

GLOSSARY AND CREDITS

VOCABULARY

abbot	the superior of an abbey of monks
abstraction	a concept that is open to many interpretations due to its lack of specific or concrete information.
acanthus	a plant from the Mediterranean that is used to decorate paintings within manuscripts
adobe	sun-dried brick
aesthetics	the study of beauty or good taste; anything related to the study of beauty or good taste
altarpiece	a decorative piece such as a painting or sculpture that is used to ornament the church altar. It is the table where Mass is performed
ambiguity	open to two or more interpretations
ambulatory	an aisle circling the site of the choir or altar in a cathedral
amphora	vessel made for storing and transporting wine and foodstuffs
amulet	a small object that was worn to stave off evil and illnesses. It was also used to bring good luck and health
animated	full of life
apse	a large niche, semicircular or polygonal in shape and usually vaulted, protruding from the end wall of a building in a Christian Church; it contains the altar

aqueduct	a pipe or channel that carries water over a great distance
arabesque	a decorative piece that creates a sophisticated design by meshing simulated foliage
arcade	a line of arches and their supporting columns
aromatic	good-smelling
artifice	made by intention and not nature; skillful and clever, sometimes tricky
atmospheric perspective	sequentially using lighter colors for each region of the painting; this technique creates a sense of distance for objects that are distant in the painting
atrium	an enclosed area in the front of a house or building that allows the sunlight to permeate the space. Sometimes it can be open and sometimes covered by a skylight
axes	plural of axis, which means a straight line meeting certain conditions
axial	the positioning of a building that allow the doors to open from east to west so that it is aligned to the path of the sun
baldachin	a pillared canopy
baptistery	building used for baptismal rites and containing the baptismal font; sometimes merely a bay or chapel reserved for baptisms
barrel vault	an extension of the simple arch that forms a tunnel-like structure; a pipe or channel that carries water over a great distance
basilica	a public building for assemblies, rectangular in plan and with a columned aisle on each side
bitumen	a tar-like substance
caliphs	an Islamic supreme leader, considered a successor to Muhammad

calligraphic	using flowing, decorative lines
calligraphy	the use of line in a flowing, flamboyant manner
carravesque	in the style of Caravaggio
catacombs	underground burial sites
cella	a room inside an ancient or Roman or Greek temple where the statue of god is placed
chalices	a large cup used to hold the wine believed to become the blood of Christ in the ritual of the Catholic Mass
chiaroscuro	a technique that uses a contrast of bold and light colors
choir	the area of a church occupied by singers; the part of the chancel between sanctuary and nave
circus	a building for live entertainment including staged battles and trained animals
clerestory	a set of windows placed along the top of a wall
cloister	covered walk within a monastery or nunnery often looking onto a courtyard
codex	book composed of folded sheets sewn along one edge
codices	(plural of codex) — screen-fold books with paper made from deerskin or plant fiber
contour line	a perceived line that describes three-dimensional form
consul	roman magistrate, comparable with a prime minister or a president
contrapposto	a human pose captured in a painting or a sculpture in which the head and shoulders are turned in a different direction from the legs and hips
corbel	one stone is extended above another to form an archlike shape

cornices	crowning projections
crusaders	knights who went to the holy land from Europe on what they saw as a quest to free Jerusalem from Islam and to find holy relics
cuneiform script	writing typified by the use of wedge-shaped characters
curvilinear	consisting of or bounded by curved lines
deities	gods
devotional imagery	art work produced for the purposes of worship, prayer or religious instruction or inspiration
diffused	a light that spreads soft shadows (may be filtered through translucent material)
dynasties	families which maintained political power for more than one generation
dynasty	a ruling family that covers more than one generation
eclectic	made up of or combining elements from a variety of sources
egg-and-dart	figures in the shape of eggs alternating in pattern with another figure
Egyptologists	scientists who study the history of ancient Egypt
empiricism	the doctrine that says sense experience is the only source of knowledge
ethereal	of heaven or the spirit; characterized by unusual lightness and delicacy
expressionistic	from Expressionism, a style that often has an emotional dimension
filigree	delicate and intricate ornamentation, usually in gold or silver or other fine twisted wire
foreshortening	a technique used to create the illusion of an object receding into the background by making it large in front and smaller in the back;

	shortening an object to make it look as if it extends backwards into space
frescoes	paintings made on freshly spread moist lime plaster with water-based pigments
friezes	any sculpted or painted band in a building
frontality	facing forward
gabled	possessing a gable — a triangular section above a door or window
genre	generally means "kind" or "type"; this was a type of painting
glazes	thin, semi-transparent layers put over color
grotto	a small cave; an artificial cavern-like retreat
hieroglyphics	picture words
idolatrous	engaged in the worship of images or idols
incised	carved or engraved
indigenous	the original inhabitants of an area
intelligentsia	the intellectuals of a particular time and place
iridescent	having a play of lustrous rainbow colors
ka	spirit or soul
laity	in Christianity, members of a religious community who do not have the priestly responsibilities of ordained clergy
lancet	long, narrow window with pointed head
line	in art, a technique for defining shape, also used to create a sense of depth
lintels	the horizontal beam or crosspiece over a door or window that carries the weight of the structure above it
lucid	transparently clear; easily understandable

luminous	giving off light
luminosity	having the quality of light
lyrical	expressing deep emotion
lyricism	characterized by emotion, subjectivity, and imagination
macehead	polished spherical or solid oval stone with a cylindrical hollow right through for mounting the stone on a stick or shaft
martyria	shrines dedicated to those killed for their religion
masonry	structure built of stone or brick by a mason
mastabas	large, flat pieces made of mud-brick
mausoleum	a large burial chamber, usually above ground
medallion	circular panel of several pieces of glass leaded together
megalithic	description of a structure made of large, roughly hewn stones
metopes	panels on the Doric frieze of a Greek temple
mihrab	niche
monochromatic	consisting of one color
monoliths	a large single block or piece of stone
mummification	a technique for preserving bodies
myth	a story passed on through oral tradition that eventually is accepted as historical truth
mysticism	immediate consciousness of the transcendent or ultimate reality or God
nave	the central approach to the high altar. (from Latin <i>navis</i> meaning "ship" suggested by the keel shape of its vaulting)
niche	a recess in a wall meant to house a statue

nomadic	a trait of people who do not live in one place but rather travel around, hunting and gathering food where they can find it
ochre	a hydrated (containing water) iron oxide compound
oeuvre	(pronounced "uhvrr") — a work of art; the sum of the lifework of an artist, writer, or composer
oolitic limestone	sedimentary rock consisting of tiny spherical concentric grains
opaque	a screen that separates the nave and the choir in a church
optics	the branch of physics that studies the physical properties of light
opulence	rich showiness; overabundance
palettes	decorated flat pieces of stone or metal with a surface for cosmetics
patina	a dull surface that develops on a metal over time
patron	generally a wealthy person who pays an artist to create a work of art; throughout much of history artists could not have survived without "patronage"
patronage	a system whereby wealthy persons funded artists by commissioning artworks
pendentives	a triangular curved surface between two arches and beneath a dome
personification	giving human characteristics to something that is not human
perspective	a method of presenting an illusion of the three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface
pictographs	a picture representing a word or idea
pier	a support used in masonry that is larger than a column
pieta	picture or sculpture of Mary mourning with her dead son Jesus Christ across her lap
polychrome	many-colored

polyptych	characterized by four or more sections or panels
porphyry	an igneous rock distinguished by the a groundmass of minerals embedded with crystals
porticoes	porches or walkways with a roof supported by columns, often leading to the entrance of a building
print	a picture or design printed from an engraving
proportion	the relationship of one part of a person, building or object to another; for example the size of a statue's head in relationship to the rest of the body
qibla	the direction in which Muslims pray (facing towards the Kaaba, a holy place in Mecca)
rectilinear	characterized by straight lines
relief sculptures	pictures carved in such a way that the figures stand out from the background
reliquaries	containers or shrines for relics; these may be the physical remains of saints
republic	a political order whose head of state is not a king or queen; government elected by at least some portion of the citizens
riwaqs	arcades
rood screen	a screen that separates the nave and the choir in a church
sahn	an enclosed courtyard
salon	a gathering of people for the purpose of discussion
sarcophagus	an outer coffin made of stone; for royalty it might be made of gold or silver
satirize	to ridicule or mock

sensuous	appealing to the senses; taking delight in beauty
sfumato	(from the Italian for smoke) an imperceptible, subtle transition from light to dark, without any clear break or line
shaman	a person who communicates with the natural and supernatural worlds. Shamans use magic, predict futures, and communicate/control spiritual forces
stanze	rooms
stele	a large stone monument; plural is <i>stelae</i>
still lifes	arrangements of non-human objects in an artful manner
stoic	indifferent to pain or pleasure
stylized	using artistic forms and conventions to create effects; not natural or spontaneous
sublime	the quality of greatness or vast magnitude, whether physical, moral, intellectual, metaphysical, or artistic
surreal	dreamlike; resembling a dream
symbol	an object or word or gesture that represents something else
symmetrical	a mirror image (though not exact) balance
taper	a thin cylindrical shape that narrows at one end
terra cotta	a brownish-orange earthenware clay
tone	the feeling created by the picture
tracery	the bars of a Gothic window; these bars create a matrix or decorative pattern
transept	the north and south projections or "arms" of the cross
transverse	lying across; imagine lying a stick across the tracks
treatise	a written work on a particular subject

tribune	an upper story over an aisle, opening on to the nave; also called a gallery
triforium	passage with arcade
trilithons	a three-part construction of two monoliths topped by a lintel
trompe l'oeil	a painting that fools the eye
tufa	dark local limestone
tumulus	mound
twisted perspective	each part of the body is shown so that the image most easily represents the original
tympnum	a triangle-shaped decorative region that is located between an arch and the bar of a window
tyranny	dictatorship: a form of government in which the ruler is an absolute dictator (not restricted by a constitution or laws or opposition, and so on)
ushabti	small figures representing servants
value	relative darkness or lightness of a color
vellum	animal skin used for art and writing
viracocha	creator and ruler of all living things
virtuoso	performer of exceptional technical skill
voluptuous	having a large bosom and pleasing curves; having strong sexual appeal
votive	a gift of gratitude to a deity
zulla	a rough portico