

## *Year Course resource*

# High Renaissance to Baroque:1500–1720

## Glossary

### **All'antica**

Meaning 'after the antique' and used to describe decoration such as foliage scrolls or grotesque ornament, which derives from classical examples. In 16th century England, it was referred to as 'antick work'.

### **Boule**

The name for a type of marquetry perfected by André-Charles Boulle in late 17th century France. It consists of patterns cut into thin layers of brass and tortoiseshell, used as a veneer on furniture such as tables, desks, clocks and armoires.

### **Cabinet**

This word has two meanings. It can refer to a room, a small private study usually set beyond the owner's bedroom, with his or her most precious possessions. Or it can refer to a showy piece of furniture, particularly popular in the 17th century, with the finest examples made in Augsburg and Paris. Some were veneered in ebony, others in tortoiseshell, some were decorated with paintings or pietra dura panels. The upper part contained many small drawers, where private papers and valuables could be stored.

### **Canopy of state**

Usually made of textiles such as brocade or damask, it forms a roof over a throne or chair of state, and marks out the seat of the most prominent person in a room. See also cloth of honour.

### **Cartoon**

A full-scale design, usually drawn on paper. This is then used to transfer the design to another medium, such as a wall-painting or a tapestry.

### **Cassone**

A gessoed, carved, painted and gilded chest, which usually formed part of a girl's dowry in Italy.

### **Catalogue raisonné**

A book containing the complete works of an artist. Each entry has details of that picture, with its subject matter, provenance, size and condition.

### **Chiaroscuro**

Meaning literally 'lightdark' and used to describe the very strong contrasts between light and dark areas in paintings. Used particularly in Baroque painting.

### **Cloth of honour**

A length of rich material which is hung behind a throne or chair of state, to mark out the most important seat in the room. It can also be seen in many paintings of the Virgin and Child. See also canopy of state.

### **Contrapposto**

An asymmetrical pose, usually with the hips tilted one way, and the shoulders another. Much used in the 16thC to animate a sculpted figure.

### **Delft**

This is similar to Italian Maiolica and French faience, but made in the Netherlands, particularly in the town of Delft. Large quantities were exported to England, and English imitations are also called delft - but without the capital letter.

### **Diptych**

A painting or sculpture with two parts of equal size, usually hinged so that it can be closed.

### **Elevation**

A design for or drawing of a building, in which only one side is shown and there is no perspective.

### **Enamel**

An ancient technique which uses a glassy substance, coloured and baked at high temperatures. It can be used to decorate metalwork, such as jewellery or small boxes. Limoges enamels were especially prized in the 15th and 16th centuries.

### **Engraving**

A method of reproducing words or pictures by cutting them into a metal plate, usually copper. When inked, the ink is pressed into the incisions and the surface of the plate wiped clean, so when pressed onto paper the lines are printed. See also etching.

### **Etching**

The copper plate is covered with a resin, then the artist draws onto this soft surface. It is then given a coat of acid, which eats into the plate where it is not protected by the resin. This can then be inked and printed like an engraving; but it is freer technique, much favoured by 17thC artists such as Rembrandt.

### **Faience**

This is the French name (from the Italian town of Faenza) for the earthenware made in France in the same manner as maiolica.

### **Figura serpentinata**

Literally meaning 'serpentine figure'. It refers to a type of composition in which the human form is twisted in movement, making a composition which can be viewed from all sides.

### **Gesso**

Gypsum, a form of chalk, mixed to a paste with animal glue and applied to a wooden surface to provide a smooth layer to which painting and gilding can be applied. It can also be carved.

### **Grisaille**

A painting using only various shades of grey; usually either a preliminary sketch, or painted to resemble relief sculpture.

### **Grotesque**

A type of ornament which derives from the antique. Roman buildings which were rediscovered were of course underground, and were therefore called grotte or caves; the delicate foliage designs in frescoes and plasterwork found in them were therefore called grottesche.

### **Humanism**

The study of classical texts during the Renaissance, giving rise to an increased influence of classical philosophy and ideas on art, scientific enquiry and society. It is not to be confused with the 19th century meaning of the term, when humanism is seen in opposition to religion.

### **Incunabula**

The earliest printed books, those produced before 1501.

### **Japanning**

A form of decoration on furniture, clock cases and boxes, etc, imitating the effect of lacquer. It often has a black background and oriental motifs.

### **Kunstkammer**

Literally 'art chamber'. A German word used from the 16th century to describe a room or rooms containing a collection which might comprise small paintings, sculptures and metalwork, as well as prints and drawings, scientific instruments and exotic objects. These collections derive from the medieval Schatzkammern or treasuries and later evolve into the modern concept of the museum. They frequently contained objects which combined naturalia (or natural history) and artificialia (man-made) such as a coconut shell mounted in silver. One of the most celebrated to survive is the Green Vaults in Dresden. By 1565 a separate category of Wunderkammer or chamber of wonders had been established.

### **Lacquer**

A product of the lac tree which is made into a hard varnish and can be coloured black, red or green. When many coats are applied to a wooden carcase, the result is a very durable shiny finish which can be incised or decorated. Lacquer was a prized import from the Far East.

### **Maiolica**

The Italian name for a type of earthenware with a lead glaze, opacified with oxide of tin. The glaze makes it impermeable. It was used for everyday dishes, bowls, jugs etc, as well as for large decorative pieces, often specially commissioned. The main centres of production in the 16th century were Deruta, Gubbio, Faenza, Castel Durante and Urbino.

### **Marquetry**

A veneer of wood cut into geometric or floral patterns. By using different colours of woods, with ivory or horn, naturalistic effects could be reproduced. It was mainly applied to case furniture such as commodes and tables. See also Boulle.

### **Mezzotint**

Another type of engraving, developed in the mid-17th century by Prince Rupert of the Rhine and written about by John Evelyn. The copper plate was first roughened all over, so that shadows become deeper and more textured. It was particularly effective as a method of reproducing the paint effects of portraits.

### **Miniature**

A very small portrait, usually painted on card or vellum in gouache. They were often framed in precious materials, and given covers like a locket. Some were worn as jewellery, others were kept in a cabinet, as a private object to be shown only to a select few.

### **Modello**

A stage in the design process for a piece of sculpture. Small-scale models are made in clay, in order to work out the final form, and some have been preserved. It is also applied to a preliminary stage of painting.

### **Perspective**

The illusion of spatial extension into depth. It can be either one point perspective (where the image is focused on a single spot on the horizon line) or aerial perspective (where it is arranged in receding planes of colour).

### **Pietra dura**

A method of inlaying coloured marbles or semi-precious stones into a stone base, often in geometric or flower patterns. The technique was developed in Florence, where the Grand Ducal workshops specialised in producing table tops, cabinets or church furnishings.

### **Pigment**

Coloured powder created by grinding naturally occurring substances by hand. Mixed with egg, this becomes tempera; mixed with oil, it becomes oil paint. (No pots or tubes of paint made from chemically created substances were available from shops until the 19th century).

### **Print techniques**

See engraving, etching and woodcut.

### **Provenance**

The history of the ownership of an object or work of art, often very important for establishing authenticity.

### **Reredos**

The painting or sculpture which decorates the space above or just behind the altar of a church or chapel.

### **Section**

A drawing of a building, in which it is apparently sliced through to show the interior arrangement.

### **Strapwork**

A type of ornament made up of interlaced bands, especially popular from the mid-16th to mid-17th century.

### **Support**

The surface on which a picture is painted. Panels made of poplar were commonly used in Italy; in Northern Europe oak panels were used. Canvas became increasingly common; and some paintings were on linen (though these have not lasted as well as canvas, and few survive).

### **Tapestry**

A material woven on a loom, usually made of woollen threads, but can also include silk, or silver or gold metal thread. The main centres of production were in Arras, Tournai and Brussels, although some were made in England, France and Italy. The designs were often made by leading artists, and the manufacture carried out by highly skilled craftsmen. It was used mainly as an expensive wall hanging, which could be stored when not in use.

### **Triptych**

Paintings or sculptures in three parts. It usually applies to an altarpiece; the two outer panels can be closed over the central one, and opened on special occasions.

### **Virtuoso**

One who is interested and knowledgeable in the arts and sciences. A term used particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries.

### **Wall painting**

This could be of several types. True fresco is paint applied to damp fresh plaster; fresco a secco is paint applied to dry plaster. Later, oil paint was applied to dry plaster (e.g. in late 17th century England and France).

### **Woodcut**

A method of reproducing text and pictures by cutting into a wood block. When inked and pressed onto paper, the cut-away areas remain white, while the inked areas transfer to the paper.