

Why Western Art is Unique, and Why Muslim Immigration Threatens It

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I'd like to dwell on one aspect of Western culture that tends to be downplayed, but is quite important: We are the only culture in the history of mankind to develop realistic, faithful depictions of beings and matter in our paintings and sculptures, rather than merely stylized depictions. We are also the only culture to invent a way to depict three-dimensional subjects in a two-dimensional format. A similar perspective was lacking in all other types of early art, be that Chinese or Japanese, Indian, Mesoamerican, African or Middle Eastern. This could conceivably be because the Western man has perceived space and spatial relationships in a different way than other men. Westerners are different, from a very long time back.

What does this mean for our civilization? We need to understand why the West is so different from all other human cultures, and why it has produced so many different results.

Egyptian art was dedicated to preserving the body for the afterlife. Artists drew from memory, according to strict rules. Early Greek art was modelled on the Egyptian one, but the Greeks moved away from this after a while. This gives a good indication of who is "Western." The Greeks were Westerners, which we can detect in their philosophies as well as in their art. The Egyptians, although they created an advanced civilization that influenced both the Greco-Roman and to a lesser extent the Judeo-Christian strands of the West, were not Westerners. The same thing goes for the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and other Mesopotamian cultures.

In the brilliant book [The Story of Art](#), writer E.H. Gombrich explains this. For an Egyptian artist, "once he had mastered all these rules he had finished his apprenticeship. No one wanted anything different, no one asked him to be 'original'. On the contrary, he was probably considered the best artist who could make his statues most like the admired monuments of the past. So it happened that in the course of three thousand years or more Egyptian art changed very little. Everything that was considered good and beautiful in the age of the pyramids was held to be just as excellent a thousand years later."

As American blogger [Lawrence Auster comments](#): "Let's remember to give the Egyptians credit for first developing the beautiful human form, which the Greeks then adopted and made more alive. Camille Paglia is mostly silly, but be sure to read the first chapter of her book *Sexual Personae*, where she discusses the Egyptian creation of the clear, perfect, 'Apollonian' form which became the basis of Western art. [...] In a sense, the artists of the Athenian Golden Age were expressing in stone what Homer had expressed centuries earlier in poetry: those special moments in life when the hero 'seemed like something more than man.' Or like the scene in the Iliad (Book III, 156-58) where the old men on the wall of Troy see Helen approach, and say to each other:

'Surely there is no blame on Trojans and strong-greaved Achaians
If for long time they suffer hardship for a woman like this one.
Terrible is the likeness of her face to immortal goddesses.'"

According to Auster, "the Hebrews, who along with the Greeks were the precursors of Christian and Western culture, amazingly experienced God as (or rather God revealed himself to them as) both the Creator of the universe and as a Person having a personal relationship with men, as in this passage from Genesis (17:1-4): 'And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.'"

There was only one major exception to the established Egyptian tradition, and that was the heretical Pharaoh Akhenaten in the 14th century B.C. The art [depicting him and his wife Nefertiti](#) is naturalistic, unlike anything before in Egyptian history, and may have been inspired by that of the Minoan culture on the island of Crete, by many considered to be the first European civilization. Some of this style is still discernible in objects found in the tomb of Tutankhaten, believed to be son of Akhenaten, who later changed his name to Tutankhamun as the old religion was reestablished. Even though the artistic legacy of Akhenaten was quickly forgotten, his religious ideas may have proven more durable. His insistence on worshipping one supreme god, Aten, makes him a pioneer in monotheism. It has been speculated, though

disputed by some and difficult to prove, that his ideas may have inspired those of Moses, which led to the creation of Judaism and, by extension, Christianity.

What is less disputed is that the earliest alphabet, the ancestor of nearly every alphabet used around the globe, including, via Phoenician, the Greek and the Latin ones, was partly derived from certain Egyptian hieroglyphs representing syllables.

Greek artists studied and imitated Egyptian art, but experimented and decided to look for themselves instead of following any traditional, ready-made formula. As Gombrich says, "The Greeks began to use their eyes. Once this revolution had begun, there was no stopping it." It is surely no coincidence that this Great Awakening of art to freedom took place in the hundred years between, roughly, 520 and 420 BC, in Greek city-states such as Athens where philosopher Socrates challenged our ideas about the world:

"It was here, above all, that the greatest and most astonishing revolution in the whole history of art bore fruit. [...] The great revolution of Greek art, the discovery of natural forms and of foreshortening, happened at the time which is altogether the most amazing period of human history." This art was later spread far beyond the borders of Greece, when Alexander the Great and later the Romans brought Hellenistic art to Persia, Afghanistan and India:

"Even in far-distant India, the Roman way of telling a story, and of glorifying a hero, was adopted by artists who set themselves the task of illustrating the story of a peaceful conquest, the story of the Buddha. The art of sculpture had flourished in India long before the Hellenistic influence reached the country; but it was in the frontier region of Gandhara that the figure of Buddha was first shown in the reliefs which became the model for later Buddhist art. [...] Greek and Roman art, which had taught men to visualize gods and heroes in beautiful form, also helped the Indians to create an image of their saviour. The beautiful head of the Buddha, with its expression of deep repose, was also made in this frontier region of Gandhara."

The beautiful [Bayeux Tapestry](#), which illustrates the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, is also a picture-chronicle similar to the ones used in ancient Rome to depict an epic tale.

Buddhism spread from India to the rest of Asia, and brought with it these influences from Western art. This is highly significant if we remember that the invention of woodblock printing during the Tang dynasty in China (7th or 8th century AD) was intimately linked to Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist art. Alexander the Great may also have brought with him inked seals to India during his invasion, and Indian merchants later introduced them to the Chinese. Stamped figures of the Buddha marked the transition from seal impression to woodcut in China. The oldest surviving printed texts from East Asia are Buddhist scriptures. Printing was thus used to promulgate a specific religion, just like Gutenberg's printing press in Europe was later used to print Bibles.

The Islamic Middle East, however, for centuries rejected both the Eastern and the Western printing traditions due to religious intolerance (they thought that their sacred books would no longer be scriptures if they were printed) and hostility towards pictorial arts. And they suffered all the more for it.

However, although Western styles did influence Asians, this did not change their fundamentally different view of art. Again according to Gombrich, "religious art in China came to be employed less for telling the legends of the Buddha and the Chinese teachers, less for the teaching of a particular doctrine – as Christian art was to be employed in the Middle Ages – than as an aid to the practice of meditation. Devout artists began to paint water and mountains in a spirit of reverence, not in order to teach any particular lesson, nor merely as decorations, but to provide material for deep thought. Their pictures on silk scrolls were kept in precious containers and only unrolled in quiet moments, to be looked at and pondered over as one might open a book of poetry and read and reread a beautiful verse. That is the purpose behind the greatest of the Chinese landscape paintings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."

Chinese artists wanted to capture the beauty and mood of a particular landscape as they remembered it, and use this as an inspiration for meditation. They considered it "childish to look for details in pictures" and then compare them with the real world, the way Westerners did. Gombrich again:

"There is something wonderful in this restraint of Chinese art, in its deliberate limitation to a few simple motifs of nature. But it almost goes without saying that this approach to painting also had its dangers. As time went on, nearly every type of brushstroke with which a stem of bamboo or a rugged rock could be painted was laid down and labelled by tradition, and so great was the general admiration for the works of the past that artists dared less and less to rely on their own inspiration. The standards of painting remained very high throughout the subsequent centuries both in China and in Japan (which adopted the Chinese conceptions) but art became more and more like a graceful and elaborate game which has lost much of its interest as so many of its moves are known. It was only after a new contact with the achievements of Western art in the eighteenth century that Japanese artists dared to apply the Eastern methods to new subjects."

In the eighteenth century, "perhaps under the influence of European prints, Japanese artists had abandoned the traditional motifs of Far Eastern art, and had chosen scenes from low life as a subject for colour woodcuts, which combined great boldness of invention with masterly technical perfection. Japanese connoisseurs did not think very highly of these cheap products. They preferred the austere traditional manner. When Japan was forced, in the middle of the nineteenth century, to enter into trade relations with Europe and America, these prints were often used as wrappings and padding, and could be picked up cheaply in tea-shops. Artists of Manet's circle were among the first to appreciate their beauty, and to collect them eagerly."

In the second half of the nineteenth century, before and after the Meiji Restoration which fused traditional Japanese culture with Western culture and made Japan into an industrial, but also a colonial power, the Japanese adopted many Western concepts. Although they were heavily influenced by Western art (even the popular manga cartoons of today were probably invented through inspiration from Western political cartoons), the influence in this period was two-sided. Japanese art had a profound impact on Impressionists and painters such as Vincent van Gogh in the West.

There is a classical, Western way to create 3-D illusions on a 2-D surface that is called "tonal perspective," the creation of a 3-D illusion using light and shadow patterns to describe mass. The beautiful **Alexander Mosaic** in the Roman city of Pompeii, Italy, from about 200 B.C. shows a battle between the armies of Alexander the Great and Darius III of Persia. The use of light creates a 3-D cheekbone for Alexander and a 3-D set of knuckles for his hand. Linear perspective was developed later during the Italian Renaissance, starting with Giotto, but developed fully in the early 15th century into the geometrical method of perspective by Filippo Brunelleschi. It was used with great skill by other artists in Florence, for instance Donatello, and Leonardo da Vinci added his own techniques on top of this. Western art has always been radically different from all other forms of art, which is why the first Western influence that spread across much of Asia was artistic (Hellenistic to Buddhist art). It's ridiculous to claim, as Western Multiculturalists do, that the pictorial art of Raphael during the Renaissance was somehow influenced by "Arab thought." How many frescoes are there in mosques?

In his book [*What Went Wrong?*](#) historian Bernard Lewis tracks how Western inventions such as the mechanical clock and the Christian (Gregorian) calendar had a profound impact on not just the Middle East, but the entire non-Western world:

"Western perceptions – and measurement – of time and space also had an impact on art and music. We can see the influences of European art on the miniature at quite an early date, even as far east as Iran. One of the attractions of Western art and particularly of Western portraiture must surely have been the use of perspective, which made possible a degree of realism and accuracy unattainable in the stylized and rather formal art of the traditional miniature. Pictures of the Ka'ba in Mecca, the holiest shrine of Islam, were widely disseminated in the Ottoman lands and elsewhere. These were of course schematic representations. Sometime in the early eighteenth century a European artist, presumably having obtained one of these pictures, redrew it in the European style, that is, in perspective. It appears on a musical clock, made in England for the Turkish market. [...] As the perception and measurement of space affected the visual arts, so too did the perception and measurement of time affect music – though to a much lesser extent."

That the Islamic world was less affected by Western influences in music than in most other fields is significant. This was probably due to the fact that if you want to play the works of Mozart or Beethoven, you also have to think and feel like the infidel composers, which is abhorrent to a Muslim. Lewis also notes that one defining feature of European classical music is that the various participants play as individuals, yet at the same time cooperate towards a common goal. He believes this tells us something about Western attitudes:

"A distinguishing characteristic of Western music is polyphony, by harmony or counterpoint. [...] Different performers play together, from different scores, producing a result that is greater than the sum of its parts. With a little imagination one may discern the same feature in other aspects of Western culture – in democratic politics and in team games, both of which require the cooperation, in harmony if not in unison, of different performers playing different parts in a common purpose."

It is not a coincidence that the Islamic world was slow at adopting cultural inventions from the outside world. Muslims tend to be at best indifferent towards non-Muslim cultures, past or present, at worst actively hostile. Saladin or Salah al-Din, the twelfth century general loved by Muslims for his victories against the Crusaders, is renowned even in Western history for his supposedly tolerant nature. Very few seem to remember that his son [Al-Aziz Uthman](#), who was presumably influenced by his father's religious convictions, tried to demolish the Great Pyramid of Giza, Egypt, only three years after his father's death in 1193. The reason why we can still visit them today is because the task at hand was so big that he eventually gave up the attempt. He did, however, manage to inflict visible damage to Menkaure's Pyramid, the smallest of the three. It is tempting to view this as a continuation of his father's Jihad against non-Muslims:

[When king Al-Aziz Othman](#), son of [Saladdin] succeeded his father, he let himself be persuaded by some people from his Court, who were devoid of good sense, to demolish the pyramids. One started with the red pyramid, which is the third of the great pyramids, and the smallest. [...] They brought there a large number of workmen from all around, and supported them at great cost. They stayed there for eight whole months [...] This happened in the year 593 [i.e. 1196 AD]." (transl. SACY, Description de l'Egypte IX, 468)

The legend that the missing nose of the Great Sphinx at Giza was removed by Napoléon Bonaparte's artillery during the French expedition to Egypt 1798-1801 is incorrect. Sketches indicate that the nose was gone long before this. The Egyptian fifteenth century historian al-Maqrizi attributes the act to Muhammad Sa'im al-Dahr, a Sufi Muslim. According to al-Maqrizi, in the fourteenth century, upon discovering that local peasants made offerings to the Sphinx, al-Dahr became furious at their idolatry and decided to destroy the statue, managing only to break off its nose. It is hard to confirm whether this story is accurate, but if it is, it demonstrates that Sufis are not always the soft and tolerant Muslims they are made out to be.

Far from damaging the Sphinx, the French expedition brought large numbers of scientists to Egypt to catalogue the ancient monuments, thus founding modern Egyptology. The trilingual Rosetta Stone, discovered in 1799, was employed by philologist Jean-François Champollion to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822. In this task, Champollion made extensive use of the [Coptic language](#). Arab Muslims had controlled Egypt for more than a thousand years, yet never managed to decipher the hieroglyphs nor for the most part displayed much interest in doing so. Westerners did so in a single generation after they reappeared in force in Egypt. So much for "Arab science." And they did so with the help of the language of the Copts, the Egyptian Christians, the only remnant of ancient Egypt that the Arab invaders hadn't managed to completely eradicate.

Sita Ram Goel and other writers have tracked the destruction of numerous pre-Islamic temples in India in the book [Hindu Temples - What Happened to Them](#). Infidels would be well-advised not to believe that such cultural Jihad is a thing of the past. Within a few years, thousands of churches have been destroyed in Indonesia, and many more Serb Orthodox churches and monasteries have been damaged by Muslims in Kosovo and Bosnia. An attack on statues at a museum in Cairo by a veiled woman screaming, "[Infidels, infidels!](#)" shocked the outside world. She had been [inspired by Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa](#), who quoted a saying of the prophet Muhammad that sculptors will be among those receiving the harshest punishment on Judgment Day. The influential Sheikh Youssef Al Qaradawi agreed that "Islam prohibits

statues and three-dimensional figures of living creatures" and concluded that "the statues of ancient Egyptians are prohibited."

The great [Bamiyan Buddhas](#) in Afghanistan were demolished by the Taliban regime in 2001, who decreed that they would destroy images deemed "offensive to Islam." The Taliban Information Minister complained that "The destruction work is not as easy as people would think. You can't knock down the statues by dynamite or shelling as both of them have been carved in a cliff. They are firmly attached to the mountain." The statues, 53 meters and 36 meters tall, the tallest standing Buddha statues in the world, turned out to be so hard to destroy that the Taliban needed help from Pakistani and [Saudi engineers](#) to finish the job. Finally, after almost a month of non-stop bombardment with dynamite and artillery, they succeeded.

Judging from the experiences with the Bamiyan Buddhas, it is tempting to conclude that the only reason why the pyramids of Egypt have survived to this day is because they were so big that it proved too complicated, costly and time-consuming for Muslims to destroy them. Had Saladin's son Al-Aziz had modern technology and engineers at his disposal, they might well have ended up like countless Hindu temples in India or Buddhist statues in Central Asia.

As a European, I fear for the future of the Louvre in Paris, the National Gallery in London, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and Michelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. There is every reason to believe that they will end up the same way as the Bamiyan Buddhas. Although it may not happen today, tomorrow or even the day after tomorrow, sooner or later, pious Muslims will burn these works of art, and doubtlessly consider it their sacred duty. Muslim immigration now threatens many of the masterworks of the Western tradition of art, the most inventive and groundbreaking mankind has ever seen, with annihilation. History will never forgive us for our cowardice and stupidity if we allow these treasures to be destroyed just because we think history is boring or don't want to say anything unfashionable about other cultures.

The official reason given by Muslims for why non-Muslims are not allowed to visit the cities of Mecca and Medina is because they might damage or destroy the Islamic Holy Sites. But since Muslims have a proven track record of more than a thousand years, from Malaysia to Armenia, of destroying non-Muslim places of worship or works of art, perhaps we should then, in return, be entitled to keep Muslims permanently away from our cultural treasures?