

Rococo



The Century of Louis XV
1700 - 1800

The Marquise de Pompadour became the mistress of Louis XV, king of France, in 1745. François Boucher painted this portrait, which hangs in the Louvre museum in Paris, France



Outline

- Introduction
- Part I. The 18th century in France
- Part II. Characteristics of Rococo
- Part III. Rococo Masters
- Conclusion

Introduction

- ❑ Rococo art, which flourished in France and Germany was in many respects a continuation of the baroque, particularly in the use of light and shadow and compositional movement
- ❑ Rejected the traditional themes of heroes and mythology and instead focused on representing the carefree life of the aristocratic patrons of the arts
- ❑ This style received its name in the nineteenth century, designating a whimsical fashion style (*style rocaille*)
- ❑ Rocaille: small stones used to decorate.

Part I. The 18th century in France

- ❑ Louis XV, king of France (1715-74), whose failure to provide strong leadership and badly needed reforms contributed to the crisis that brought on the French Revolution
- ❑ Marquise de Pompadour, influential mistress of Louis XV, known for her patronage of art and literature
- ❑ In 1745 French population 25 million; 28 million in 1789
- ❑ Emergence of the intellectual movement called the Enlightenment

Part II. Characteristics of Rococo

- ❑ Emphasis on portraying the carefree life of the aristocracy rather than on grand heroes or pious martyrs
- ❑ Love and romance as subjects rather than history and religion
- ❑ Free, graceful movement
- ❑ Lighthearted
- ❑ Playful use of line
- ❑ Delicate colors
- ❑ Complex compositions
- ❑ Genre painting came back into favor
- ❑ *fêtes galantes* (fashionable outdoor gatherings)

Part III. Rococo painters

- ❑ Among rococo painters, Jean-Antoine Watteau is known for his ethereal pictures of elegantly dressed lovers in outdoor settings
- ❑ Highly popular also were mythological and pastoral scenes, including lighthearted and graceful depictions of women, by Fragonard and Chardin

a. Watteau

- ❑ **Watteau, Jean-Antoine (1684-1721)**
- ❑ French painter, regarded as one of the outstanding artists of the Rococo period
- ❑ Moved to Paris in 1702
- ❑ Worked with Gillot, simulating his interest in theatrical costume and scenes from daily life
- ❑ Watteau had many loyal friends and supporters who recognized his genius, however his reputation suffered with the Revolution and the growth of Neoclassicism

The Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera

1717

Louvre

Paris, France

This picture was Watteau's diploma piece for the Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.

The general atmosphere of the painting is Venetian, and the distant mountains in their blue haze recall Leonardo.

Soft, dream-like atmosphere,
luxurious costumes, dainty figures,
silvery colours



b. Fragonard

- ❑ **Fragonard, Jean-Honoré (1732-1806)**
- ❑ French painter of the Rococo age, became a favorite in the courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI
- ❑ His most familiar works are characterized by delicate hedonism
- ❑ Studied under artist François Boucher
- ❑ In 1752, Fragonard's elementary training completed, Boucher recommended that he compete for a Prix de Rome scholarship, which meant studying under Carle Van Loo, in Paris
- ❑ In 1756, after winning the scholarship he set off for the French Academy at Rome
- ❑ A prodigiously active artist, he produced more than 550 paintings, several thousand drawings (although many hundreds are known to be lost), and 35 etchings
- ❑ His style, based primarily on that of Rubens: rapid, vigorous, fluent, never tight or fussy

The Swing

1767

Oil on canvas

Wallace Collection,
London

Aristocracy liked to frolic, pamper their pets, play on elegant swings, and engage in idle gossip.



c. Chardin

- ❑ **Chardin, Jean Baptiste Siméon (1699-1779)**
- ❑ One of the greatest genre painters of the 18th century
- ❑ Embodies the frivolity and elegant superficiality of French court life at the middle of the 18th century
- ❑ In 1727-31 he was in Italy, and on his return was soon busy as a versatile fashionable artist
- ❑ Favourite artist of Louis XV's most famous mistress, Mme de Pompadour, to whom he gave lessons and whose portrait he painted several times

Winter

1735
Oil on canvas
Frick Collection,
New York



Conclusion

- ❑ Style of the aristocracy: it revealed a taste for what is clear and elegant, refined and gallant
- ❑ Life without worry, closely related to nature
- ❑ Its influence on French architecture is limited, yet it reaches Germany with some success
- ❑ The 1789 French Revolution interrupted the development of Rococo
- ❑ Rococo was eventually replaced by Neoclassicism, which was the popular style of the American and French revolutions

References

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