

Modernism

The birth of modernism and [modern](#) art can be traced to the Industrial Revolution. This period of rapid changes in manufacturing, transportation, and technology began around the mid-18th century and lasted through the 19th century, profoundly affecting the social, economic, and [cultural](#) conditions of life in Western Europe, North America, and eventually the world. New forms of transportation, including the railroad, the steam engine, and the subway, changed the way people lived, worked, and traveled, expanding their worldview and access to new ideas. As urban centers prospered, workers flocked to cities for industrial jobs and urban populations boomed.

Before the 19th century, artists were most often [commissioned](#) to make artwork by wealthy patrons or institutions like the church. Much of this art depicted religious or mythological [scenes](#) that told stories intended to instruct the viewer. During the 19th century, many artists started to make art based in their own, personal experiences and about topics that they chose. With the publication of psychologist Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and the popularization of the idea of a [subconscious](#) mind, many artists began exploring dreams, [symbolism](#), and personal [iconography](#) as avenues for the depiction of their subjective experiences. Challenging the notion that art must realistically depict the world, some artists experimented with the expressive use of [color](#), non-traditional [materials](#), and new [techniques](#) and [mediums](#). Among these new mediums was photography, whose invention in 1839 offered radical possibilities for depicting and interpreting the world.

MoMA collects work made after 1880, when the atmosphere was ripe for [avant-garde](#) artists to take their work in new, surprising, and modern directions.

Related Artists: [Eugène Atget](#), [Hippolyte Blancard](#), [Paul Cézanne](#), [Salvador Dalí](#), [Max Ernst](#), [Paul Gauguin](#), [Vincent van Gogh](#), [Hector Guimard](#), [Vasily Kandinsky](#), [Raoul François Larche](#), [Jacques-Henri Lartique](#), [Fernand Léger](#), [Henri Matisse](#), [Joan Miró](#), [Joan Miró](#), [Paula Modersohn-Becker](#), [Edvard Munch](#), [Pablo Picasso](#), [Henri Rousseau](#), [Georges-Pierre Seurat](#), [William J. Shew](#), [Paul Strand](#), [Charles Sheeler](#), [Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec](#), [Édouard Vuillard](#)

Museum of Modern Art

Pictorialism

“Pictorialism,” as a loosely constituted, international movement advocating photography’s assimilation into the traditional fine arts, succeeded to the extent that it fostered widespread acceptance of the medium as “art” prior to World War I, but failed in the post-War period as its aesthetic agenda was condemned as antimodernist, agrarian, bourgeois, and imitative of outmoded, idealizing paintings. This two-day international symposium reconsiders and complicates the stylistic goals, methods, influences, politics, and social networks of American photographers who identified as “pictorialists” and yet produced works ranging from book and magazine illustrations, commercial portraits, fashion photos to Salon prints, and from sharp-focus, silver bromides to atmospheric, hand-manipulated multiple-gums.

Princeton Symposium 2017