

GLOSSARY OF ART TERMS

SCULPTURE TERMS

Bronze	Copper alloy containing about 12% tin that was a popular medium for molded statues or implements in ancient times because of its durability.
Casting	Process by which heated metal is poured into a mold and allowed to solidify in a given shape.
Relief	Sculptural technique that involves making a three dimensional carving on a plane surface. Three styles of Relief sculptures are 'high-relief', 'bas-relief', and 'sunken-relief'.
Bas-Relief	Style of Relief sculpture where images are shallow or flat relative to the plane surface below them. Also called 'low-relief'.
Terra cotta	Refers to clay sculptures or moldings that have been heated in an oven. Literal meaning is 'baked earth'.
Ceramic	Comes from the Greek word for pottery, but refers to earthenware covered with glossy enamel paint that has been hardened by heating.
Baldacchino	A Baldachin is a canopy set over a throne or altar. The term Baldacchino usually refers to Bernini's ornate canopy over the altar at St. Peter's Basilica.
Pieta	Image of Sorrowful Mary holding the body of Jesus. The term often refers to the famous statue of Michelangelo in St. Peter's Basilica.

PAINTING TERMS

Fresco	Painting technique whereby water colors are applied directly onto wet plaster to make a mural permanently embedded in a wall or ceiling.
Icon	From the Greek word for 'image'. Now refers to wooden tablets featuring a holy person painted on a gold background.
Perspective	Artistic technique intended to achieve realistic proportions in landscape scenes by sizing images correctly.
Triptych	Work of art painted or carved onto three side-by-side panels that are hinged together so they can be folded shut.
Altarpiece	Piece of art that has been created to adorn the area behind the altar of a Christian church. It may be a painting, sculpture, icon, mosaic or tapestry.
Tempera	Type of paint used egg yolk mixed with pigments. Popular for its durability, but not as versatile as oil.
Pigments	Colored earth minerals, such as clays, stones, and metals that can be ground into powder and added to paints, inks, glazes.
Dyes	Coloring substances that can be absorbed by textiles, usually derived from plant or animal parts.
Mural	Work of art painted directly on a wall, ceiling or other large permanent surface.

MANUSCRIPT AND PRINT TERMS

Engraving	Process involving the transferring pen and ink drawings to metal plates to be reproduced on a printing press. Popularized by Albrecht Durer.
Etching	Process that uses acid to wear away portions of a metal plate that are not protected by a coating to create illustrations on metal, acid to wear away.
Illumination	Decoration of a medieval manuscript with illustrations or lettering in gold, silver, or other brilliant colors.
Parchment	Ancient writing material made from the skin of animals, usually lambs, goats, or calves
Vellum	Finest quality parchment, usually made from calfskin or lambskin.
Manuscript	Handwritten document (means written by hand). Before printing, all books and documents were manuscripts.
Codex	Manuscript written on flat sheets of parchment or paper and bound together in 'book' form, rather than being rolled as a scroll.

OTHER ART FORMS

Mosaic	Decorative image or pattern made by inlaying small pieces of colored tile, marble, or glass onto a surface.
Stained Glass	Art form using pieces of colored glass held together by lead. Developed in the early Middle Ages to create sacred images for church windows.
Tapestry	Fabric wall hangings featuring elaborate weaving of designs or pictures using brightly colored threads. Popular in Flanders during the Middle Ages.

OTHER ART TERMS

Renaissance	Literal meaning is 'rebirth'. Refers to the cultural flowering of arts and sciences at the end of the middle ages, especially in Italy.
Renaissance Man	Refers to someone who is an expert in a wide variety of related fields in the arts and sciences such as Leonardo da Vinci. Also known as a Polymath .
Iconoclast	Literal meaning is 'breaker of images'. Used to describe the movement in the Eastern church to discourage the veneration of religious images.
Beeldenstorm	Dutch term, meaning 'statue storm', used to describe riotous destruction of religious imagery in Northern Europe during the Protestant rebellion.

SAINTS IMPORTANT TO ARTISTS

St. Luke	Patron Saint of Artists . Thought to have painted the first icon of Mary on wood.
St. Catherine of Bologna	Patron Saint of Artists . Fifteenth century Italian abbess known for her writings and paintings.
St. John of Damascus	Syrian Monk who lived under Moslem rule and defended the Eastern Church from Iconoclast heresy . Doctor of the Church also known as John Damascene.
St. Castorius	One of the Four Crowned Martyrs and Patron of Sculptors . Four carvers killed under Diocletian when they refused to make a statue of a Pagan god.