

# STILL LIFE THROUGH THE AGES

## (AN ANALYSIS)

Mr. Nikhil Tiwari



**MAFT**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF  
MEDIA AND ARTS



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# STILL LIFE THROUGH THE AGES

*(An analysis)*



## School of Fine Arts

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# Foreword

As an academician and a lover of the fine arts, it gives me great pleasure to write this foreword for “Still Life through the Ages.” This book, written by Mr. Nikhil Tiwari and his students in their second semester of the Bachelor of Fine Arts program, is a remarkable achievement in the study and analysis of still life art.

As I read through the pages of this book, I was struck by the depth of research and analysis that the author had undertaken. The book is structured chronologically, tracing the evolution of still life art from its earliest forms to its modern-day interpretations.

The author have analysed major works and artists from each era, providing a thorough and engaging exploration of the subject. What impressed me the most about this book was the author’s ability to not only describe the artwork but also contextualise it within the broader historical, cultural, and societal contexts of each period. They explored the symbolism and themes present in the artwork, revealing the ways in which still life has been used by artists to convey complex ideas and messages. As I turned the pages of this book,

I was reminded of the enduring appeal of still life as a genre. It is a subject that continues to inspire artists today, and this book is a testament to its ongoing significance in the world of art. I congratulate Mr. Nikhil Tiwari and the students of the Bachelor of Fine Arts program on this outstanding achievement.

Their passion for the subject is evident on every page, and I am confident that this book will be a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history and evolution of still life art.

Artist

Art Academician

Prof. Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma ‘Shira’

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# Acknowledgement

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the esteemed individuals and cherished members of the academic community who have played a significant role in the creation of this book, titled "Still Life through the Ages." Their unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement have been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition.

First and foremost, I extend my sincere gratefulness to respected Chancellor *Dr. Sandeep Marwah*, whose visionary leadership and commitment to the pursuit of knowledge have laid the foundation for a thriving academic environment. Your constant motivation and belief in my abilities have been an invaluable source of inspiration throughout this journey.

I am deeply indebted to Director *Dr. Shikha Verma Kashyap*, whose unwavering support and guidance have been pivotal in shaping the direction and scope of this book. Your incisive insights and profound understanding of the subject matter have enriched its content and contributed to its overall quality.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our Dean *Mr. Santosh Swarnakar*, whose profound knowledge and expertise in the field of technicalities have been invaluable resources for me. Your unwavering support and constructive feedback have helped refine my ideas and ensured the accuracy and authenticity of the information presented within these pages.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the students of the 2nd semester, *Bhumika Bhansali, Shweta Thakur, Aashi Agrawal, Chetana Ganjir, Harshita Mulwani and Divya Tawri* for their enthusiasm and engagement during the course of this project. Your valuable perspectives and thoughtful efforts have provided valuable insights and helped shape the final form of this book. Your commitment to learning and passion for the subject have been truly inspiring.

Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to my colleagues, whose unwavering support and understanding have been the pillars of strength throughout this endeavour. Their encouragement and belief in me have fuelled my determination to see this project through to its completion.

To all those who have contributed to the creation of "Still Life through the Ages," whether directly or indirectly, I offer my heartfelt thanks. Your support and belief in this endeavour have been an integral part of its success. May this book serve as a tribute to the timeless beauty and enduring significance of still life in History of art.

With profound gratitude,

**Nikhil Tiwari**

Asst. professor

SOFA, AAFT University

# Preface

Welcome to "Still Life through the Ages," a captivating exploration of the enduring genre of still life art. This book, lovingly curated by the artist Nikhil Tiwari, in collaboration with the remarkable students of the 2nd semester Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) program, takes you on a visual and intellectual voyage through centuries of artistic expression.

As an artist, I have always been fascinated by the power of still life to encapsulate the essence of objects, to freeze time, and to tell stories. It is a genre that has transcended the boundaries of time and culture, captivating the imagination of artists throughout history. With this book, I aim to delve deep into the evolution of still life, exploring its origins, tracing its development through various periods, and showcasing its contemporary interpretations.

What makes "Still Life through the Ages" truly unique is the invaluable support and contribution from the students of the 2nd semester BFA program. These talented individuals, driven by their passion for art, have poured their hearts and souls into this project. Their essays, analyses, and personal reflections provide invaluable insights, shedding light on the significance of still life and its impact on their artistic journeys.

Furthermore, the artwork created by these budding artists is nothing lesser than extraordinary. Their brushstrokes, compositions, and attention to detail reflect their dedication, growth, and artistic prowess. Each piece not only contributes to the narrative of the book but also stands as a testament to their boundless creativity and artistic vision.

In "Still Life through the Ages," we embark on a historical and artistic adventure, exploring the art of ancient civilizations, discovering the opulence of the Dutch Golden Age, embracing the innovations of modernism, and witnessing the bold experimentation of contemporary artists. We examine the symbolic, allegorical, and metaphorical aspects of still life, delving into its ability to evoke emotions, provoke thoughts, and capture the essence of life itself.

While this book pays homage to the masters of the past, it also celebrates the vibrancy of the present and the potential of the future. It is a tribute to the enduring nature of art and its ability to transcend time, cultures, and generations. It is a testament to the power of collaboration, as the collective efforts of Nikhil Tiwari and the 2nd semester BFA students bring forth a truly remarkable body of work.

I invite you to immerse yourself in the pages of "Still Life through the Ages" and allow the art to transport you to different eras, to engage your senses, and to spark your imagination. May this book ignite your passion for art, inspire your own creative endeavours, and deepen your appreciation for the beauty that lies in the simplest of objects.

With gratitude for your interest and support, we present to you "Still Life through the Ages."

Nikhil Tiwari  
Artist, Educator

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# Chapter 1

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## Introduction

### 1.1 What is still life?

Still life is arranging objects around us and creating their life forms on paper.

Still life drawing is a fascinating art form that captures the beauty of inanimate objects. It allows Artists to hone their technical skills and learn to appreciate the subtle details which are often overlooked in everyday objects. By carefully observing the interplay of light and shadows, artists can bring a piece of fruit or a vase to life on paper. Not only is this type of drawing deeply fulfilling for the artist, but it is also a wonderful challenge for the viewer to find the beauty in the mundane.

Still Life is a painting composed with the help of inanimate objects like kitchen utensils, dead animals, food, foliage, musical instruments and other things. It is composed of anything from man-made to natural subject matter. The objects are all arranged differently by the artist. Sometimes it can be for a symbolic meaning other times just for the sake of art.

Still life is a genre that stretches through the history of art. It is foraged everywhere from the tombs of ancient Egypt which were decorated with paintings from daily life to the works of Modern art which supplied new opportunities to explore different techniques, forms, and styles.



Image: 1

Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625), Bouquet (1599).







Paintings of flowers (Image: 1) by Netherlandish Renaissance artists are some of the earliest examples of still life. The golden age of Netherlandish art (1500-1600) is the era where still life achieved its greatest importance as a genre which also included the vanitas.



Image: 2

Still Life with Game Fowl (Image: 2)

, Vegetables and Fruits (1602) by Juan Sánchez Cotán, Museo del Prado Madrid.

### A QUICK NOTE

1. *For Many It Might Seem Like A Dull Genre of Painting, For an Instance Like ...A Bowl of Fruits, Flower, Or Kitchen Utensils Arranged in A Proper, Balanced and Neat Manner. On A Table or Any Other Surface, But This Is Exactly What A Still Life Is.*
2. *A Still Life Is Composed of Both Variety of Animated and Inanimate Objects, Such as Utensils, Foliage and Food, Which Are Arranged by The Artist in A Unique Way.*
3. *This Type of Painting Also Gives Artist Significant Freedom of Choice.*
4. *Artists Can Choose How to Paint A Still-Life in Terms of What the Palette of Colours Are, The Ambience of The Composition, As Well As Its Size.*

### 1.2 Why do we do still life?

There are many possible reasons for an artist to be inspired to create a still life. To capture memory enhancement of basic skill and improvement of observation, to know the texture and colours, they may wish to play with perspective, angle and the arrangement of the object. The rise of still-life painting started in the early 16th and 17th centuries. Italian painter Jacopo de Barbari's painting in 1504 is generally considered as the first still life painting. The "golden age" of still-life painting broke out in the Lowlands during the 17th century. The particular elements required to do still life are object, drapery, pedestal or base, a light that shows lightness and darkness in a still life.





### 1.3 What Does “Still Life” Mean?

The definition of still life comes from a Dutch word ‘Still leven’. In French, it is nature morte and in Italian, it is natura morta – both terms mean “dead nature”. This directly indicates the meaning to what a Still Life inherently is, which is an composition of inanimate objects which are often dead in nature, for example dead animals, foodstuffs that allude to time passing and thus rotting, as well as something that stands still, which can otherwise be considered “dead”.

### 1.4 What Are the Types of Still Life?

The different categories of still life paintings are referred to as types. These types are also called “pieces” which mainly consist of flowers and floral types, banquet or breakfast types, animal types, and symbolic types (known as Vanitas).

Furthermore there are two elements of still life:

1. Natural
2. Man made

Natural and Man Made are further divided into three categories:

1. Arranged - Arranged object means in which we do not need to remove or add anything.
2. Pre-arranged - Pre arranged means we add some object in arranged objects.
3. Semi arranged - Semi arranged means all objects are arranged by human beings.

There are 3 types of composition in still life:-

1. Circle
2. Triangle
3. Square

### 1.5 What Are Vanitas Paintings?

The Latin term Vanitas means “vanity”, which is a concept explored in these types of Still Life paintings. They symbolise the shortness of life through the depiction of skulls, clocks, and even half-peeled fruit, indicating decay and the element of rotting and dead animals (sometimes juxtaposed with live animals). The term also derives from the Bible’s Ecclesiastes verse, which states: “Vanity of vanities, everything is vanity”.

### 1.6 What Is the Plural Word for Still Life?

The word “Still Life” indicates a work of art. Although it uses the word “life” in it, it does not refer to a living entity such as a person. Because of this distinction, the noun “life” receives an “s” at the end and does not become what we would commonly call it in the plural form, “lives”.





# Chapter 2

---

## Upbringing of Still Life

### 2.1 Renaissance Still-Life

During the Middle Ages and into the Early Renaissance period, Still Life painting helped religious artworks as supplementary stylistic elements with symbolic meanings. These paintings were usually painted in the backgrounds of religious paintings as well as on artistic works like manuscripts.

The primary focus on the role of Still Life within a religious context. This is noticeable in the works of *Jan van Eyck*, a Flemish painter.

While other artists like *Leonardo da Vinci* and *Albrecht Dürer* painted Still Lives without any religious symbolism. For example, Still Life paintings were done of various natural objects of nature. At this stage, Renaissance still life paintings were also done to explore the natural world by observing it and then painting it.

#### 2.1.1 The Renaissance Movement

The Renaissance movement started in Italy in the late 13th and made its way all over Europe the remaining 400 following years, changing European art forever. During the 16th century, the Renaissance movement fully hit the Lowlands (now known as Netherlands), but it took a bit of time before the Dutch artists really made their own on still-life art.

The religious aspect of still-life art remained a significant influence on artists during the Renaissance of the Dutch Golden Age or era. While Italian and French artists of the early Renaissance movement often favoured human matter subjects, some Dutch masters decided to focus their work on still-life and revived the interest for this art style on their own.

The Dutch developed a particular interest for Baroque still-life painting, often choosing colossal canvas depicting epic feasts usually hiding religious scenes and symbolism in the background. Some seventeenth-century Flemish painters were also famous for painting fantastic landscapes, another genre of still-life. Vanitas still lifes were a widespread genre of Dutch still-life. Their composition often included a skull, symbol of mortality as well as rotten fruits, watch and hourglass, to represent the passing of time and the fleeting nature of life. Usually featuring a black background, they reminded the viewer of the certainty of death and that all the wealthy objects, lavish feasts and luxurious settings painted by the artist did not matter.





Dutch art at that time often used flowers in a vase as a subject. Tulip was one of the flowers which was frequently used. As the Netherlands and Amsterdam became the biggest producer of the flower, an arranged bouquet of tulips was a perfectly adequate subject and was usually painted with oil on canvas.

## 2.2 Dutch Still Life

Dutch Realism focused mainly on the middle class, which mainly consisted of merchants and traders. When it came to painting, artists painted subject matter for merchants who were more focused on depicting what they have earned in life. Other popular painting genres were portraits and paintings of everyday people and their skills and various embellishments.

Small paintings were done during this time period mostly for private home display contrary to large paintings for church display.

However, because this was dominantly a Protestant culture, there was not a need to flaunt artworks in the same way. Furthermore, the common types of Still Life paintings, or subsets, included the aforementioned *Vanitas genre*, *Ontbijtjes* (which translates to “breakfast pieces”), *Pronkstilleven* (which translates to “ornate”), or “*ostentatious*” displays of Still Life pieces, as well as florals.

## 2.3 Impressionism and Post-impressionism

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the French Academy, a hugely influential art institution at that time, had declared that the subject matter of a painting was more important than the painting techniques and colour harmony used.

The human form was considered the most important and more difficult to depict and so still-life was put at the end of the Hierarchy of Subject Matter. It was not until the end of the 19th century that this point of view declined and the Impressionist movement emerged.

The movement originated in Paris during the 1860's, under the influence of one group composed of four young artists: **Claude Monet**, **Pierre-Auguste Renoir**, **Alfred Sisley**, and **Frédéric Bazille**. They had all met while studying for the same master painter but decided to follow the earlier influence of painters such as **J.M.W. Turner** or **Eugene Delacroix**.

Their style put freely brushed colours before well-defined contours and line, emphasised the play on natural lights while boldly painting shadows and paying a close attention to the reflection of light and colours from object to object.

They also used the wet paint technique, rather than waiting for the first layer of paint to dry, which resulted in softer contours and overlapping of colours.

While they did not invent any of the painting or drawing techniques that they used, they were the first to use all of them together, giving their work a unique and original look.

The Post-Impressionism movement, mainly led by *Paul Cezanne*, was an extension and continuation of the Impressionist movement but it rejected its limitations. Post-impressionist artists such as *Vincent Van Gogh* or *Paul Gaughin*, still used vivid colours, thick brush strokes and real-life subjects but



accentuated the geometric forms, often distorting their subject to convey a message and using subjective colours.



It is from Post-Impressionism (Image:4) that cubism (Image:3) and fauvism, two other painting movements, emerged.



Image:3  
“Cubistic Still life”



Image:4  
“Post-impressionistic Approach”



## 2.4 Modern Still Life

Modern Still Life prevailed during art movements like Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Notably, during Post-Impressionism, *Vincent van Gogh* brought Still Life painting to life with his expressive and flower and vase paintings. An example of this includes his piece, *Sunflowers* (1889).

A French artist from Post-Impressionism, *Paul Cézanne*, painted Still Lifes with fruit, bread, bottles, and baskets atop a seemingly toppling table, as in *The Basket of Apples* (Image:5) (c. 1895). The difference between these paintings and the more realistic Dutch Still Life paintings was that these modern artists used more expressive brushstrokes, colours, and different perspectives.

During the Cubist art movement, popular artists like *Pablo Picasso* and *Georges Braque* created Still Life paintings in their characteristic abstract and cubic style. An example of this is in *Picasso's Large Still Life* (1881 to 1973) and *Braque's Still Life with Metronome* (1909).

**In contemporary Still Life art, we find photography, computers, and videos as a means of portraying everyday objects and food. The evolution of technology has allowed a hyper-realistic portrayal of subject matter, from painting to being computer-generated. The canvas of Still Life art has evolved dramatically into the 21st Century.**



Image:5

*The Basket of Apples*





### 2.4.1 Modern Still Life Art

*Georgia O'Keefe's* work in recent years laid the base of American Modernism with her New Mexico landscape painting and New York's skyscrapers cityscape. Her large-scale paintings representing close-up flowers are some of the best examples of modern still-life artwork. The legacy of O'Keefe in the art scene of America is undeniable. She became the highest paid American woman artist when she moved to New York in 1918, paving the way for many exceptional artists. Still life artwork has followed many roads with the advance in technology and the Abstract art movement. The Proto-Pop Art movement started in the 1950's, after which started the pop art movement redefining the meaning of still life art.



Image:6  
Andy Warhol

Artists such as *Andy Warhol (Image:6)*, used prints on canvas as a media stuck between painting and photography.

Some contemporary artists took still-life art one step further in exhibiting massive artwork installations. Such a setup was created by epic feminist artist *Judy Chicago* in 1979. Titled *The Dinner Party*, the masterpiece consisted of a triangular table of nearly 15 metres on each side. Each side was laid down with 13 settings and each set included on the table a hand-painted china plate, ceramic flatware and a chalice along with a golden embroidered napkin.

This massive installation, which took more than six years and a quarter million dollars to complete was made to honour women of importance throughout history. Each seat was dedicated to a different



woman, her name embroidered into the tablecloth. Each side of the table corresponded to a different period of history.



Image:7,  
Installation

This piece by Jimmie Durham, Since the beginning, still life art has been expressed through two-dimensional artwork may it be drawings, paintings or photography. Such an eye catching, three-dimensional installation (Image:7) allowed the viewers to immerse into the still-life art piece and brought more of a communicative approach than classical still-life drawing.





# Chapter 3

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## Technicalities and Fundamentals

1. *Choose your objects:* Select the objects you want to draw or paint, and arrange them in an interesting composition.
2. *Set up your lighting:* Position your objects and lighting in a way that creates interesting shadows and highlights.
3. *Sketch the basic shapes:* Use a pencil to sketch the basic shapes of your objects, making sure to pay attention to their proportions and relationships to each other.
4. *Add details:* Once you have the basic shapes blocked in, start adding details to your drawing or painting. Pay attention to the textures, colours, and values of your objects.
5. *Refine your drawing:* Keep refining your drawing or painting, adding more details and adjusting the proportions and relationships between objects as needed.
6. *Final touches:* Once you are happy with your drawing or painting, add any final touches, such as highlights, shadows, or additional details.
7. *Evaluate your work:* Step back and evaluate your work to see if it meets your artistic goals. Make any final adjustments as needed.

These steps can be adjusted depending on your medium (e.g. pencil, paint, etc.) and personal preferences, but they provide a general framework for creating a still life.

The fundamentals consist of the principal and elements of art which is also important in still life drawing.

### Elements:-

1. **Line-** is one of the most basic elements of art that can be used to create a sense of depth, texture, and movement in a still life. The direction, thickness, and quality of lines can convey emotions and moods, and can be used to create shapes and forms.
2. **Shape-** shape of the objects in a still life can create a sense of balance and harmony. Different shapes can be used to create contrast and variety, and can draw the viewer's eye to certain parts of the composition.





3. **Form-** refers to the three-dimensional aspect of an object. In still life, form can be created through the use of shading, highlighting, and shadows. This creates a sense of depth and realism, and helps to give objects a sense of weight and solidity.
4. **Space-** is the area within and around objects in a still life. Positive space refers to the objects themselves, while negative space refers to the area around the objects. The use of space can create a sense of depth and distance, and can help to create a sense of balance and harmony within the composition.
5. **Colour-** colour can be used to create mood and emotion in a still life. Different colours can create different feelings, and can be used to create contrast and variety. Colour can also be used to create a sense of light and shadow, which can give objects a sense of depth and form.

### Principals:-

1. **Balance:** is the distribution of visual weight within a said composition. In a still life, objects can be arranged to create a sense of balance and harmony. This can be achieved through asymmetry, symmetry or radial balance.
2. **Emphasis:** refers to the part of a composition that draws the viewer's eye. In a still life, emphasis can be created through the use of colour, shape, or placement of objects within the composition.
3. **Movement:** refers to the way the viewer's eye moves through a composition. In a still life, movement can be created through the use of lines, shapes, and placement of objects within the composition.
4. **Contrast:** refers to the use of different elements to create variety and interest in a composition. In a still life, contrast can be created through the use of light and dark values, colour, texture, and shape.
5. **Unity:** refers to the sense of oneness or harmony within a composition. In a still life, unity can be created through the use of repetition, colour, and composition. A unified composition feels balanced and cohesive, and creates a sense of visual harmony for the viewer.





# Chapter 4

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## Approaches

Throughout the history of art, there have been many approaches towards painting still life. From the classical still life paintings of the Renaissance to the contemporary still life works of today, artists have utilised different techniques and styles to depict objects that are typically stationary.

During the Renaissance period, still life paintings were often included as part of larger works that featured religious or mythological subjects. These still life's were painted in a realistic style, with attention paid to the play of light and shadow on the objects depicted. Artists such as Caravaggio and Vermeer were particularly skilled at rendering the intricate details of still life objects.

In the Baroque period, still life paintings began to take on a more dramatic and theatrical quality. Artists such as Rembrandt and Rubens used strong contrasts of light and dark to create dynamic compositions that drew the viewer's eye to the central object. These still life's often included exotic and luxurious objects such as fruits, flowers, and precious metals.

The 19th century saw a resurgence of interest in still life painting, with artists such as Cézanne and Van Gogh experimenting with new techniques and styles. Cézanne, in particular, was known for his use of geometric shapes and bold colours to create abstract still life compositions.

In the 20th century, artists such as Picasso and Braque pioneered the art movement known as Cubism, which involved breaking down objects into their basic geometric shapes and reassembling them in a new way. This approach was particularly well-suited to still life painting, as it allowed artists to create complex and dynamic compositions that challenged traditional ideas about representation.

Today, still life painting continues to be a popular genre among artists of all styles and backgrounds. Some contemporary artists, such as Wayne Thiebaud and David Hockney, have embraced a more colourful and playful approach to still life painting, while others, such as Janet Fish and Audrey Flack, continue to explore the traditional themes of light, form, and composition.

In conclusion, the approaches towards painting still life have evolved throughout the history of art, with each era bringing new techniques and styles. Whether realistic or abstract, dramatic or playful, still life painting remains a vital and enduring genre that continues to inspire artists today.





# Chapter 5

## Famous Works

Here are some famous still life art works from early times:

1. *"The Last Supper"* by Leonardo da Vinci (1495-1498)
2. *"Basket of Fruit"* by Caravaggio (1599)
3. *"The Ambassadors"* painted by Hans Holbein the Younger (1533)
4. *"Still Life with Flowers and Fruit"* by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1606)
5. *"The Sistine Madonna"* by Raphael (1513-1514)
6. *"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp"* by Rembrandt (1632)
7. *"Still Life with Drinking-Horn"* painted by Willem Kalf (1653)
8. *"Bouquet"* by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1599)
9. *"The Red Vineyard"* painted by Vincent van Gogh (1888)
10. *"The Basket of Apples"* painted by Paul Cézanne (1893)

### 1. *"The Last Supper"* (Image:8)

is a renowned fresco painting created by *Leonardo da Vinci* between 1495 and 1498. It depicts the last supper of Jesus Christ with his disciples, as described in the holy book of Bible. The painting is located in the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy currently. The work is recognised for its use of perspective, as well as the emotional expressions and poses of the figures portrayed. It is considered one of the most renowned and significant works of Renaissance art.

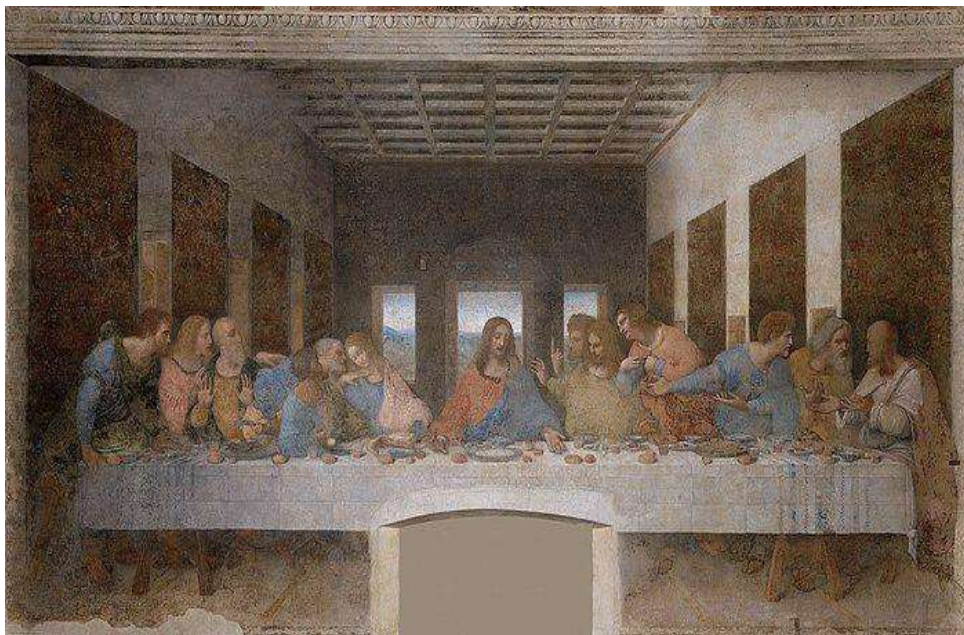


Image:8

*"The Last Supper"*





2. **"Basket of Fruit"** is a still-life painting by the Italian Baroque master *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio*, in 1599. The painting features a wicker basket filled with a variety of fruits, including grapes, peaches, figs, pomegranates, and apples. The fruits are in a highly realistic and detailed manner, with a focus on their textures, colours, and shapes.

The painting is notable for its use of *contrast*, a technique that Caravaggio was renowned for. The painting is illuminated by a single source of light from the upper right-hand side of the composition, creating a dramatic contrast between light and shadow. The background of the painting is dark and muted, which serves to highlight the bright colours of the fruits.

"Basket of Fruit" (Image:9) is considered to be one of the finest instances of still-life painting from the Baroque period, and is applauded for its realism, attention to detail, and the way in which it captures the beauty of the natural world.



Image:9

"Basket of Fruit"

### 3. **"The Ambassadors"**

is a renowned oil painting created by *Hans Holbein the Younger* in 1533. The painting depicts two French ambassadors, Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve, standing in a grand room surrounded by various objects and symbols. The painting is notable for its use of anamorphic perspective, which is a technique that distorts the image so that it appears normal only when viewed from a certain angle. At the bottom of the painting, there is a large, elongated object which is revealed to be a skull when viewed from a specific angle. This is recognised as a **memento mori**, a reminder of death and the transience of life. The objects and symbols in the painting are believed to represent various themes, such as knowledge, music, and religion. For instance, the lute on the floor is a symbol of music, while the globe represents knowledge and learning. The painting is also filled with many other symbolic objects, such as the crucifix and the book of mathematics.

"The Ambassadors" (Image :10) is considered to be one of the greatest masterpieces of the Northern Renaissance, and is commended for its intricate details, use of symbolism, and technical skill.





Image :10

"The Ambassadors"

#### 4. "*Still Life with Flowers and Fruit*"

is a painting created by the Flemish Baroque artist *Jan Brueghel the Elder* in 1606. The painting is a beautiful instance of still life painting, a genre that was very popular during the 17th century in the Netherlands and Flanders. The painting depicts a variety of flowers and fruits, arranged in a naturalistic and harmonious way. The composition is carefully balanced, with each element complementing and enhancing the beauty of the others. The flowers include roses, tulips, lilies, and irises, while the fruits include grapes, peaches, cherries, and strawberries. One of the distinctive features of the painting is its use of light and shadow. The flowers and fruits are depicted with a great degree of realism and attention to detail, with each petal, leaf, and fruit carefully rendered. The painting is also notable for its use of vivid colours, which are rich and vibrant.

"Still Life with Flowers and Fruit" (Image:11) is considered to be one of the masterpieces of Flemish Baroque painting, and is commended for its beauty.



Image:11

"Still Life with Flowers and Fruit"





### 5. *"The Sistine Madonna"*

is a painting created between 1513 and 1514 by the Italian Renaissance master *Raphael*. The painting depicts the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus in her arms, with St. Sixtus and St. Barbara standing on either side of them. The painting is named after Pope Sixtus IV, who commissioned the original altarpiece for the Benedictine Monastery of San Sisto in Piacenza, Italy. The painting is recognised for its stunning composition and beautiful use of colour. The figures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus are depicted with a gentle tenderness and an expression of deep love. The cherubs at the bottom of the painting are also a notable feature, with their chubby cheeks and playful expressions.

One of the most striking aspects of the painting is the use of a dark blue curtain as a backdrop, which serves to create a sense of depth and perspective. The painting also features Raphael's signature use of light and shadow, which gives the figures a sense of three-dimensionality.

*"The Sistine Madonna"* (Image:12) is considered to be one of the greatest works of the Italian Renaissance, and is commended for its beauty, elegance, and emotional power. The painting has inspired countless artists and continues to be an important masterpiece in the history of art.



Image:12

*"The Sistine Madonna"*

### 6. *"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp"*

is a painting created in 1632 by the Dutch Golden Age artist *Rembrandt*. The painting depicts a public dissection performed by Dr. Nicolaes Tulp, a prominent Amsterdam physician, on the body of a criminal named Aris Kindt. The painting is notable for its realism and attention to detail, with each figure and object carefully rendered. The painting features a group of men gathered around a table, observing the dissection. Dr. Tulp is shown demonstrating the dissection to the others, while the body of Aris Kindt is partially covered by a white sheet.

One of the most striking aspects of the painting is its use of light and shadow, which gives the figures a sense of depth and dimensionality. The painting also features Rembrandt's characteristic use of Chiaroscuro, with areas of light and dark contrasting sharply with one another. *"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp"* (Image:13) is considered to be one of Rembrandt's most renowned works and a





masterpiece of the Dutch Golden Age. The painting is commended for its technical skill, realism, and the way in which it captures the drama and intensity of the dissection scene.



Image:13

"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp"

### 7. *"Still Life with Drinking-Horn"*

is a painting created by the Dutch Golden Age artist Willem Kalf in 1653. The painting is a classic example of Dutch still life painting, which was a popular genre during the 17th century. The painting depicts a variety of objects arranged on a table, including a drinking horn, a Chinese porcelain bowl, a nautilus shell, and a peeled lemon. The composition is carefully balanced, with each object complementing and enhancing the beauty of the others. One of the distinctive features of the painting is its use of light and shadow. The objects are depicted with a great degree of realism and attention to detail, with each texture and surface carefully rendered. The painting is also notable for its use of strong contrasts between light and dark, which give the objects a sense of solidity and presence. "Still Life with Drinking-Horn"(Image:14) is considered to be one of Kalf's masterpieces, and is commended for its beauty, technical skill, and the way in which it captures the elegance and refinement of Dutch still life painting.



Image:14

. "Still Life with Drinking-Horn"







8. **"Bouquet (1599)"** (Image:15)

by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625) was a Flemish painter. His work consists of many genres like flower still life, history paintings, hunting scenes, landscapes, villages scenes, seascape. He invented new types of paintings like flower garland and gallery paintings in the seventeenth century.



Image:15

. *"Bouquet (1599)"*

9. **"The Red Vineyard"**

is a painting created by the Dutch Post-Impressionist artist Vincent van Gogh in 1888. The painting depicts a vineyard in Arles, France, with workers harvesting grapes under a bright blue sky. The painting is characterised by its bold and vibrant use of colour, with the bright red of the vineyard and the deep blue of the sky contrasting sharply with one another. "The Red Vineyard" (Image:16) is notable for being the only painting that Van Gogh sold during his lifetime. The painting was purchased by Anna Boch, a Belgian painter and collector, and is now part of the permanent collection of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow. The painting is commended for its bold use of colour, its expressive brushwork, and the way in which it captures the beauty and energy of the natural world. The painting is considered to be a masterpiece of Post-Impressionist art and continues to be commended by art lovers and collectors around the world.





Image:16

"The Red Vineyard"

#### 10. *"The Basket of Apples"*

is a painting created by the French Post-Impressionist artist Paul Cézanne in 1893. The painting depicts a basket of apples, a bottle of wine, and a plate, arranged on a table against a plain background. The painting is notable for its use of colour, composition, and brushwork, which are characteristic of Cézanne's unique style. The painting is characterised by its distinctive use of colour, which is muted and subdued compared to the bright, vibrant colours of other Post-Impressionist artists. The colours are applied in thick, impasto brushstrokes, which give the painting a sense of texture and depth. The composition is carefully balanced, with the objects arranged in a way that creates a sense of harmony and symmetry.

"The Basket of Apples" (Image:17) is considered to be one of Cézanne's masterpieces, and is admired for its technical skill, its sense of balance and harmony, and the way in which it captures the beauty of everyday objects. The painting is now part of the permanent collection of the Art Institute of Chicago and is admired by art lovers.



Image: 17

"The Basket of Apples"





# Chapter 6

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## Timely Presentations

### Sixteenth century

#### 6.1 Joachim Buckler

Joachim Buckler (1533-1574) was a Flemish painter known for his still life paintings of the sixteenth century. He was born in Antwerp and was active in the city from the 1550s until his death.

Buckler's still life paintings often depicted everyday objects such as fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, and kitchen utensils. His works were characterised by their attention to detail, vivid colours, and realistic rendering of textures. He was also known for his use of light, which often emphasised the shapes and colours of the objects in his compositions.

One of Buckler's most famous works is "The Four Elements: Earth," which depicts a variety of vegetables, fruits, and grains arranged in a landscape setting. Other notable works include "The Four Elements: Water," "The Four Elements: Air," and "The Four Elements: Fire," which each depict different elements of nature.

Buckler's still life paintings were highly sought after in his time and continue to be admired for their technical mastery and visual appeal today.

#### 6.2 Caravaggio

*Caravaggio (1571-1616)*. The Piousness, pleasure, fury and death the kind that get your hands dirty Caravaggio's paintings hold an unsparing realness well suited to the time and manner in which he lived. There's a word in Italian *sottobosco* ( meaning is undergrowth ) and in art it refers to a subgenre of still life depicting the plants ,fungi and creepy crawlies the inhabit the forest floor the life the thrives in darkness creatures in of the *sottobosco* lurk in some of Caravaggio most exquisite paintings the baby Jesus tramples and snake with his bare foot a symbol of his triumph over sin and otherwise by a pesky lied Caravaggio wasn't a painter of the *sottobosco*.





### 6.3 Seventeenth century

A still life painting of the 17th century is an artistic representation of a group of inanimate objects or objects that are not typically associated with one another. They typically tend to include things like fruits, flowers, dead animals, or household items like jugs and glasses. These paintings often depict everyday objects in unexpected scenarios and are a reflection of the evolving lifestyles of the time. Many of these paintings are intended to be a representation of moral lessons or life lessons. Despite the non-movement captured within these pieces, they can still be powerful and emotive.

### 6.4 Eighteenth century

#### Jean-Baptiste Oudry

*Jean-Baptiste Oudry* was a French Rococo painter active in the 18th century. He is best known for his still lifes (Image:18) (Image:19) , which were renowned for their detailed realism. His tender and restrained treatment of light and texture make these works both beautiful and profound. For his still lifes, Oudry often used natural elements like flowers, fruits, and books, imbuing these everyday objects with a sense of elegance and reverence. These paintings reveal the skill of a master at the height of his craft, securing Oudry's place among the greatest still life artists of the eighteenth century.



Image:18

*Still Life with Dead Game and Peaches (Image:18) in a Landscape, (1727), 80 x 100.3 cm., Birmingham Museum of Art*





Image:19

*The White Duck* (1753), 95.3 x 63.5 cm., Houghton Hall [stolen 1990]

## 6.5 Nineteenth century

### Francisco Goya

Francisco Goya (1746- 1828) was a Spanish painter who is widely considered to be one of the prominent figures of the European romantic movement. Although he painted a variety of subjects, including portraits and history paintings, Goya is especially remembered for his remarkable still life paintings (Image:20)

, which range from wintry still life with dead game hanging from the wall to technically advanced arrangements of fresh flowers and fruits. He is widely credited with revolutionising the genre in the 19th century, through his innovative compositions and use of light and shadow.



Image:20

*Francisco Goya, Still Life with Fruit, Bottles, Breads* (1824–1826)





## 6.6 Twentieth century

### Henri Matisse

Henri Matisse is considered one of the most prominent painters of the 20th century. He is especially known for his unique style of still life painting (Image:21). His works often featured bright and vibrant colours, seemingly simple and neglected subject matters, and an overall feeling of simplicity and harmony. His still life paintings often depicted common objects and food, such as plates of fruit, cups and bottles, and other simple wares and goods placed on tables or in pots. Some of his most famous still life paintings include *Still Life with Geraniums* (1915), *The Snail* (1953), and *Still Life with Oranges and Lemons* (1912)



Image:21

*Still Life with Compote, Apples and Oranges, 1899, The Cone Collection, Baltimore Museum of Art*





# Chapter 7

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## Conclusion

In conclusion, 'Still Life through the Ages' offers a captivating exploration of the evolution of one of the most enduring genres in fine art. From its origins with the ancient Egyptians to the opulent displays of the Baroque era, still life has served as a diverse and meaningful subject throughout history. Artists have employed still life to capture the beauty of nature, convey the fleeting nature of existence, and provide social and cultural commentary.

This book showcases the timeless allure of still life, which continues to inspire contemporary artists today. Whether through traditional oil paintings or experimental mixed media works, still life remains a versatile and evocative theme across various artistic disciplines. Additionally, the book emphasizes the significant role of still life in art education, as it enables students to learn fundamental techniques like composition, lighting, and perspective.

Overall, 'Still Life through the Ages' offers a comprehensive look at the history and significance of this beloved genre. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of fine art or the creative process of artists throughout the ages.

Still Life through the Ages' provides a comprehensive exploration of the history and significance of this beloved genre. A must-read for art enthusiasts and those intrigued by the creative process of artists across different eras.



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'Still Life Through the Ages' is a comprehensive exploration of one of the most enduring genres of fine art. Written by Nikhil Tiwari and projected by students of BFA in their 2nd semester, this book traces the evolution of still life art from its earliest forms to its modern-day interpretations. The book is organized chronologically, with each chapter devoted to a particular period or style.

The students have analyzed major works and artists from each era, providing a thorough and engaging exploration of the subject. They have also contextualized the artwork within the broader historical, cultural, and societal contexts of each period, revealing the ways in which still life has been used by artists to convey complex ideas and messages.

This book is a testament to the enduring appeal of still life as a genre. It is a subject that continues to inspire artists today, and this book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history and evolution of fine art. The book also highlights the important role of still life in art education, making it a must-read for students and educators alike.

With its engaging analysis, stunning visuals, and comprehensive coverage, 'Still Life Through the Ages' is a must-read for art lovers, historians, and anyone with a passion for the fine arts. It is a remarkable achievement by the students of BFA in their 2nd semester, and a valuable addition to the world of art scholarship.



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