



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF ART INSTRUCTION

From the Middle Ages to the present in Europe and North America

# The Middle Ages in Europe

- God and Religion were at the core of every part of life
- Very few people were **literate**
- Art was used to teach people biblical stories, and about heaven and hell
- **Do you consider this to be a “good” drawing? Why? Why not?**



# Monastic Art

- In the early years of the middle ages, (from 600 ce to before approximately 1100 ce) most of the art was created by religious Monks who lived in religious compounds called monasteries.
- Images of people “graven images” were forbidden in the bible, so most art was in the form of abstract designs and decorative lettering inspired by nature



A page from the book of Kells (800 CE)

# Monastic Art

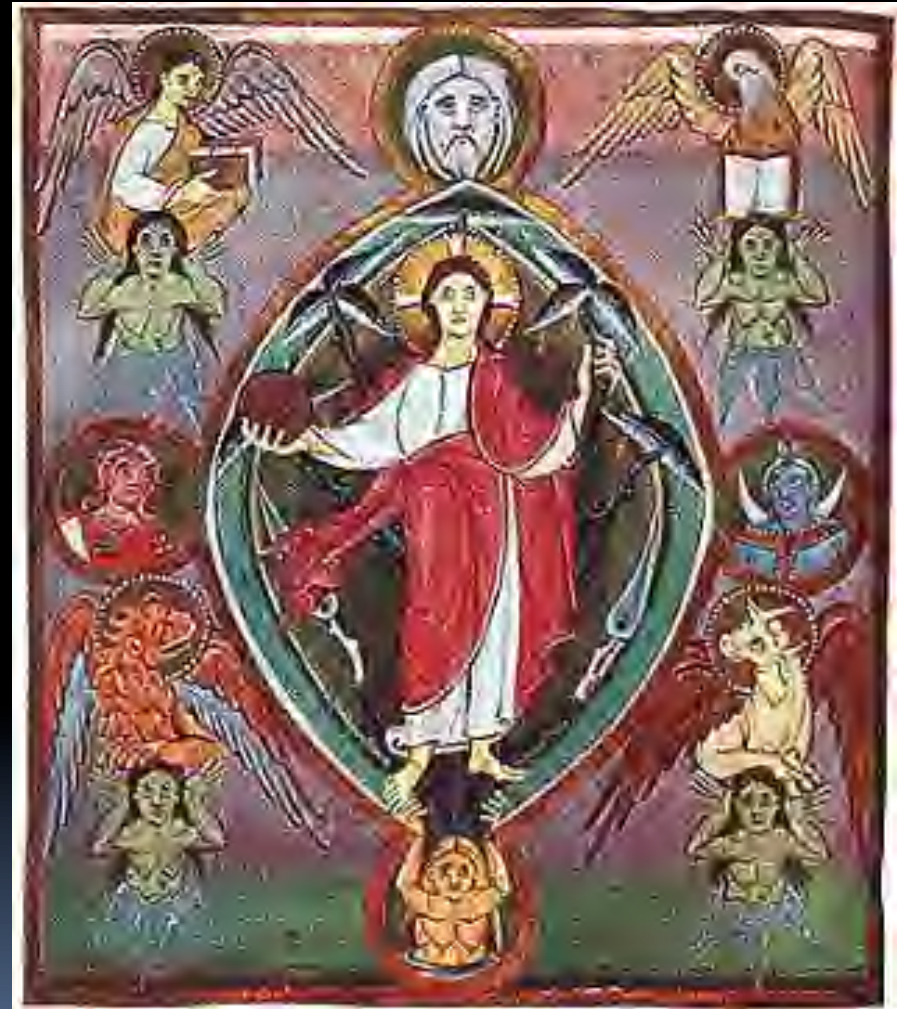
- What other cultures/religions follow similar rules regarding forbidden artistic subject matter and have a similar artistic style?



Details of artwork from  
The Book of Kells (800 CE)

# Monastic Art

- Eventually, the church decided it was acceptable for images of biblical figures to be drawn, painted and sculpted
- Because few people could read, this enabled them to learn about the bible through pictures
- Drawings were not made by observation and they did not look very realistic



# The Guilds

- In the later years of the middle ages, (after approximately 1300 ce) most of the art was created by laypersons (not a member of the clergy e.g. not priests or monks)
- These people belonged to guilds
- Guilds brought together people who worked in the same trade and established a system or rights and responsibilities for the profession
- Artists were trained through apprenticeships. Apprentices began studying under a master artist (who taught them) when they were 13 or 14



Apprentices were taught and gained job experience in professional workshops as opposed to classrooms

# The Guilds

Thus: art instruction shifted:

FROM: the religious monks and clergy

TO: apprenticeships in the secular guilds



medieval workshops where apprentices were taught and gained job experience

# Drawing Instruction In The Renaissance (1500's-1600's)

How are students in this Academic classroom being taught differently than they were in the workshops?



*A Painter's Academy in Rome*  
Engraving  
By Pierfrancesco Alberti



# Drawing Instruction In The Renaissance (1500's-1600's)



What stylistic differences do you notice between this drawing of a Renaissance **Academy** classroom and the one of the Master teaching his Apprentices ?

# The Guilds

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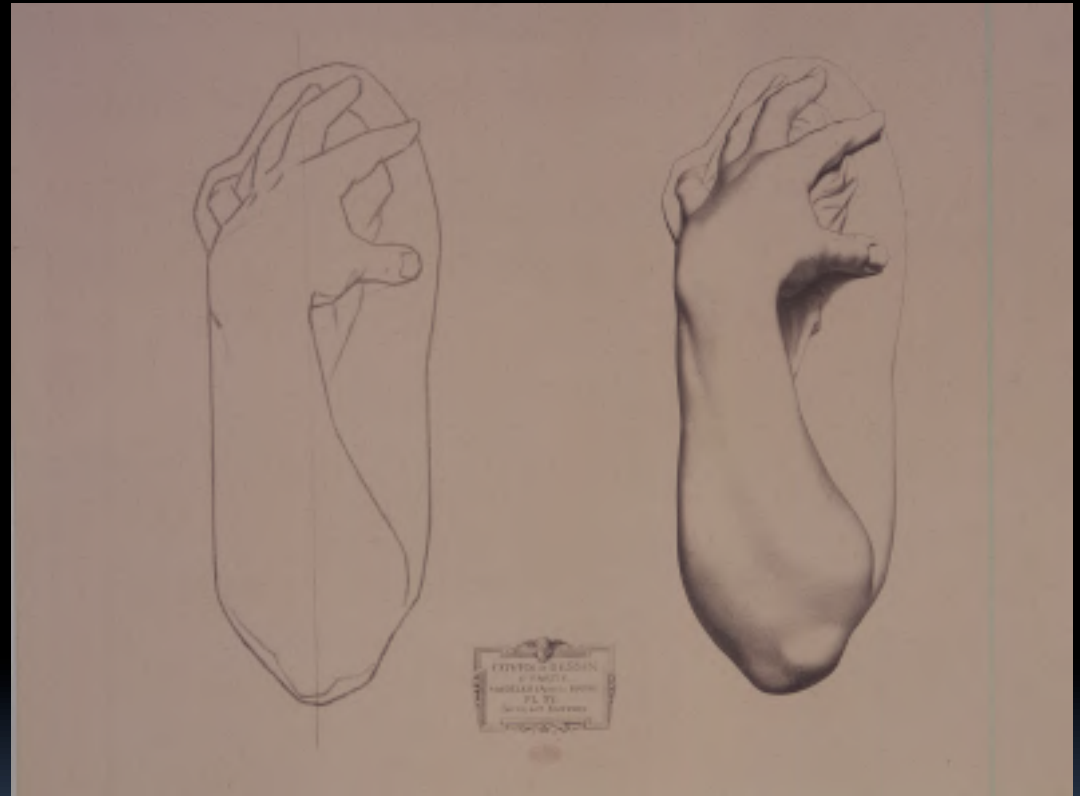
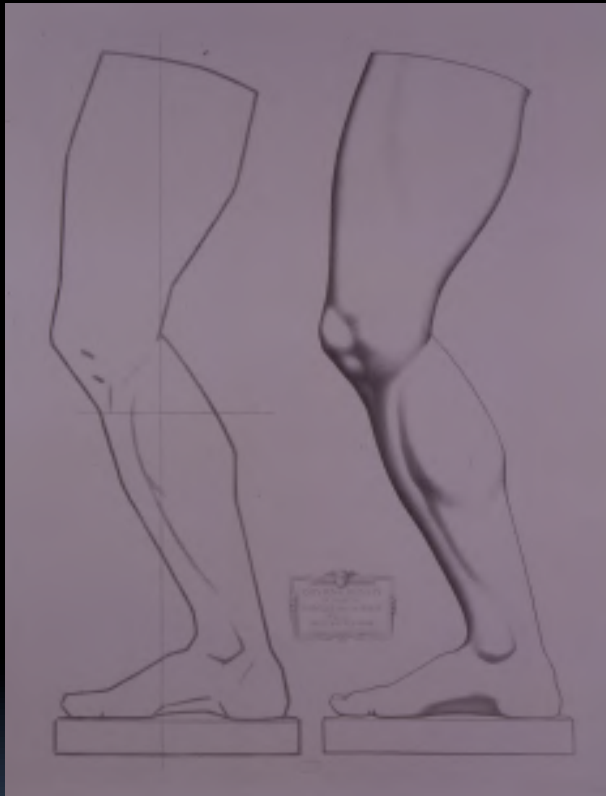


medieval workshops where apprentices were taught and gained job experience

# Drawing Instruction In The Academies (1500's – 1800's)

- Before the Renaissance, art was considered manual labour and thus, something of low status.
- In the Renaissance, a philosophical movement called "Humanism" elevated art to the level of history, poetry, and philosophy
- Academies were first established during this time to formally teach art in a classroom setting to people who were rich and/or very talented
- Art instruction shifted:  
FROM: the workshops of the guilds  
TO: the classrooms of the art academies

# Drawing Instruction In The Academies (1500's – 1800's)



- Initially, students in the academies learned to draw by exactly copying drawings of the human Body (by established professional drawing masters) and plaster castes (statues) of it such as these.
- The finished product needed to be indistinguishable from the original.

# Drawing Instruction In The Academies (1500's - 1800's)

In the more advanced classes, they would draw directly from a live model



Model Posing for the Academy at St. Luc by Charles-Nicholas Cochin the Younger (1700's)

# Drawing Instruction for Everyone:

## The Industrial Revolution (1800's and 1900's)



Traditional workshops



Large factories from the Industrial revolution

- Machines and large factories replaced skilled artisans who made things by hand in small workshops

# Drawing Instruction for Everyone:

## The Industrial Revolution (1800's and 1900's)



- More and more people lived in cities where jobs in factories were available
- Public schooling (education for everyone regardless of their financial background) was introduced for kids in Kindergarten to grade 8
- Most kids from poor families would enter the workforce after 5<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- What we now call high school was often only for wealthy or very smart, high achieving students.

# Drawing Instruction for Everyone:

## The Industrial Revolution (1800's and 1900's)



Exercise from the 1895 *Syllabus of Drawing in Elementary Schools, Standards I, IV, and V*

Which method of instruction do you think would enable students to become better at drawing: the Academic method or this one? Why?

- In the 1800's elementary aged students were taught how to draw in England (and eventually the same was true in the United States)
- It was felt that drawing skills were important for designing products that would be manufactured in the factories
- Two kinds of post-secondary art schools developed:
  - Trade schools were established for industrial designers
  - Fine Artists continued to study at the Academies



# Drawing Instruction for Everyone:

## The Industrial Revolution (1800's and 1900's)



Illustration from Walter Smith's book *The Standard Book of Graphic Reproductions and Designs* (1872)

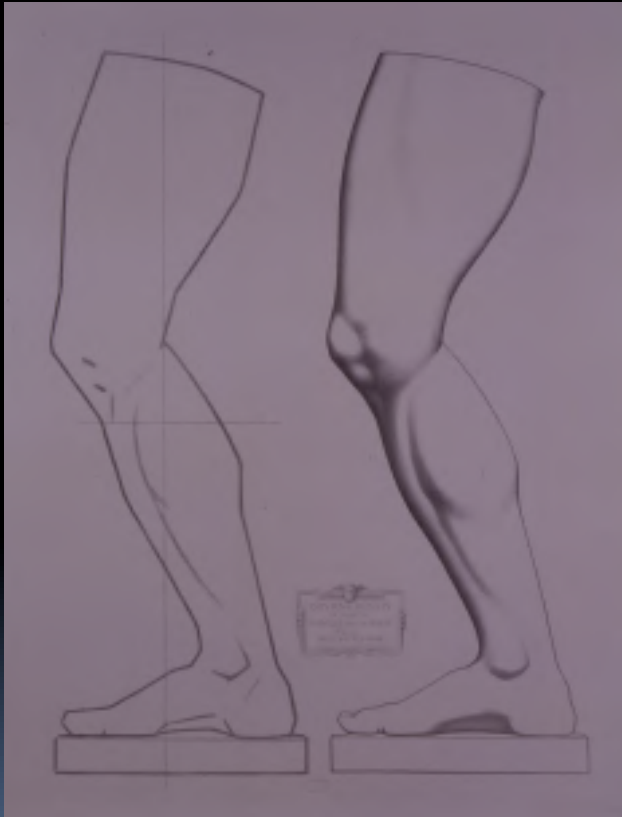
- The classical art and beauty taught by the Academy were not abandoned entirely
- Its teachings were modified by having students draw "flat copies" as opposed to the traditional contoured ones that were shaded to look 3-dimensional

Which method of instruction do you think would enable students to become better at drawing: the Academic method or this one?  
Why?

# Drawing Instruction for Everyone:

## The Industrial Revolution (1800's and 1900's)

Art instruction branched out:



**FROM:** the classrooms of the art academies



**TO:** the classrooms of the trade schools

# Drawing Instruction for Everyone:

The Industrial Revolution (1800's and 1900's)



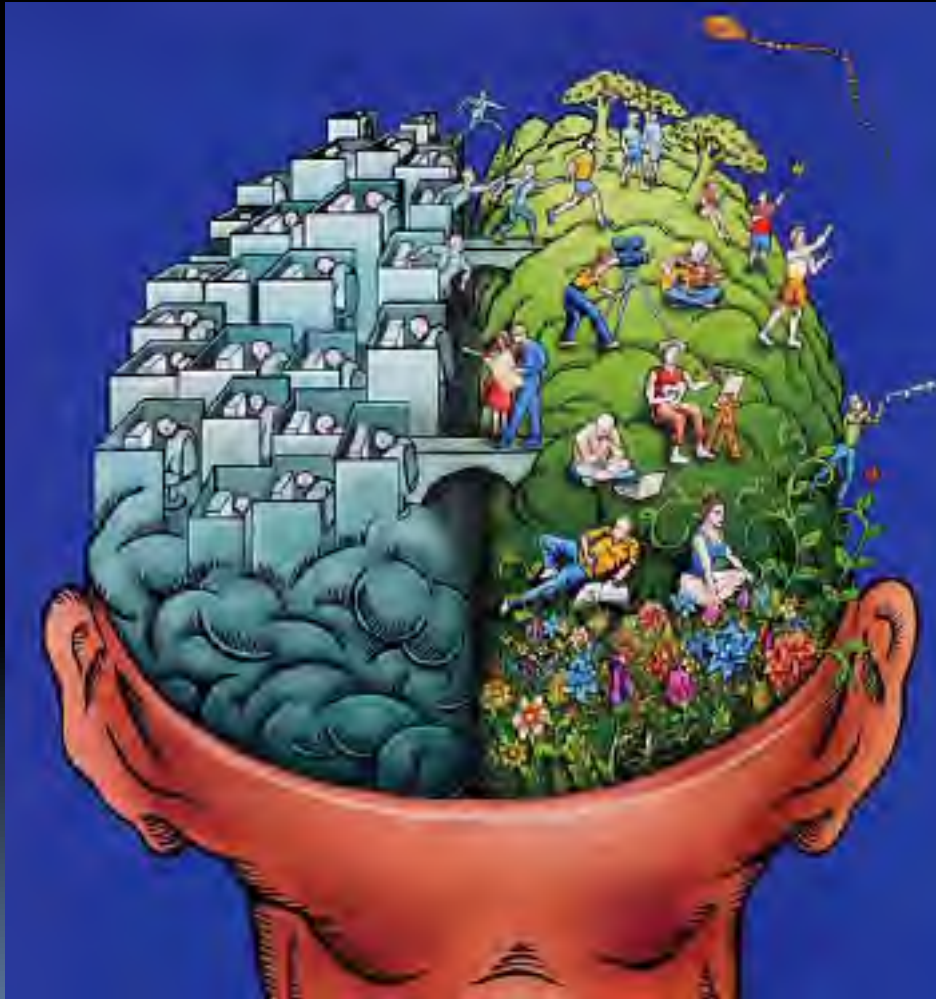
From the Book of Kells (800 CE)

Textile designs from the 1800's

1000 years later, dominant drawing styles appear to have come full circle

# Betty Edwards:

## Left and Right Brain Drawing 1980



Betty Edwards began her career teaching high school art at Venice High School in Los Angeles, CA

Her goal was to figure out how to instruct students to draw, particularly those who could not do so intuitively.

She championed the theory that most people used their left brains to draw – distracted by the idea of the object, as opposed to their right brains, which see the objects as an abstract compositions of lines, shapes, colors and values

The left side of the brain is very organized and logical. The Right side is creative and intuitive

# Betty Edwards:

## Left and Right Brain Drawing



"left brain" drawing by an 11<sup>th</sup> grade student before instruction



"right brain" drawing by an 11<sup>th</sup> student after instruction

Source:  
Ms Linder's  
archives of  
student work

# Betty Edwards:

## Left and Right Brain Drawing



Like the Academies, and technical approaches such as Walter Smith's, Edwards had her students copy master drawings (one of several different kinds of drawing exercises she developed)

Her approach differed in that she required them to do so with the original works turned upside down

In doing so, students were more likely to engage their right brains than their left brains and in-turn, create more accurate and faithful copies

Do you think this approach is better than copying a work right side up? Why?/Why not?