

Art in the Age of Revolution and Reaction

European Art
1800–1880

Sweeping historical events shaped the character of European art of the 1800s, beginning with the Napoleonic wars, and continuing through the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The unification of Italy in 1861 and Germany in 1871, along with expansion of the British and Russian Empires, were accompanied by rising nationalism and waves of counter-revolutionary reaction. As the industrial revolution brought tremendous wealth, the European powers fought to control trade and colonies across the globe.

The romantic idea of overthrowing tyrannical oppression through violent uprisings first unleashed by the American and French Revolutions fired the imaginations of poets and artists. French painter Eugène Delacroix, like the British poet Lord Byron, became an ardent supporter of the Greeks during their war for independence (1821–29) against the Ottoman Empire. Many Europeans regarded the Greek uprising as an effort to reclaim the birthplace of democracy for Western civilization. The war even influenced French fashion, as reflected in the man wearing a black velvet suit in the exotic *à la Grec* mode in Hippolyte-Jean Flandrin's portrait of two brothers (to the right).



Hippolyte-Jean Flandrin. *René-Charles Dassy and His Brother Jean-Baptiste-Claude Amédé Dassy*, 1850. Oil on canvas. Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund 2000.17



Francisco de Goya. *The Disasters of War: And There Is No Remedy*, 1810–20. Etching, drypoint and engraving. Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund 1987.56



Eugène Delacroix. *Greek Cavalry Men Resting in a Forest*, 1858. Oil on canvas. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Wade 1916.1032

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Violent revolutions again swept across Europe in 1848. Economic depression, unemployment, and famine led to the overthrow of the restored French monarchy of Louis-Philippe and its replacement by the Second Republic (1848-52).

The establishment of European colonies in North Africa and the Middle East ignited popular fascination with these seemingly distant and alien cultures. Responding to rising interest in such subjects, many artists devoted themselves to “Orientalist” themes featuring exotic animals, desert landscapes, and harem slaves playing lutes and smoking hookah pipes. French artists Jean LeComte du Nouÿ and Jean-Léon Gérôme were among the leading painters of Orientalist themes.



Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Lion on the Watch*, about 1885. Oil on wood panel. Gift of Mrs. R. W. Gehring in memory of her husband, F. W. Gehring 1945.25

Honoré Daumier. *Rue Transnonain, 15 April 1834*, 1834. Lithograph. Gift of Ralph King 1924.809



Jean Lecomte du Nouÿ. *Eunuch's Dream*, 1874. Oil on wood. Seventy-fifth anniversary gift of Mrs. Noah L. Butkin 1991.173