

Volume 8, Issue 1 (2021) 01-11

[www.prosoc.eu](http://www.prosoc.eu)

Selected Paper of 9th World Conference on Design and Arts (WCDA 2020) Nov 29 - Dec 1, 2020, National Kapodistrian University of Athens  
(ONLINE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE)

## A study of landscape painting development – Past, present and future perspectives

**Zainab Salim Aqil Alhadi Baomar**, Interior Design Department, Oman College of Management & Technology, Muscat, Oman

**Reham Sanad\***, Interior Design Department, Oman College of Management & Technology, Oman, Muscat

### Suggested Citation:

Baomar, Z. S. A. A., & Sanad R. (2021). A study of landscape painting development – Past, present and future perspectives. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. [Online]. 8(1), pp 01-11. Available from: [www.prosoc.eu](http://www.prosoc.eu)

Received from December 25, 2020; revised from February 02, 2021; accepted from March 11, 2021, 2021.  
Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof.Dr. Ayse Cakir Ilhan, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey.  
©2021 Birlesik Dunya Yenilik Arastirma ve Yayıncılık Merkezi. All rights reserved.

### Abstract

This study is focused on landscape paintings' characteristics throughout history. It starts with primitive cave paintings passed through the ancient civilisations, then followed by the main art movements and styles and ends with the contemporary style landscape paintings. Future prospects and expectations for landscape representations were also considered. It was found that landscape representation has been the focus for most artists because of its link to their normal lives. In the primitive caves, illustrations of plants and animals were found covering caves' walls. Landscape backgrounds were used in the ancient Egyptian civilisation and lost its significance in the Greece style to reappear with the Roman artists with special concern and perspective. The Renaissance era witnessed more progress in landscape paintings' subjects and perspective. Baroque paintings initiated the focus on independent landscape paintings to be crystalised in the Romantic paintings and later on in the impressionists' art works using distinctive painting techniques. The modernists approved landscape topic in their paintings to apply their unique techniques, whereas the contemporary landscape paintings have adopted abstract and free methods in employing various materials and colours. It is obvious that the landscape subject has been employed throughout all stages of art history because it is the key segment of their environment and life not only because of its aesthetic values. Realistic landscape representation in visual art and design is expected to progress in abundance in the near and far future as many people due to the pandemic circumstances have been deprived from naturally experiencing landscapes causing mental and health difficulties.

**Keywords:** Prehistoric period, ancient civilisations, Renaissance, Baroque, romantic.

---

\* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Reham Sanad, Interior Design Department, Oman College of Management & Technology, Oman, Muscat.

E-mail address: [reham.sanad@omancollege.edu.om](mailto:reham.sanad@omancollege.edu.om)

## 1. Introduction

Landscape is all the noticeable structures and scenes in a space or region having unique aesthetic characteristics. There are various natural elements and compositions such as mountains, lands and plants that would be varying according to the regional environment in which they exist. Occasionally, landscapes from different regions would look similar. The topic of landscape depiction has been the concern of artists and designers for long time and one of the main subjects adopted by fine and applied designers and artists (Aslan & Serin, 2020; Erman, 2018). Artists throughout history to the present day have worked on depicting, representing, imitating, embodying or expressing nature in the form of two- or three-dimensional artworks. Therefore, it is evident that this unique and significant subject could endure forever because it is developed with the primitive man and kept as an inspiration source throughout several civilisations and eras. This would be for several social, economic, political or technological reasons (Anda et al., 2020; Rakhat et al., 2021).

Landscape painting is a prominent versatile art field and product which could be implemented using a variety of media. It has been playing an important role in people's lives starting from the prehistoric era to the present day. However, natural landscapes are considered as visible factual realistic scenes consisting of existent environmental elements. There have been several approaches in their depiction based on affected and limited by several factors.

This study is concerned with investigating artists' motives to display and implement landscape paintings and the sub-subjects addressed and highlighted in their artworks. It aimed at reviewing landscape paintings throughout history since the prehistoric era passing through the main ancient civilisations, i.e., Egyptian, Greece, Roman and Chinese, followed by a series of the main art movements and styles to the present day.

Research studies have found that viewing natural or artificial (painted) landscapes would have significant psychological and physiological impacts on a human's well-being (Velarde et al., 2007). As landscape paintings are the focus of this paper, it could play an alternative source for human enjoyment with nature. It was important to come up with recommendations and expectations regarding future directions and prospects, especially if many people are deprived of enjoying the actual nature due to current circumstances.

## 2. Findings

### 2.1. Prehistoric period

Painting art is one of the oldest arts known to mankind. The primitive man began painting before he even began writing or building a house 50,000 or 70,000 years ago. The primitive artists considered the natural surrounding elements on the caves' walls (Nas, 2018). The most used elements painted from landscapes are parts of plants and animals of varying types according to the period and territory. Fish and birds would be found as well.

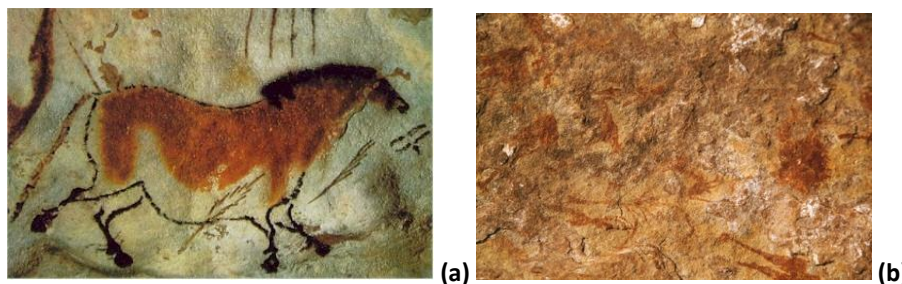


Figure 1. (a) Lascaux, France, cave paintings, so-called 'Chinese Horse', ca. 15,000–13,000 B.C. (paleolithic cave paintings, 15,000–13,000 B.C.). (b) Possible branch with long leaves at bottom. Algeria (Gabrielsen, 2017)

These animals would be alive or dead and presented with profile or front views, which means that these creatures are represented and described rather than visualised. Natural colorants were used in making these cave paintings (Galanopoulo, 2019) (see Figure 1).

## 2.2. Ancient civilisations

Ancient civilisations depicted landscape elements, including Egyptian, Greece and Roman civilisations. In ancient Egyptian art, painters paid attention to the depiction of nature and painted scenes such as floods and drought, harvest and hunting actions, conveying a strong sense of the concerned events in their lives. Therefore, the landscape subject was a secondary element supporting the background requirements in ancient Egyptian wall paintings (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Marsh hunting scene, Nebamun tomb chapel c 1350 B.C. © British Museum (McCoat, 2015)

The ancient Greek paintings were limited as the human figures were the main focus at this period of time (Cook, 1976) which was preceded with the Minoan's frescos of natural subjects, including flowers and plants without humans present in the scene. On the other hand, the Roman civilisation used landscape subjects and developed the sense of perspective. In these paintings, nature showing the sky, rocks and sea were still almost used as backgrounds for figurative paintings (Abbate, 1972) (Figure 3).



Figure 3. National Archaeological Museum of Naples (inv. Nr. 147501). From Boscotrecase, Villa of Agrippa Postumo. Central framework of a red wall, representing an idyllic-sacral landscape (Pompejanischer, n.d.)

In ancient China (c. 1600–221 B.C.), paintings are well known for celebrating and enjoying nature to the sanctification extent. The Chinese paintings depict and contemplate natural elements, especially flowers in accuracy and patience without real simulation because they believed that it reflects its spirit. Chinese landscape painting is significant for certain features; it is the blending of three different

forms of art, namely painting and calligraphy and poetry (see Figure 4). Chinese painters were interested in depicting the nature character and their impression towards it in addition to the inherited concepts rather than transmitting its visual specifications, including light and shadow. Figures were not focused in their paintings since flowers, trees, mountains and animals were used more than human (see Figure 4) (Li, 2007).



Figure 4. (a) Buddhist temple in the mountains, 11th century, ink on silk, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (Missouri) (Cheng, n.d.). (b) Guo (2013), a representative painter of landscape painting in the Northern Song dynasty, has been well known for depicting mountains, rivers and forests in winter. This piece shows a scene of a deep and serene mountain valley

### **2.3. Renaissance era**

When the Roman Empire fell in 476 AD, the landscape disappeared as many popular religious beliefs appeared in this period rejecting the landscape. Later, after four centuries of the fall of Rome, the art of manuscripts landscape painting reappeared as a result of medieval philosophy.

After a long period of time, life began to stabilise, the standard of living rose, the turning point and the resurgence of landscape painting was redeveloped in the 13th century. At this period of time, the vision and accuracy of observing and recording landscapes were evident in the manuscripts. One of the unique examples is the paintings of the book of prayers for a French noble called the Duke of Berry. Figure 5 shows September's harvest. In this painting, the figures are depicted at the left front of the painting. The rest of the painting is the castle of Saumur in Anjou and topped with flowers. These paintings confirm the artist's attraction to light and shadow and their representation on the perspective of the landscapes (Reynolds, 2005).



Figure 5. Saumur castle, Les Tres Riches Heures (book of hours): September – (Archaeotravel, 2020; Limbourg, 1478–1549)

In the 15th and 16th centuries, a revolution in European art and culture which became known as Renaissance art took another completely new curve characterised by the tendency of humanity's interest in discovering and depicting nature after being avoided due to the influence of philosophy of middle ages. Among the Renaissance artists who were interested in nature and landscape in the 15th century were Fra Angelico, Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione. Fra Angelico is an Italian artist who loved nature and painted it with passion depicting the creativity of the creator and for the first time in the history of art in Italy, the blue sky appears in his works. Giovanni Bellini is one of the greatest landscape painters and is described by the artist Durer as the city's best painter; however, he was focused on religious subjects, he included a great deal of landscapes in his paintings, he added a new aspect of realism. Bellini's landscapes have a truly magical property in its unique style that reveals light and nature details. He has distinguished the sense of paper and creating depth in the painting. He was able to achieve a wonderful unity that linked figures and nature scenes in the background (see Figure 6) (Bellini, n.d.).



Figure 6. Ecstasy of St. Francis by Giovanni Bellini (Bellini, n.d.)

Giorgione is considered one of the most famous artists in history and distinguished for introducing the landscape as the main subject in his works while humans are secondary elements (see Figure 7)



Figure 7. The Virgin and child with a view of Venice (The Tallard Madonna), c.1500. Circle of Giorgione (c.1477/78–1510). Oil on panel. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Giorgione, c.1500)

## 2.4. Baroque era

Despite the development in landscape painting, which occurred in the 16th century, landscape painting did not reach its golden age until the 17th century. As the best landscape artists such as Belgian Paul Rubens, Dutch Rembrandt and Albert Koepp, Jacob van Roisdale and Hobbima contributed to making their landscape paintings, their concept of depicting nature is to present the outside world surrounding them and to reveal the beauty of the sky as a vital aesthetic element in the painted artworks.

Artist Peter Paul Rubens is considered one of the greatest Baroque painters who had a unique style in depicting nature as his paintings depended on motion and colour, representing natural scenes of massive trees occupying a huge part of the painting; however, the human figures are of small size in the foreground. In these paintings, there are elements of waving and moving as if the trees were moving by the wind (Figure 8).



Figure 8. (a) An autumn landscape with a view of het steen (Rubens, 1636). (b) Landscape in moonlight, by Peter Paul Rubens. Oil on paper, 21.4 by 28.1 cm. (Hermitage, Leningrad) (Bruce-Gardner, 1988).

Jacob van Roisdale is one of the most famous landscape painters in Dutch art, and his art is characterised by a smear. Poetically, the seascapes featured a roaming painter who loves to travel and sit on hilltops until it melts in the natural landscape that extends in front of him; he did not think of the Netherlands or the lowlands or the land of monotonous scenery, because he painted by a variety of different angles and lights and was keen to lay a castle or windmill in the picture or a hidden tower between trees, and people with his paintings were either small or absent (Figure 9).



Figure 9. (a) Castle Bentheim–Jacob van Ruisdael (Ruisdael, 1653) (b) Landscape with windmills near Haarlem (Ruisdael, 1668–1670)

## 2.5. Romantic landscape

The romanticism landscape was developed in the 19th century and is concerned with expressing the individual's feelings and impression towards the seen nature. John Constable and Joseph Turner are considered the pioneers of this style in painting landscape. From Figure 10, the uniqueness and significance of both artists is evident; in the Cornfield artwork, the artists used realistic details avoiding

it from being picturesque. On the other hand, Turner was overly concerned with representing strong expressive emotional natural seascapes (Figure 10).

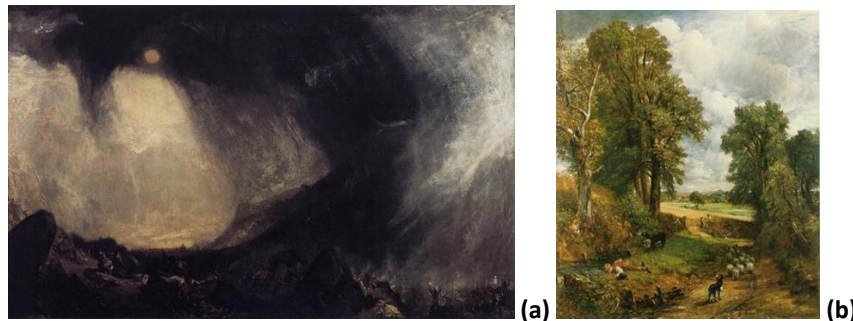


Figure 10. (a) Snowstorm, Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps-Joseph Turner, 1812-Tate Gallery, London (Reynold, 1985) (b) Constable: The Cornfield, 1826 (56" × 48") (radford.edu, n.d.)

## 2.6. Impressionists landscape

The impressionists were concerned with expressing their impression regarding a viewed subject. Impressionism artists including its pioneers, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, worked outside their studio and this would be considered the first time artists worked out of their studios. This is because they aimed at expressing their interest in light reflected and affected landscape at different times (Reynolds, 1985). Another aim was to get out of the classical method and style of depicting polished identical landscape views; however, they still introduced the real landscape (Renoir, 1869) (Figure 11).



Figure 11. La Grenouillere – 1869 oil on canvas painting – Pierre-Auguste Renoir (Renoir, 1869; Reynold, 1985)

## 2.7. Modernism landscapes

Abstraction entirely converted the conventional approaches used in depicting and exploring landscapes in painting. Abstract artists played a significant role in elevating the important rank of landscape painting by selecting it as an important subject depicting their speedily developing methods. The fauvists, including Georges Braque, confidently and productively painted their landscapes employing bright random colours refusing the realistic colours of the realism style artists (see Figure 12). The Cubists as well had employed and preferred landscapes as ideal themes and topics to explore their developing concepts and techniques (Figure 13).

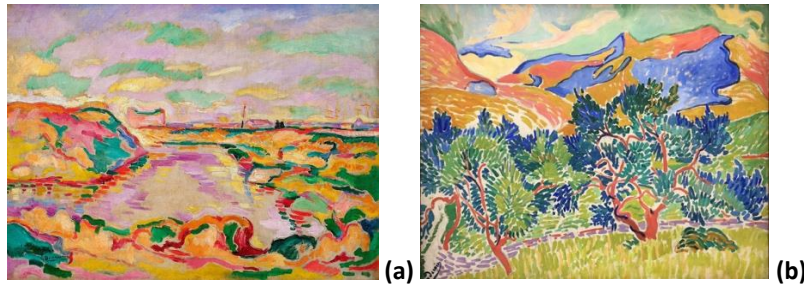


Figure 12. (a) Andre Derain, mountains at Collioure, 1905, oil on canvas, 32 × 39 1/2 inches (National Gallery of Art, Washington) (Cramer & Grant, 2020) (b) Landscape near Antwerp, Georges Braque, 1906, oil on canvas (Braque, 1906)



Figure 13. (a) S. Steinmetz, cubist landscape, 1956, oil on board (b) Imre Szobotka (Hungarian, 1890–1961), Cubist landscape, ca. 1910–1912 oil on paperboard (Artnet, 1910–1912)

## 2.8. Pop landscapes

Landscape topics were considered as well by pop artists. David Hockney is a British pop artist who is captivated with landscape and depicted nature employing pop style including bright flat colours. Moreover, man-made areas and spaces were highlighted in his artworks (see Figure 14).

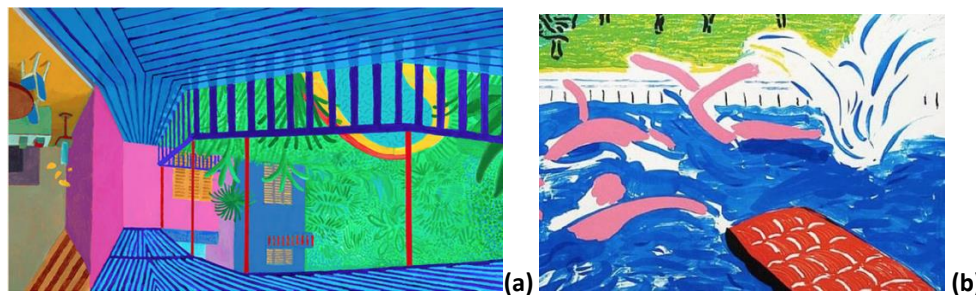


Figure 14. David Hockney| Peinture pop art, Peintre David, David Hockney (Artrepublic, 2013). (b) David Hockney's 'Afternoon Swimming' 1980 Lithograph © David Hockney/Tyler Graphics Ltd. Picture: Richard Schmidt (Hockney, 1980)

## 2.9. Contemporary landscape

Contemporary artists are concerned with the environmental crisis the world is suffering from these days. Current landscape paintings have adopted several approaches which is evident from Figure 15. The abstract style is used by several artists employing a variety of techniques and even colour palettes. This is significantly unique and different from the previous art styles. Figure 15a shows an artwork of the artist Bas in which he used mixed media technique to illustrate his view of landscape and environmental background. In his art works, exterior worlds were employed just to link the core concepts of his subjects. Adnan's painting of landscape shown in Figure 15b shows her style of making



landscape paintings as an approach of translating her written words and concepts gracefully to tiny joyful tiny landscapes. Will's Cotton landscapes have introduced artworks highlighting environment abuse. He makes large models and artworks giving a realistic impression making the audience feel as if they could reside in his created world (Artspace, 2019).

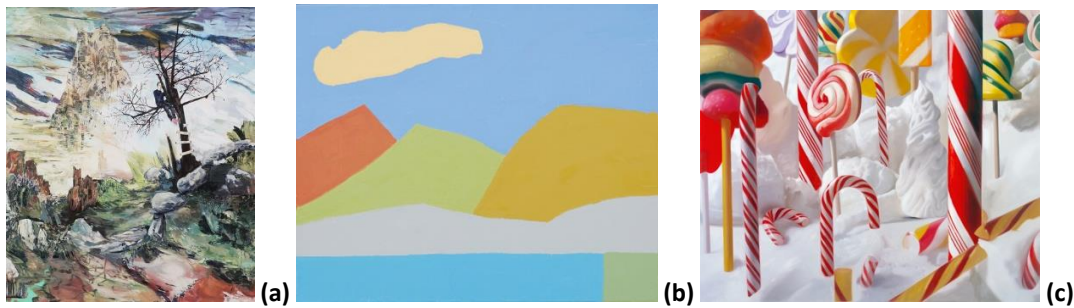


Figure 15. (a) Don't tell it on the mountain, Hernan Bas, 2013, (b) Untitled, 2016. Oil on canvas, 15 × 18 1/8 inches (38 × 46 cm). ©Etel Adnan. Courtesy of Sfeir-Semler Gallery (c) Forest, 2003. Oil on linen, 60 × 70 inches (152.4 × 177.8 cm). © Will Cotton. Courtesy of the artist (Artspace, 2019)

Critics of landscape artworks from 1965 to these days have found that there are variable artistic techniques and styles used based on and characterised by freedom in abstraction.

### 3. Conclusion

This study reviewed landscape paintings' characteristics throughout history. It found that the landscape elements and compositions were almost the concern of the artists because these are part of their daily lives or beliefs. This is evident in the primitive cave paintings comprising plants and animals' views by people in this era. Natural elements and compositions were illustrated as a background in the ancient Egyptian civilisation and lost its significance in the Greece style to return in the Roman civilisation with concern and perspective illustrations and representations which are highly progressed in the Renaissance era.

The landscape rank and importance in making paintings have been progressed in the Baroque era as it started to be represented independently to reach its comprehensive importance in the Romantic paintings as it was depicted as its heart. This approach continued with the impressionists and with special painting techniques developed by them.

The modernists adopted landscape paintings in many of their unique paintings as a trial of applying their unique techniques. However, the contemporary landscape paintings have adopted approaches similar to the modernists showing abstraction and freedom of using materials and colours, although in these paintings environmental issues were concerned by the artists. Therefore, it is evident that the landscape subject has been employed throughout all stages of art history. In contrast to what could be believed, that illustrating landscapes in paintings could be because of its aesthetic values including textures, colours, spaces and forms, it is obvious from this study that artists used to adopt landscape subject in their artworks as it is considered the main part of their environment and life.

Illustrating landscape is expected to have a prominent future as many people due to the pandemic circumstances have been experiencing deprivation from sensing and feeling landscapes normally which would cause mental and health problems if this situation continues for a long time. Consequently, presenting realistic landscape paintings indoors would be highly recommended for most people as a way to tackle and restore the loss of sensing natural landscape. This approach would significantly employ old actual styles of landscape painting which is in opposite direction to the latest styles, such as the modernism and contemporary art styles.

## References

- Abbate, F. (1972). Octopus Books. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/app.1972.070160514>
- Anda, M. I., Ioana, M. I., Tiberiu, I., Elena, P., & Eugenia, T. (2020). Tourism contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA). *Global Journal of Business, Economics and Management: Current Issues*, 10(3), 176–182. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjbem.v10i3.4686>
- Archaeotravel. (2020). <https://archaeotravel.eu/?p=1276>
- Artnet. (1910–1912). *Artnet*. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/imre-szobotka/cubist-landscape-wEvbA1eAxFboinOBP2YqMw2>
- Artrepublic. (2013). *Artrepublic*. <https://artrepublic.com/blogs/news/436-british-pop-art-pioneers-html>
- Artspace. (2019). *Artspace*. [https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art\\_101/lists/8-contemporary-landscape-painters-pushing-the-genre-forward-56162](https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/lists/8-contemporary-landscape-painters-pushing-the-genre-forward-56162)
- Aslan, E., & Serin, O. (2020). Transformation in primary school Sciences education in the transition process from the Empire to the Republic: Science education in 1924 primary school curriculum. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 15(3), 587–603. doi:10.18844/cjes.v15i3.4601
- Bellini, G. (n.d.). *Painting-planet.com/*. <https://painting-planet.com/ecstasy-of-st-francis-by-giovanni-bellini/>
- Braque, G. (1906). *Collection online*. [https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/671#:~:text=Landscape%20near%20Antwerp%20\(%20Paysage%20pr%C3%AAs,naturalistic%20color%20with%20Impressionist%20brushstrokes](https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/671#:~:text=Landscape%20near%20Antwerp%20(%20Paysage%20pr%C3%AAs,naturalistic%20color%20with%20Impressionist%20brushstrokes)
- Bruce-Gardner, H. B. (1988). Rubens's 'Landscape by Moonlight'. *The Burlington Magazine*, 579–596. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/883596>
- Cheng, L. (n.d.). *Buddhist temple in mountain*. <http://www.theartwolf.com/landscapes/li-cheng-buddhist-temple-mountain.htm>
- Cook, R. M. (1976). *Greek art: Its development, character, and influence*. Penguin Books. [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1142&context=etruscan\\_studies](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1142&context=etruscan_studies)
- Cramer, C., & Grant, K. (2020). *Fauve landscapes and city views, in Smarthistory*. <https://smarthistory.org/fauve-landscape-city-views/>
- Erman, D. O. (2018). Purest form of creation: Art Brut. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(6), 134–142. doi:10.18844/prosoc.v5i6.3850
- Gabrielsen, H. (2017). *African rock art, news, rock art news*. <https://africanrockart.org/trees-rock-art/>
- Galanopoulo, L. (2019). *Who was the first artist?* <https://news.cnrs.fr/articles/who-was-the-first-artist>
- Giorgione. (c.1500). *Virgin and child with view of Venice*. <https://www.tes.com/lessons/wYWee2Fuaactxg/giorgione-1477-1510>
- Guo X. (2013). *Snow mountain.*, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/432697476676396711>
- Hockney, D. (1980). *Afternoon swimming*. <https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6242419/pop-go-the-60s-prints-by-british-artist-david-hockney/>
- Li, X. (2007). *Landscape painting of ancient China*. Wuzhou Communication Press.
- Limbourg, B. (1478–1549). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378113504000537>

- Baomar, Z. S. A. A., & Sanad R. (2021). A study of landscape painting development – Past, present and future perspectives. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. [Online]. 8(1), pp 01-11. Available from: [www.prosoc.eu](http://www.prosoc.eu)
- McCouat, P. (2015). *Journal of Art in Society*. <http://www.artinsociety.com/lost-masterpieces-of-ancient-egyptian-art-from-the-nebamun-tomb-chapel.html>, <http://www.ancient-egypt.co.uk/british%20museum/nebamun/>
- Nas, E. (2018). The problematic of tradition and future in art and design education. *Contemporary Educational Researches Journal*, 8(3), 96–100. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cerj.v8i3.635>
- PaleolithicCavePaintings. (15,000-13,000 B.C.). <https://a1084-2586316.cluster8.canvas-user-content.com/courses/1084~200544/files/1084~2586316/course%20files/01-Stone-Age/Paleolithic%20Painting?download=1&inline=1>
- Pompejanischer, M. U. (n.d.). *Villa Boscotrecase*. Photo: Marie-Lan Nguyen, Wikimedia Commons. The Yorck Project. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27687228>
- radford.edu. (n.d.). *The romantic landscape*. <https://www.radford.edu/rbarris/art216upd2012/romantic%20landscapes.html>
- Rakhat, B., Kuralay, B., Akmaral, S., Zhanar, N., & Miyat, D. (2021). Examination of the researches on the use of technology by fine arts teachers. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues*, 13(1), 68–81. <https://doi.org/10.18844/wjet.v13i1.5413>
- Renoir, A. (1869). *La Grenouillere – by Pierre-Auguste Renoir*. <https://www.renoir.net/la-grenouillere.jsp>
- Reynolds, C. (2005). *The 'Tres Riches Heures', the Bedford workshop and Barthélemy d'Eyck* (pp. 526–533). The Burlington Magazine. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20074073>
- Reynolds, D. M. (1985). *The nineteenth century*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rubens, P. P. (1636). *The rainbow landscape, 1636 by Peter Paul Rubens*. <https://www.peterpaulrubens.net/>
- Ruisdael, J. I. (1653). *Castle Bentheim – Jacob van Ruisdael*. <https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/r/ruysdael/jacob/1/benthei.html>
- Ruisdael, J. I. (1668–1670). *De molen bij Wijk bij Duurstede. Landscape with Windmills near Haarlem, after Jacob van Ruisdael*. <http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/collectie/SK-C-211>
- Velarde, M. D., Fry, G., & Tveit, M. (2007). Health effects of viewing landscapes – Landscape types in environmental psychology. *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*, 6(4), 199–212. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866707000416>