to boarding school. He produced little work during this difficult period although *Women Bathing* introduced a theme he returned to later. He sold one painting and when George Seurat became leader of the avant-garde movement Gauguin rejected his Pointillist technique contemptuously and later in the year broke with his friend Pissarro.
- Gauguin spent the summer of 1886 in Pont-Aven in Brittany as it was cheap to live there. He dressed outlandishly and became a success with the young art students who flocked there. He made friends with the artist Charles Laval who accompanied him to Martinique and Panama the following year.
- He painted landscapes and nudes which were clearly indebted to Degas. An English illustrator called Randolph Caldecott produced naive drawings that influenced the young art students and Gauguin. The Symbolist subject matter and the use of pure colour is now called the Pont-Aven School. Gauguin became influenced by the art of Africa and Asia because of its mystical symbolism and vigour.

Martinique (1887)

- In 1887, after first visiting Panama Gauguin went on to Martinique for the summer accompanied by his friend Charles Laval. He suffered from dysentery and produced only about 12 paintings. He was excited by the exotic location and the natives on the island. His work at this period was brightly coloured, loosely painted and outdoors.

Vincent and Theo Van Gogh (1888)

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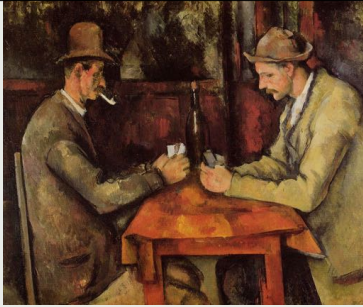
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#2



Willem de Kooning (1904-1997),
Interchange, 1955,
200.7 x 175.3 cm, private,
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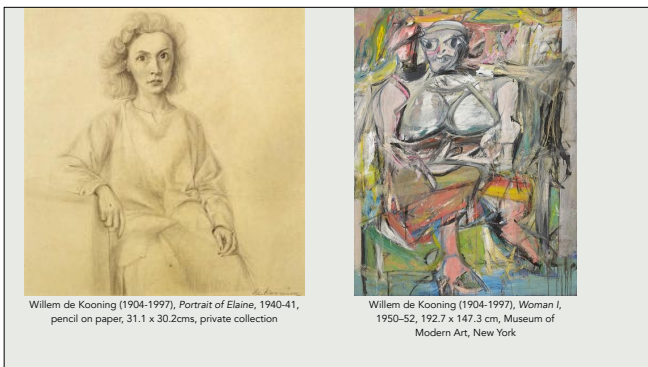
#02

- *Interchange* or *Interchanged* is an **abstract expressionist work by Dutch-American artist Willem de Kooning**. The **fleshy pink mass in the centre represents a woman** and this painting marks the transition from painting women to abstract urban landscapes.
- Originally sold by the artist for \$4,000 it sold in 2015 for **\$300 million to Kenneth Griffin who is the hedge fund manager I mentioned just now who bought the Jackson Pollock for \$200 million the same year**.
- De Kooning was **born in Rotterdam** to parents who divorced when he was three. He left school when he was 12 and became an apprentice commercial artist. He **attended art evening classes** until he travelled to New York as a **stowaway** in 1926 aged 22. On arrival he worked as a **house painter, carpenter and commercial artist**. He painted in his spare time and became friends with Arshile Gorky (pronounced 'arsh-il Gorky'). From 1937 he worked full-time as an artist

working on commissions. He painted a mural for the **1939 World's Fair in New York** and received **favourable critical attention**. He met the artist Elaine Fried who became his wife in 1943 and they established a lifelong partnership interrupted by alcoholism, lack of money, love affairs, quarrels and separations. He became **influenced by Franz Kline and joined with him and Jackson Pollock to break away from the common artistic movements**. This movement was later called 'Abstract Expressionism' sometimes known as 'Action Painting' and the 'New York School'. From 1948 to 1953 his reputation grew and in 1953, he shocked the art world by exhibiting a series of aggressively painted figural works, commonly known as the "Women" paintings.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interchange_\(de_Kooning\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interchange_(de_Kooning))



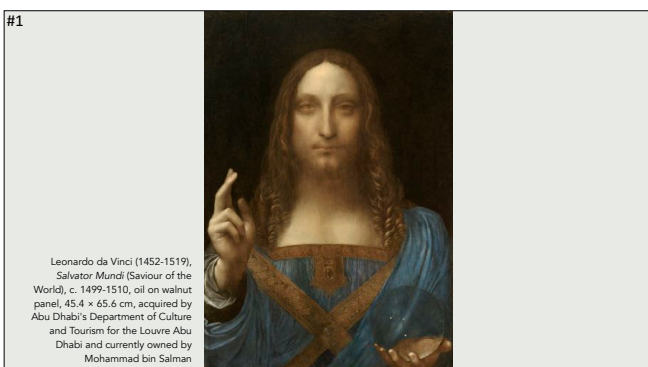
Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), *Portrait of Elaine*, 1940-41, pencil on paper, 31.1 x 30.2cms, private collection

Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), *Woman I*, 1950-52, 192.7 x 147.3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

- This is an example of his early work from the 1940s and (CLICK) this shows how his work developed through abstraction to one of the earlier paintings in his 'Women' series.
- De Kooning famously said, "**Flesh is the reason oil paint was invented.**" *Woman I* was one of a series of six paintings centred upon a female figure that de Kooning worked on from **1950 to 1953**. De Kooning made numerous preliminary studies then repainted the canvas repeatedly—scraping away and re-working the image, over nearly two years.

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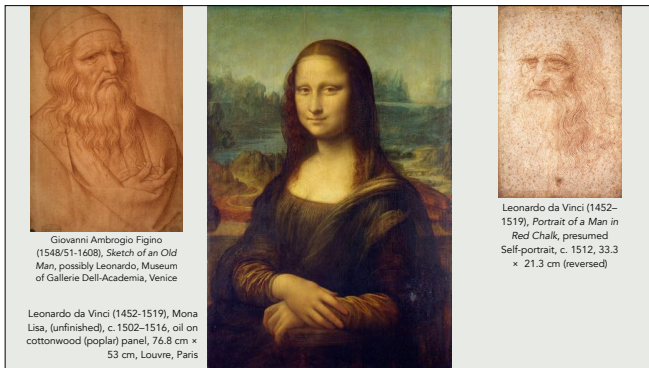
Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), *Salvator Mundi* (Saviour of the World), c. 1499-1510, oil on walnut panel, 45.4 x 65.6 cm, acquired by Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism for the Louvre Abu Dhabi and currently owned by Mohammad bin Salman

#01

- This is now generally but not universally accepted to be by Leonardo da Vinci. It was previously thought to be a later copy of a lost original painting.
- It was purchased in 2005 and restored and since then has gained acceptance as Leonardo's original although

some think the restoration was more of a reconstruction.

- Pentimenti (changes to the composition) were found in the thumb of Christ's right hand and elsewhere which are indicators of the painting's status as an original.
- **The painting set a new record for sale price (US\$450 million)** when auctioned by Christie's in 2017. Matthew Landrus considers it to be primarily the work of Bernardino Luini.
- Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of Christ, known as *Salvator Mundi* (circa 1500), **which Bouvier sold to**



Giovanni Ambrogio Figino (1548/51-1608), *Sketch of an Old Man*, possibly Leonardo, Museum of Gallerie Dell-Academia, Venice

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), *Mona Lisa*, (unfinished), c. 1502-1516, oil on cottonwood (poplar) panel, 76.8 cm x 53 cm, Louvre, Paris

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I thought I would end with the world's most famous painting and some odd facts you might not know.

FIVE THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE MONA LISA

1. **Leonardo lived and died in France.** He was born in Italy but towards the end of his life he went to work for King Francois I of France and he took the Mona Lisa with him. It was displayed Fontainebelu Palace after he died and then transferred to the Palace of Versaille. Napoleon kept it in his bedroom before it was moved to the Louvre.
2. It is thought to be **unfinished**. Towards the end of his life, when he lived in France, Leonardo's right arm became paralysed and he never finished the Mona Lisa. (CLICK) A drawing by Giovanni Ambrogio Figino after Leonardo's death shows an elderly man with his right arm covered by a cloth. Some allege this is Leonardo and although he was left-handed some say he painted with his right hand. There is also a record of a visit by Louis d'Aragon, in October 1517 which describes Leonardo's right hand as being **paralytic** at the age of 65.
3. Some say the **lack of eyebrows** was proof it was unfinished but others say it was a fashion at the time. However, detailed analysis shows Leonardo had once painted on eyebrows and bolder eyelashes but they have faded over time.
4. Some claim it is a **self-portrait**. The most (CLICK) widely accepted self-portrait by Leonardo is this one which I have reversed so you can compare it with the Mona Lisa. It does not look the same to me.
5. The *Mona Lisa* It was **stolen in 1911**. The playwright **Guillaume Apollinaire** was arrested in September and questioned for a week before being released and **Pablo Picasso** became the next suspect. Finally, two years later, **Vincenzo Peruggia**, a glazier who had worked at the Louvre, admitted stealing it to return it to Italy. He was caught when he tried to sell it to an Italian art dealer who alerted the authorities. So the Mona Lisa was recovered – and her fame was all the greater.

6. Finally, I have been talking about the **value of paintings** and how they have become ridiculously high. A recent estimate values it at **\$2.5 billion** but this makes the insurance cover so expensive that it is cheaper to install the best security system.

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- Speculation by billionaires has driven some art to ridiculously high prices. Luckily, most of what would be the world's most expensive paintings are in national museums and will never be sold and they are available for us all to see.

NOTES

- The World's Most Expensive Art as defined by Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_expensive_paintings) as at January 2022. The list has now changed, as of July 2022 Rembrandt has come in at #10 with The Standard Bearer and Andy Warhol has come in #11 with Shot Sage Blue Marilyn pushing Modigliani down to #12.

1. Leonardo, Salvator Mundi
2. Willem de Kooning, Interchange
3. Paul Cézanne, The Card Players
4. Paul Gauguin, Nafea Faa Ipoipo (When Will You Marry?)
5. Jackson Pollock, Number 17A
6. Gustav Klimt, Wasserschlangen II
7. Mark Rothko, No. 6 (Violet, Green and Red)
8. Rembrandt, Pendant Portraits of Maerten Soolmans and Oopjun Coppit
9. Pablo Picasso Les Femmes d'Alger ("Version O")
10. Amedeo Modigliani, Nu couché

REFERENCES

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