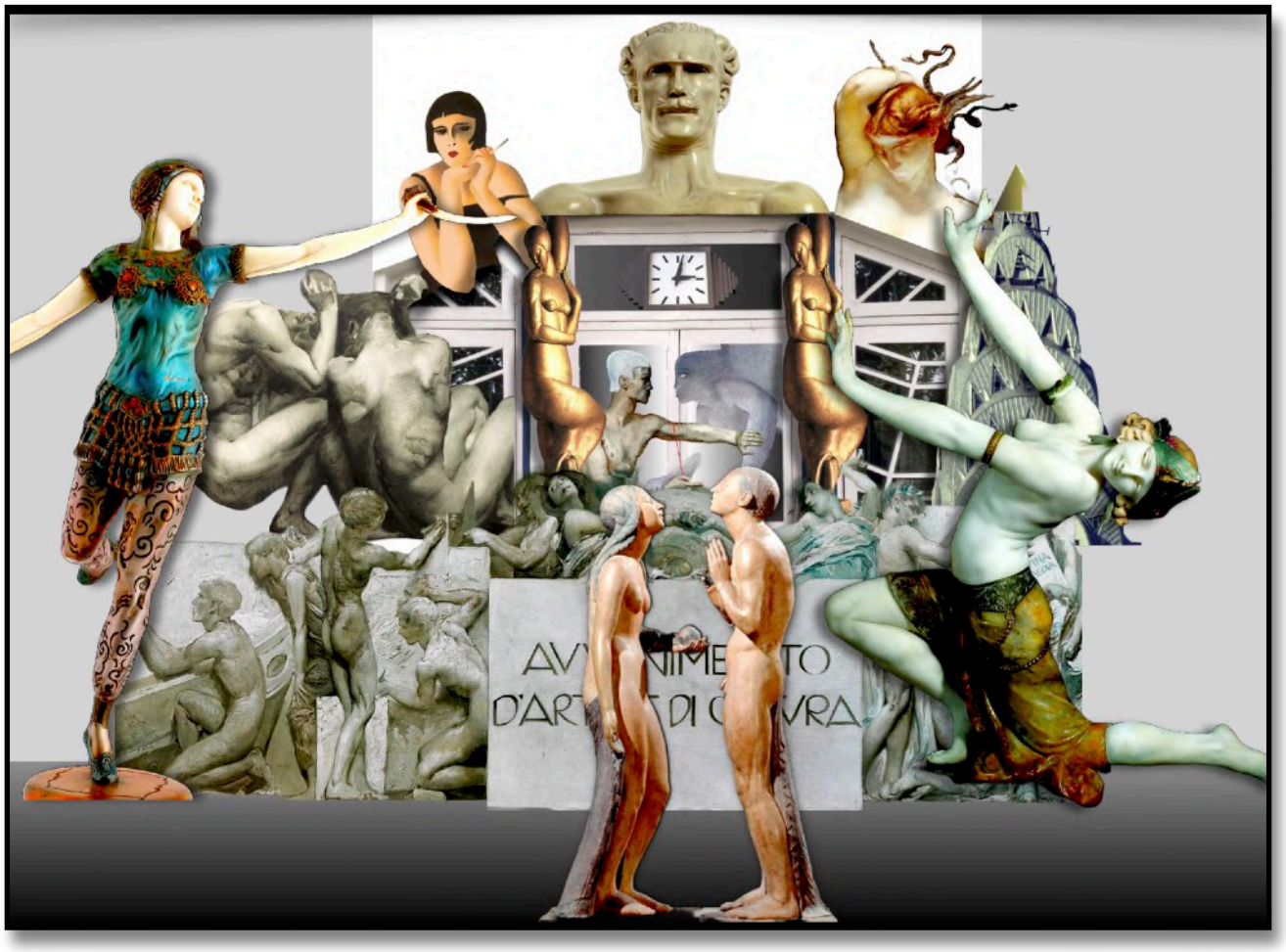


FREE THEME 2



1. ArtDéco

The Art Déco style manifests across the full spectrum of the visual arts: from architecture, painting, and sculpture, to the graphic and decorative arts.

The Art Déco style originated in 1930s Paris, but it influenced culture throughout the West. Art Déco works are streamlined, symmetrical, geometric, and consistently pleasing to the eye.

Although its proponents often paid homage to modernist influences like Cubism and Futurism, these references were indirect, as if to emphasize a process of formal simplification.



2. Artistic Flowers

In the collage, we have included two models wearing floral dresses. This is the portrait titled "Flora," the Roman goddess of flowers—an 1894 work by the British Pre-Raphaelite painter Evelyn De Morgan, who was clearly inspired by Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera*.

At the center of the collage, starting from the top, is an 1862 painting by the French artist Gustave Courbet. Below it, we find a work by the French artist Edgar Degas.
The year is 1865, and the artist depicts the wife of a close friend, believed by some to be Madame Paul Valpinçon; a painting now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



3. Black color

In order of appearance: on the left, shown in armor, is Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria from 1519, King of Spain from 1516, Sovereign Prince of the Netherlands, and Duke of Burgundy from 1506; also King of Naples, Sardinia, and Sicily), portrayed by Juan Pantoja de la Cruz in 1605.

Renaissance gentlemen preferred to dress in black, especially when sitting for a portrait, such as Lorenzo di Credi (far right of the collage), painted by Pietro Vannucci, known as Il Perugino, in 1488.

To his right is the "Old Man with a Gold Chain," a work dated 1631 by the Dutch master Rembrandt.



4. Brown color

The background of our collage is the Farnese Theater in Parma. Formerly used as an armory for exercises, it was converted into a performance hall in 1618 using unusual materials such as wood, straw, and painted plaster.

The smiling young woman was portrayed by Parmigianino in 1532, but her identity remains uncertain; she could be the poet Veronica Gambara, whom the artist had numerous opportunities to meet.

The identities are also uncertain for the two figures on either side of her: perhaps two men of letters, given that one of them is intent on writing, dead for centuries, as explicitly indicated by the animal skull.



5. Circus Xp

In 1868, the French artist Auguste Renoir painted the white-faced clown, the famous John Price, who entertained audiences by, among other things, playing the violin while standing on a wobbly chair.

The large teardrop face is "Pink Clown" by Mikuláš Galanda, a painter and illustrator among the pioneers and promoters of modern art in his country.

Most of Galanda's paintings from the 1930s—his so-called "Pink Period"—are works with a predominance of the color pink, expressing the Slovak artist's personal happiness.



6. Colorful Futurist

Futurism was the first Italian avant-garde movement of the twentieth century. Its primary center of influence was Milan, largely thanks to the dedication of the poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the soul and ideologue of the movement.
It was he who published the Futurist Manifesto in 1909 in the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*.

Central to the vision of Futurist artists was the exaltation of the modern world and all its expressions: speed, machinery, and urban industrialization.
More broadly, Futurism reflected an optimistic and positive approach toward progress that permeated the first two decades of the century.



7. Craquelé of Times gone by

Craquelé is the French name for a network of fine cracks that form over time on oil paintings.

Our collage features a few examples:
At the center is the *Madonna of St. Luke*, an icon saved from iconoclastic fury, and at the bottom, almost hidden by the others, is the famous *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer, dated 1665.

Also by Vermeer is the portrait of the young woman closing the composition on the right.
Meanwhile, the young couple exchanging gazes is the work of Georges de La Tour, a 17th-century Caravaggesque painter.



8. Dominant Blue

We begin the description with "Man in a Blue Smock" by Paul Cézanne; starting in 1887, the French artist began painting figures with the same intensity he had developed in his landscapes and still lifes.
His work served as the bridge between late 19th-century Impressionism and the new artistic exploration of the early 20th century, Cubism. As Pablo Picasso acknowledged: "Cézanne is the father of us all."

Returning to the collage, the figure depicted in the blue circle is Henry FitzRoy, Duke of Richmond—this is not a work by Cézanne, but a free composition of the collage using blue-colored elements. Also dressed in blue is the guard with the binoculars, taken from a 1941 American poster.

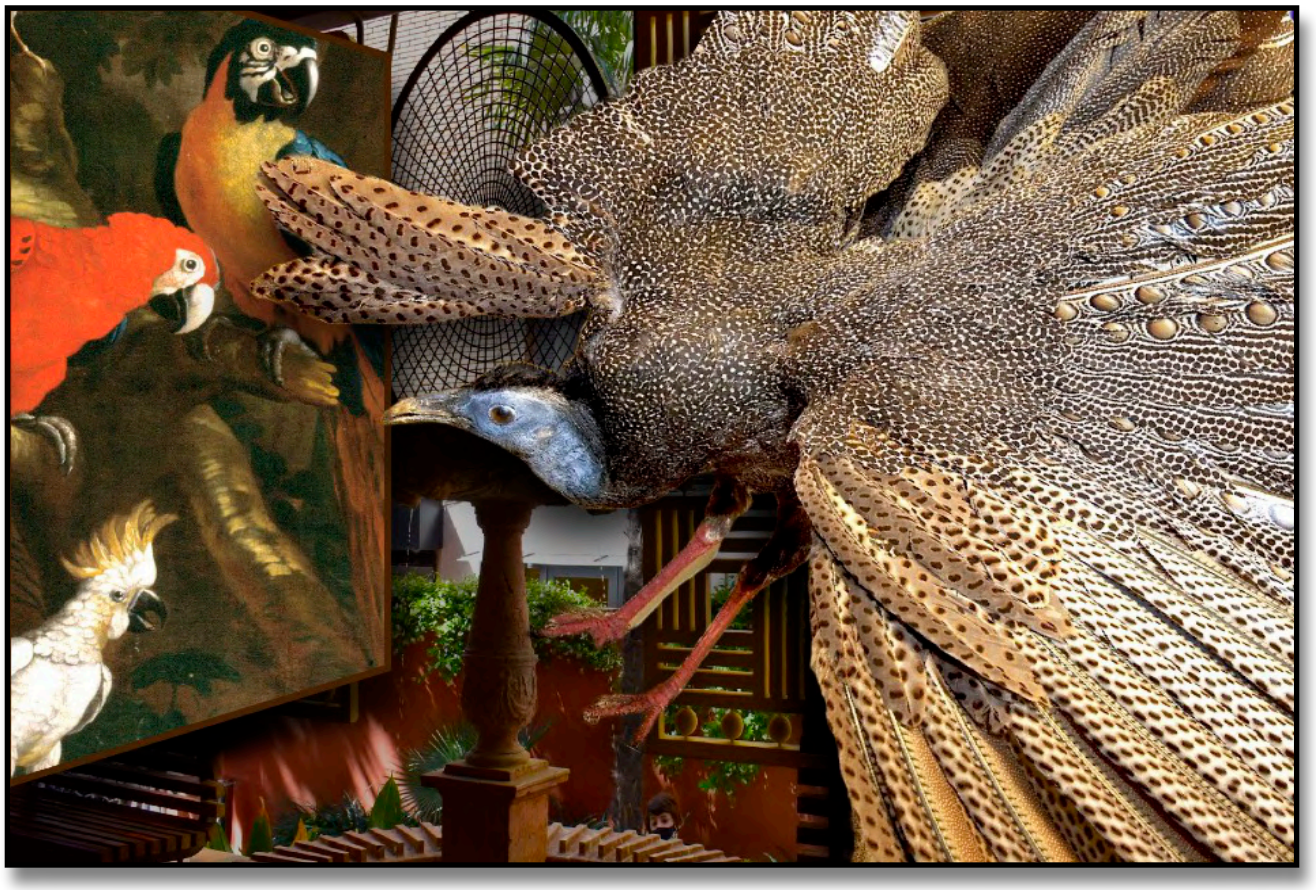


9. Eternal Guernica

We wanted to reinterpret *Guernica*, Picasso's famous painting inspired by the tragic bombing of the Basque town.

Here are the figures in the collage: from the left, a Madonna holds her dead son in her hands—a bull symbolizing violence and brutality—a frightened horse—a man raises his hands while another thrusts a fist toward the sky; the face in the right corner, with closed eyes, symbolizes the sleep of reason.

The scene is illuminated by the central chandelier, the only remaining domestic object, while in the background, soldiers march indifferently, or perhaps resignedly.



10. Evasion

Large parrots are intelligent, incredibly lively, and like large ravens, they are the only birds to know that form of suffering that also torments humans in captivity: boredom.

The three parrots on the left were painted by Jakob Bogdani in 1710. The Hungarian-British painter fascinated the world with his still lifes and paintings of exotic birds.

In 1688, Bogdani moved to London, where his expertise in still lifes and bird paintings earned him a prominent position at the court of Queen Anne. During this period, several of his masterpieces became part of the Royal Collection.



11. Free Composition

This collage brings together three artists famous for their floral paintings. On the left is Lise Cloquet, a 19th-century French botanical painter, with a splendid cream-colored chrysanthemum—a flower common today, but exotic back then.

In the center are four splendid red flowers (an Admiral Vernon and three *Lilium martagon*) painted by Georg Dionysius Ehret, an 18th-century German painter and draftsman who also specialized in botanical illustrations.

Finally, in the bottom right is a small branch with three magnolias, an 1889 work by Martin Johnson Heade. The American painter is considered a Romantic, dedicating himself primarily to depictions of tropical flowers and birds.



12. Frida's Flowers

Frida Kahlo used to say she painted flowers so they wouldn't die. All the ones you see in the foreground are hers.

In the upper black background, behind Frida's flowers, we included several flowers gathered by George Marr, which carry a touching story. These flowers were collected by George, a soldier stationed in Salonika during World War I.
When he passed away, his daughter Georgeann found them pressed between the pages of the diary her father had kept over the years.

"Thinking of him walking among those wildflowers, such a sweet and gentle man, is my fondest memory of him."



13. Gold Incense and Myrrh

In the Christian tradition, on January 6th—celebrated today as Epiphany—it is said that the Magi brought three gifts to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Giving good luck charms to celebrate a newborn is a widespread tradition; gifts are also offered to the mother as a gesture of gratitude and celebration for the new birth.

In our collage, to represent a mother, we chose the portrait of Mrs. Una Falkiner, seated on the right, a famous beauty of her time painted by the Australian artist Violet Teague, a renowned fashionable portrait painter of the early twentieth century.



14. Green color

We have chosen the following details: *Woman with a Dog*, portrayed by the Cremonese painter Bernardino Campi in 1567, wearing an elegant green-decorated dress embroidered with gold thread.

The hanging painting is *Green Wheatfield*, a lesser-known 1889 work by Vincent van Gogh; "The painting is from an experimental phase during which Van Gogh aimed to reproduce the natural beauty of the landscape in the most spontaneous way possible" (pociopocio.org).

Still Life with a Basket of Fruit is by the Flemish painter Cornelis de Heem, dated 1654.

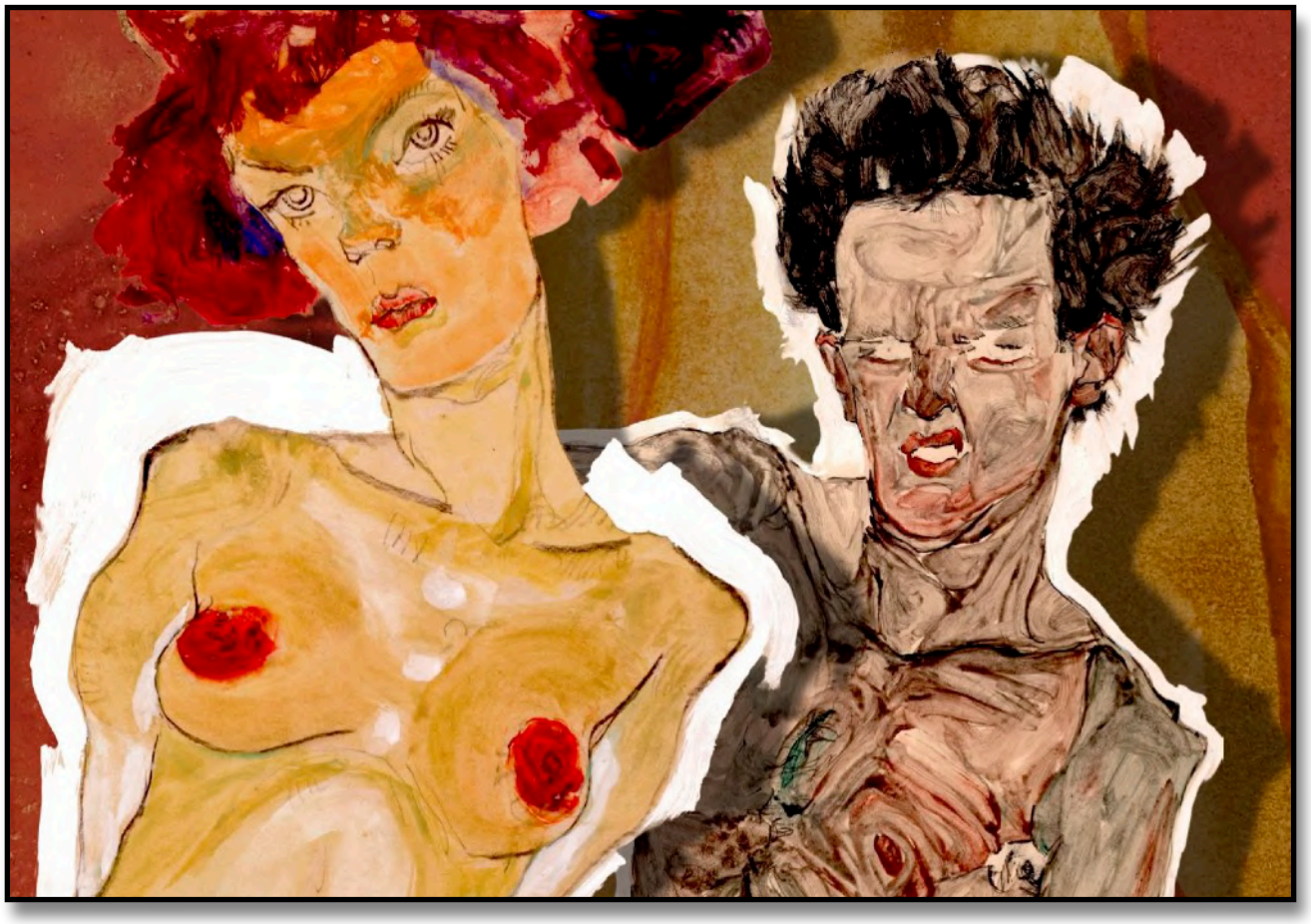


15. Horror Style

Over the centuries, art has also helped shape the imagination and iconography of the occult underworld and the Underworld itself, compelling humanity to confront its most ancestral fears.

Beginning in the Middle Ages, terrifying images of damned souls subjected to excruciating tortures served to condition human behavior.

Toward the final decades of the eighteenth century, England led the development of these themes with the Gothic novel, prized precisely for its dark atmosphere, eerie characters, mysterious settings, and nefarious tales of demons and other infernal monsters.



16. Impotence Feel

Egon Schiele's obsession with eroticism was the central theme of his brief yet intense artistic career; the artist was among the leading figures of early 20th-century Austrian Expressionism.

For Schiele, eroticism was a means to explore the tormented unconscious and the deepest truth of the individual, transforming the sexual act not into a vital dynamic, but into the suffering and fragility of the human condition.

Schiele's eroticism is the brutal exposure of the soul through the flesh, a scream of despair, and an affront to the bourgeois conventions of the Vienna of his time.



17. In Vincent's Greenhouse

Vincent van Gogh admired those who painted flowers far more than other subjects. Following this approach, we too have placed flowers in the foreground relative to the portraits, centered around Joseph Roulin, the postman of Arles.

Van Gogh arrived in the Provençal town in February 1888, and the two men became friends; for the artist, who was constantly tormented by a fragile mental balance, the postman of Arles brought great comfort. His physical appearance was equally reassuring: a thick beard, a round face, and, according to Vincent, a resemblance to Socrates.
For this reason, he expressed immense tranquility and wisdom; furthermore, he held socialist political beliefs and was a devoted family man.



Van Gogh wrote about his friend to his brother Theo, describing the postman Roulin as a good person; indeed, Roulin harbored an almost paternal feeling toward Vincent, and when the artist cut off part of his left ear, it was Roulin who took him to the hospital and cared for him in the following days.

In the summer of 2015, the Metropolitan Museum of New York organized a very special exhibition on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of Vincent van Gogh's death:
“Van Gogh: Irises and Roses," a series of floral-themed paintings created by the artist during the final years of his deeply troubled and unfortunate life.



18. Malatesta's dreams

Sigismondo Malatesta (1417–1468) was one of the most daring Italian condottieri of his time and became Lord of Rimini.

He invited to his court some of the most qualified and cutting-edge architects and painters of the artistic scene of those years, from Filippo Brunelleschi to Piero della Francesca.

Piero painted the portrait of Sigismondo to celebrate his knighthood in 1450; this is the portrait we see in the foreground, surrounded by various objects—futuristic for their time—that symbolize the dreams and ghosts of a great man: romantic and violent, dynamic and visionary, constantly looking toward the future.



19. Men's Hats

Starting in 1500, the hat was transformed from a simple headpiece into a major accessory in men's fashion.
During the French Revolution, it appeared on people's heads in the shape of a bicorne, like the one worn by the soldier in the left foreground.

The golden age of the hat was the 19th century, when the top hat was invented—a highly elegant yet fairly cumbersome headpiece. As a result, a foldable version was created: the "gibus," which could be flattened to take up very little space.

Since then, taking off one's hat when entering an indoor space in the presence of others has been a sign of respect and good manners.



In the 20th century, no man left the house without a hat; the bourgeoisie favored the "Fedora" or the "Borsalino," made of felt with a crease along the crown, while the working class wore the "beret" or the "bowler hat"—the latter immortalized by Charlie Chaplin's comedies.

The modern baseball cap dates back to 1940 and has since been adopted by younger generations.

After World War II, people began going out without hats as well, though the accessory never ceased to be used, maintaining its original protective function against the cold or the summer sun.



20. Moments of Devotion

Devotion is a profound passion, a commitment to a bond one needs in order to find inspiration and meaning; one can be devoted to a person, a god, a philosophy, a religion, or an ideology.

"Being capable of devotion is demanding because it requires us to reckon with our fragility and our capacity for gratitude, in order to choose who or what to make divine in our eyes; this generates respect, attentiveness, commitment, and loyalty within us." (Gian Maria Zapelli)

There is also the possibility that, for some, the need for devotion serves as a necessary refuge in a life devoid of dreams.



21. Orange color

Orange is a secondary color, born from the fusion of the energy of red and the optimism of yellow. Here are its key characteristics:

Energy and vitality: It conveys enthusiasm, dynamism, and a sense of activity. It is a stimulating color that invites movement and action.

Creativity and originality: It is associated with imagination, innovation, and drive. It stimulates the mind and encourages new ideas.

Warmth and sociability: It is welcoming, friendly, and promotes communication. It evokes feelings of comfort, joy, and conviviality.

Positivity and optimism: Being bright and cheerful, orange tends to lift the mood and foster a positive outlook.

Nature and warmth: It is the color of citrus fruits and sunsets.



22. Reading Group

The term "public reading" can also refer to the practice of reading aloud (distinct from an author reading their own work, or an actor performing a text)—a practice that is finding an increasing amount of space within book clubs.

During these meetings, specific passages are read aloud to analyze them better, appreciate the author's style, or simply evoke an emotion.

Reading aloud thus becomes a tool for discussion, creating an even more intense moment of reflection and sharing.



23. Real Estate Speculation

Often masked under reassuring terms such as "urban renewal" or "regeneration," this phenomenon sees old working-class neighborhoods transformed into residential enclaves for the affluent.

The neighborhood loses its history, its social fabric, and its soul. It becomes an empty shell, a standardized "showcase" identical to countless other "trendy" neighborhoods around the world, from Berlin to New York.

Real estate speculation does not solve the problems of working-class neighborhoods; it simply displaces them outside the city, into increasingly distant and marginalized suburbs.



24. Red color

Red is the first true color used by humanity after black and white, and it holds a powerful symbolic trajectory in art history:

Ancient Egypt: Associated with life, but also with danger.
Roman Empire: Consecrated as the color of leadership. Purple-red (extracted from mollusks and extremely expensive) was reserved for emperors and senators, serving as a symbol of power.
Middle Ages: It was the color of the blood of Christ and the martyrs (sacrifice and charity), but also of the Devil, Hell, and sin (lust).
Renaissance: A symbol of luxury and social status. Artists like Titian used red to depict wealth and authority.
Modern and Contemporary Era: It breaks free from symbolic constraints to become pure expression.



25. Scandalous Painting

Unlike the female nude, which causes scandal according to prevailing morality, the male nude challenges the concept of masculinity and patriarchal power.

Society has historically treated the nudity of the two sexes differently. While female nudity has long been an object of desire, male nudity has often been associated with embarrassment or taboos.

The representation of the male nude has raised issues linked to homosexuality, viewed as transgressive in many eras. Artists who explored the male body (such as Egon Schiele) challenged these norms, paying a personal price through the ostracism of many.



26. The Rules of the Game

The history of chess is a fascinating journey through time and geography—a game that has spanned centuries and continents, profoundly and enduringly influencing cultures and civilizations.

With at least 1,500 years of history, chess is far more than a simple pastime; it is a reflection of strategy, intellect, and social dynamics as we know them today.

"Chess is a matter of timing. It's not enough to play the right move, you must also play it at the right time. Knowing how to restrain oneself is one of the hardest things for a chess player to learn." (Bobby Fischer)



27. Tourists in Tivoli

Our collage has taken as the symbol of Tivoli, a small town near Rome, the remains of a small round temple dating back to the 1st century BC, likely dedicated to Vesta, goddess of the hearth.

This site has always been the subject most frequently depicted by artists who came to Tivoli during the Grand Tour.

"In recent days I went to Tivoli, where I admired one of the supreme visions offered by nature.
Those waterfalls, together with the ruins and the whole landscape, are among the things whose knowledge profoundly enriches us." (Johann Wolfgang Goethe)



28. White color

White is the first of all colors, representing freedom, peace, purification, and light. The sensations evoked by the color white suggest purity, encouraging order and mental clarity.

The white of marble is present in the sculpture of the sweet *Madonna and Child*, a work by Donatello dating to 1420, as well as in the bust of a young woman sculpted by Andrea del Verrocchio, dating back to 1485. White, too, are the robes of the friars from the monastery portrayed by the Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán in 1634.

“White is a color. It is not a mere absence of color; it is something bright and affirmative, as fierce as red, as definite as black." (Gilbert Keith Chesterton)



29. Allegorical Justice

The allegory of Justice traditionally represents one of the four cardinal virtues and, throughout art history, has been codified through precise, universal symbols:

a female figure equipped with a scale (symbolizing fairness and deliberation), a sword (emblem of punitive power and the force of the law), and, starting from the High Renaissance, a blindfold (guaranteeing absolute impartiality).

However, art history includes several famous pictorial interpretations that enrich or vary this complex iconography.



30. Classical Music Ouiz

This collage is designed to be admired, but it can also be used as a quiz for your guests. The game consists of guessing the names of the figures portrayed (all important names in the history of classical music and opera) and, even more challenging, who the artists are who painted them.

Here are the answers:



The man with the wig is Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), a German composer universally considered the greatest musician of the Baroque period; portrayed by Elias Haußmann in 1748.



To the left of Bach appears the portrait of Gaetano Pugnani (1731–1798), an Italian violinist and composer, and one of the finest violinists of the 18th century. The same cannot be said of the artist who painted him: he has fallen into obscurity, but given the uncertain proportions of the musician's body, he cannot be considered a skilled painter.



Above Bach and Pugnani is the portrait of the Hungarian Joseph Joachim (1831–1907). A violinist, conductor, and composer, Joachim was one of the most prominent figures in the music scene of his era. In 1870, the German artist Eduard Bendemann painted the musician at the height of his success.



At the top center is the famous portrait of one of the greatest composers of all time: the German Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), a composer, pianist, and conductor who was the last prominent representative of Viennese Classicism. His portrait, which became so popular, is the work of the German artist Joseph Karl Stieler.



Below Ludwig is the small caricature portrait of Franz Liszt, created in 1886 by Leslie Ward. Liszt, a Hungarian Romantic composer, pianist, conductor, and organist, was one of the greatest piano virtuosos of all time. Leslie Ward was the most famous among the illustrators who worked for *Vanity Fair* magazine.



The woman with the violin under her arm is Isolde Marie Menges (1893–1976) in a 1929 painting by James Barraclough, an English artist who specialized in commissioned portraits. Isolde Menges was the finest English violinist of the 20th century. Fake news during World War I unsuccessfully attempted to defame her, accusing her of being a German spy.

