The Evolution of Vision: 1850–1900

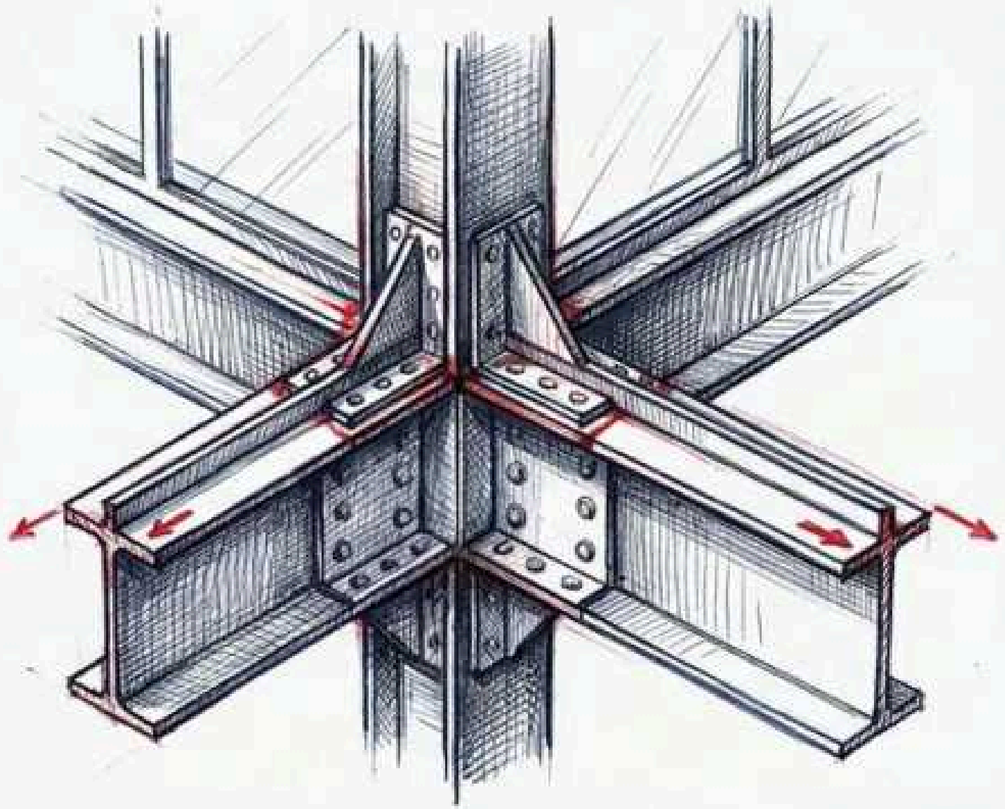
¶ 4.1

Realism → Impressionism (Modern Paris) → Post-Impressionism

Cézanne
van Gogh
Gauguin

bridge to new paths

* Iron & Glass architecture
* First Women Admitted to Art Schools

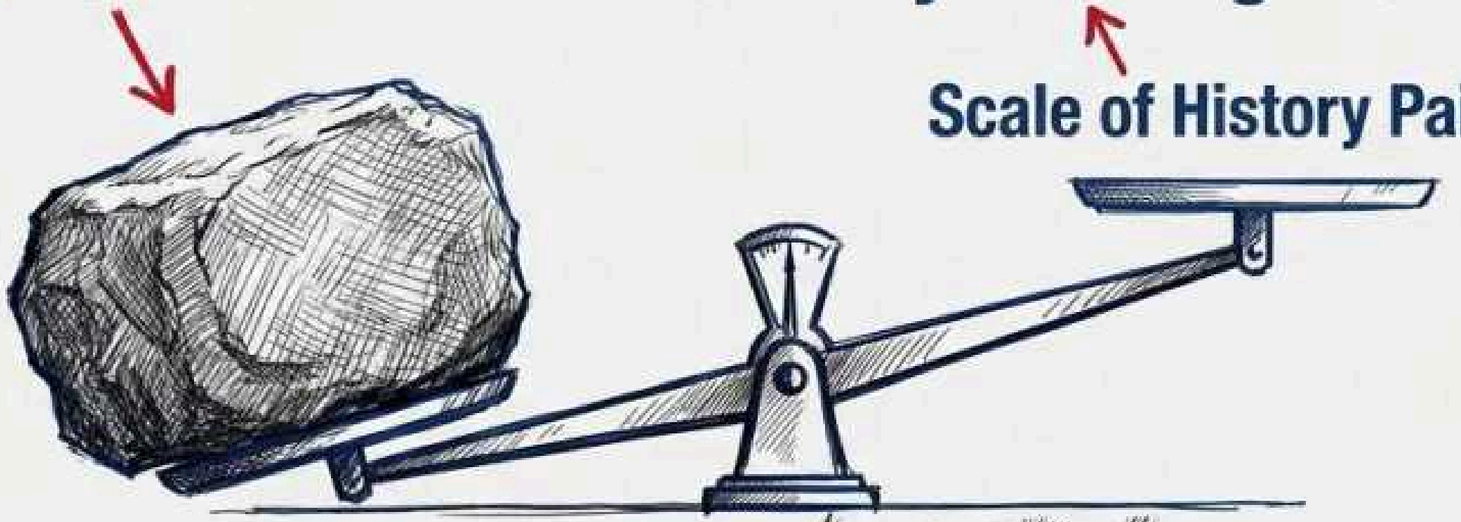




REALISM: THE SCALE OF LABOR

¶ 4.2

Ordinary Labour × Scale of History Painting = Political Shock



Gustave Courbet (1849):
Cannot paint an angel because I have never seen one. *seen one.*

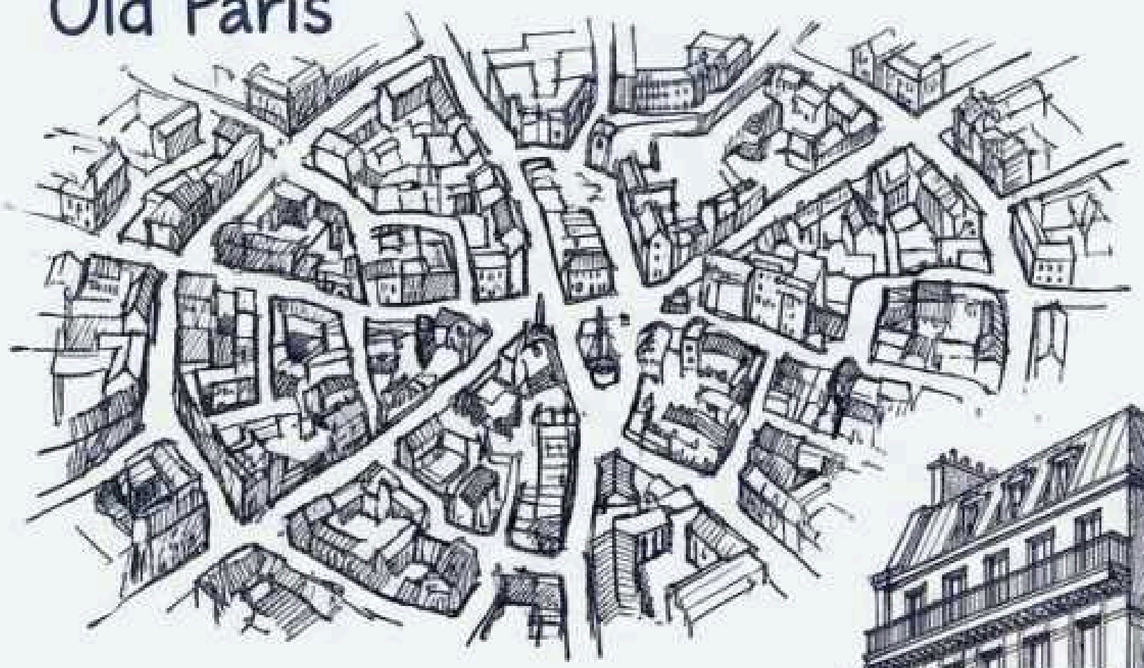


Jean-François Millet (1857):
Elevating the peasant to life-size importance. *life-size importance.*

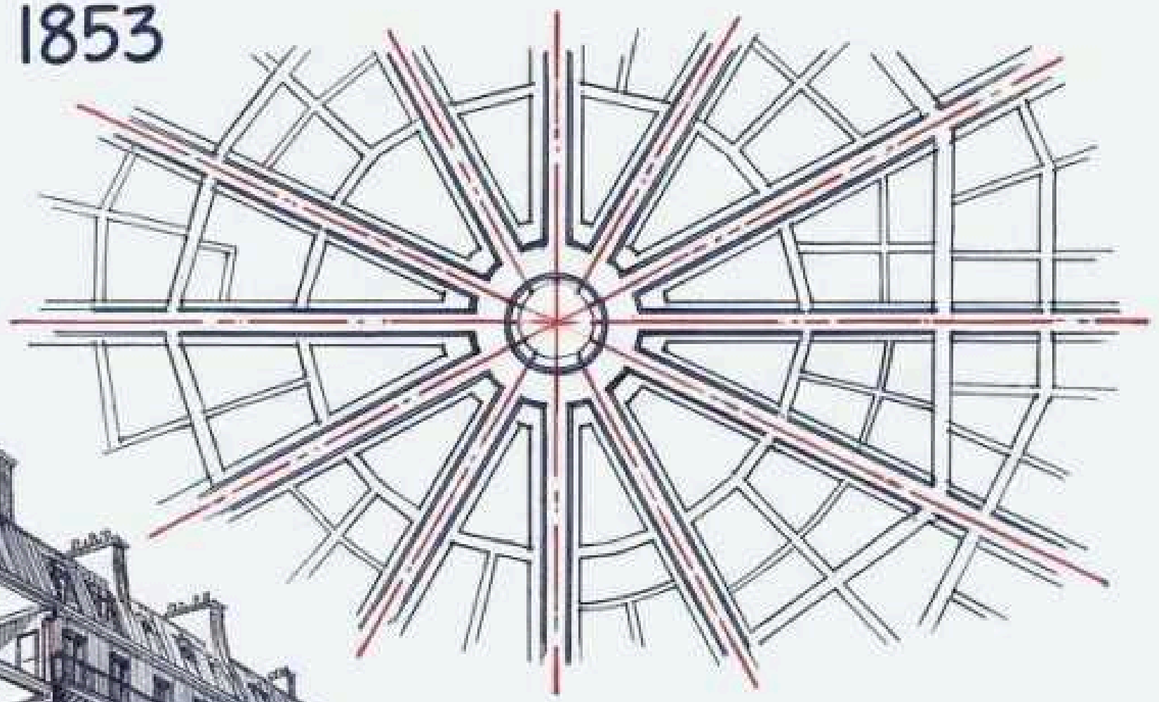
The Modern Metropolis: Haussmann's Paris

¶4.3

Old Paris



1853



New Infrastructure = Cafés, theatres, department stores, railway stations.

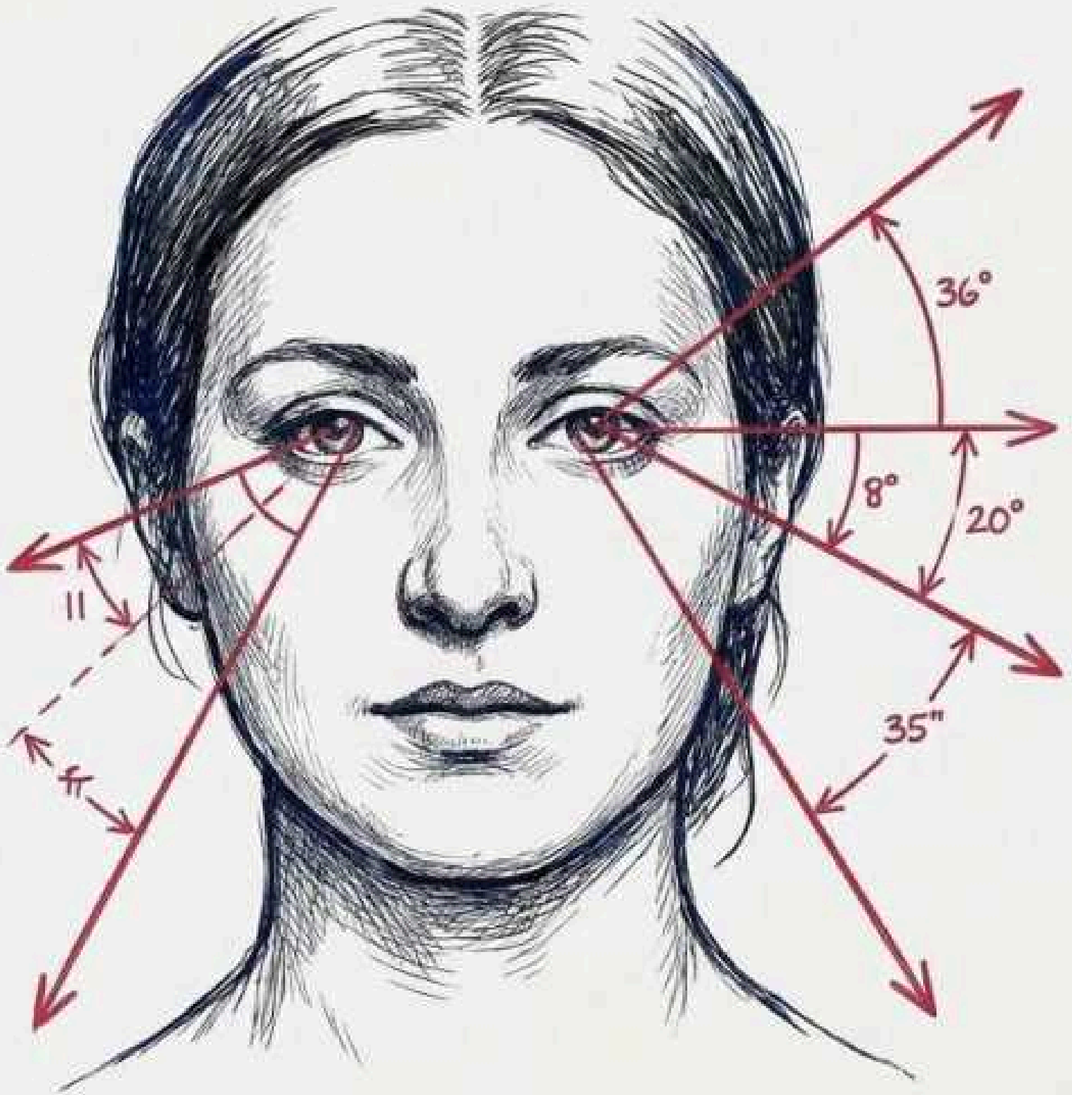


The Result: Academic subjects (saints and heroes) became obsolete in a restless, modern city.

Manet and the Salon des Refusés

¶ 4.4

Salon Jury Rejections → Napoleon III → Salon des Refusés (1863)

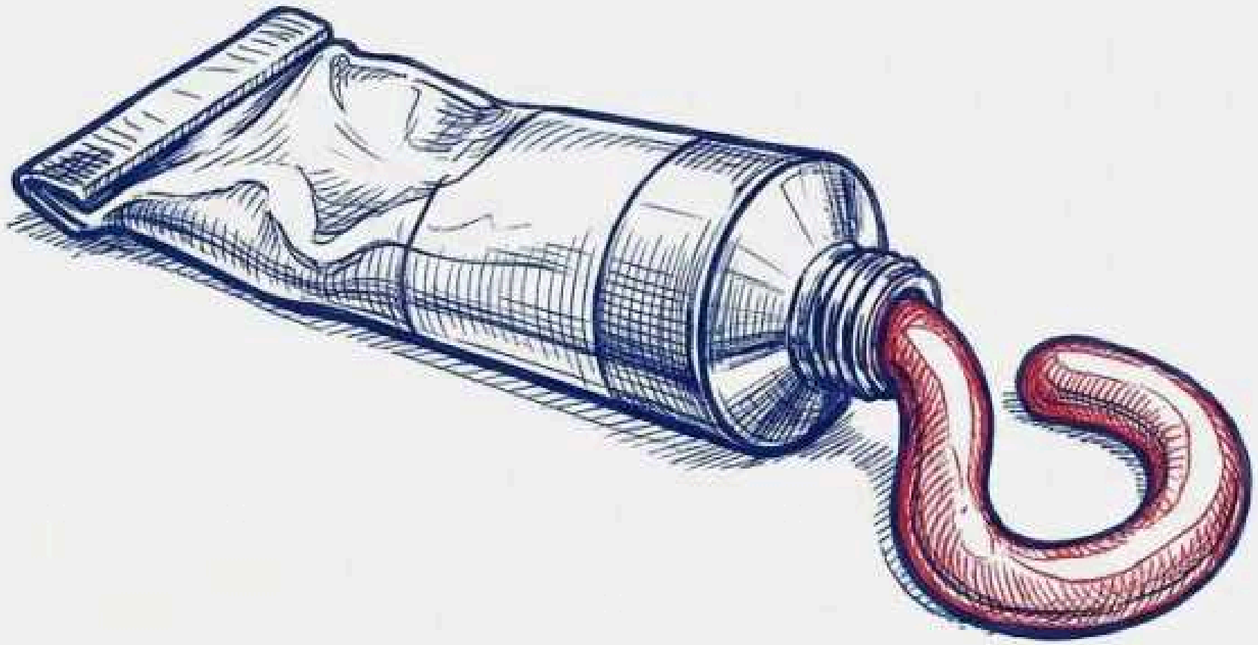


The Anatomy of Uproar:
Nude woman + Clothed men + Calm, direct gaze = **Shock.**

¶ 4.5

The Formula for En Plein Air

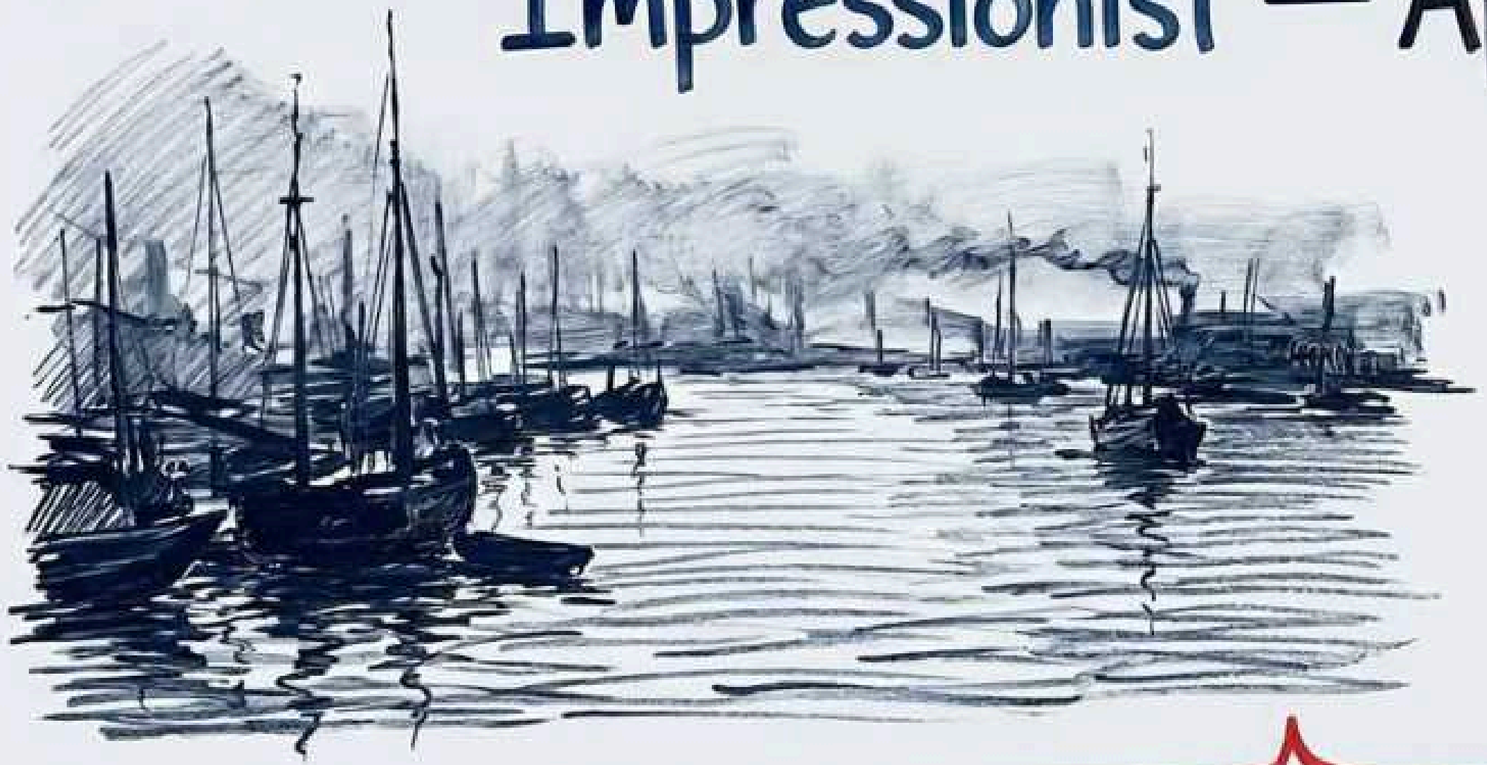
$$\Delta \text{Art} = \left(\frac{\text{Metal Paint Tubes (1841)} + \text{Railways}}{\text{Colour Theory} + \text{Photography}} \right) \times \text{Speed}$$



- Variables of change: Shifting from slow studio finish to outdoor spontaneity.
- Output: Light study, capturing fleeting effects, rapid visible brushstrokes.

Impressionist — April 1874

¶ 4.6



Coined as a mockery by a critic; adopted as a movement.

Shared Variable:
Light + Modern Life

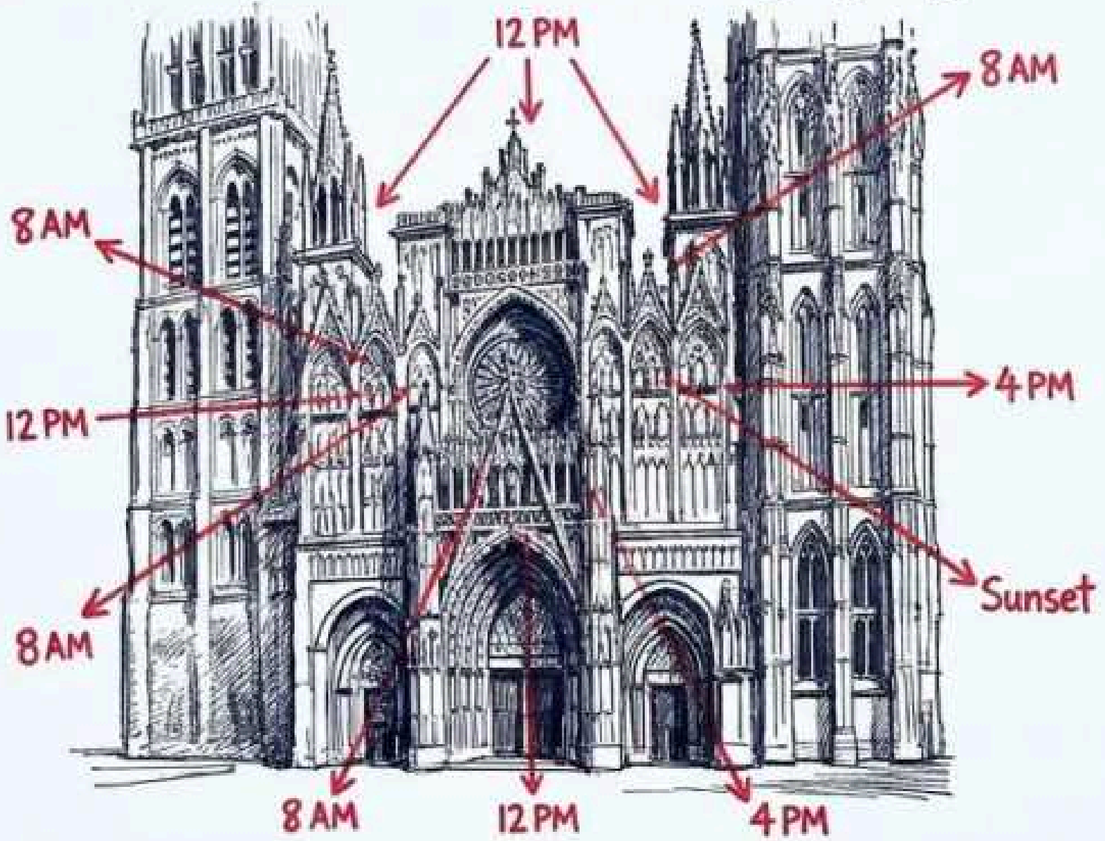
1874 1876 1877 1879 1880 1881 1882 1886

The Official Salon

Diverging Lenses: Light vs. Warmth

¶ 4.7

Claude Monet (f(x) = Changing Light)



Iterative loops: Haystacks → Cathedral →
↳ Water lilies at Giverny.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (f(y) = Human Warmth)



Focus on social enjoyment and human connection.

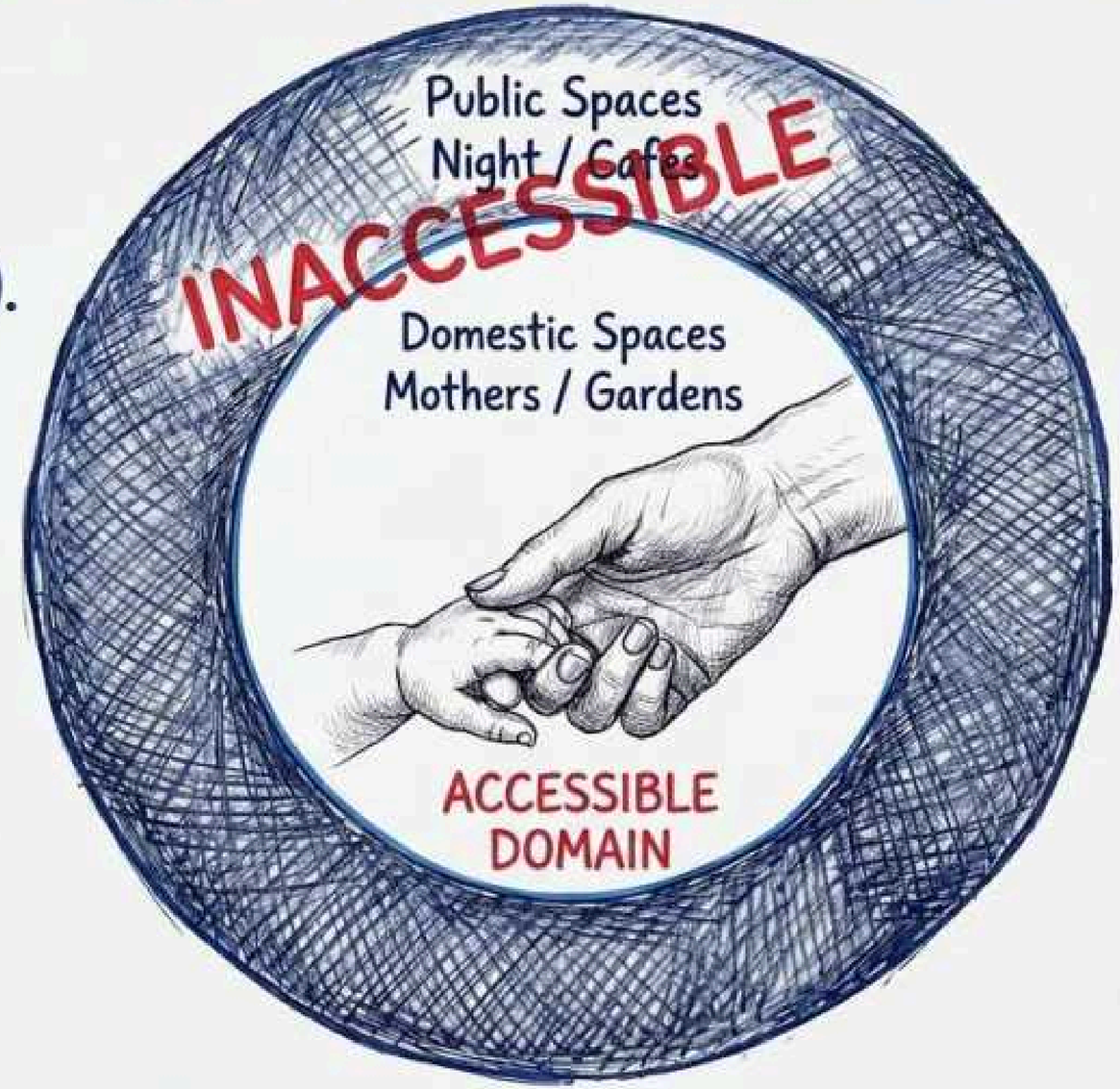
The Boundaries of Observation

¶ 4.8

Berthe Morisot (exhibited in 7 of 8 Impressionist shows).

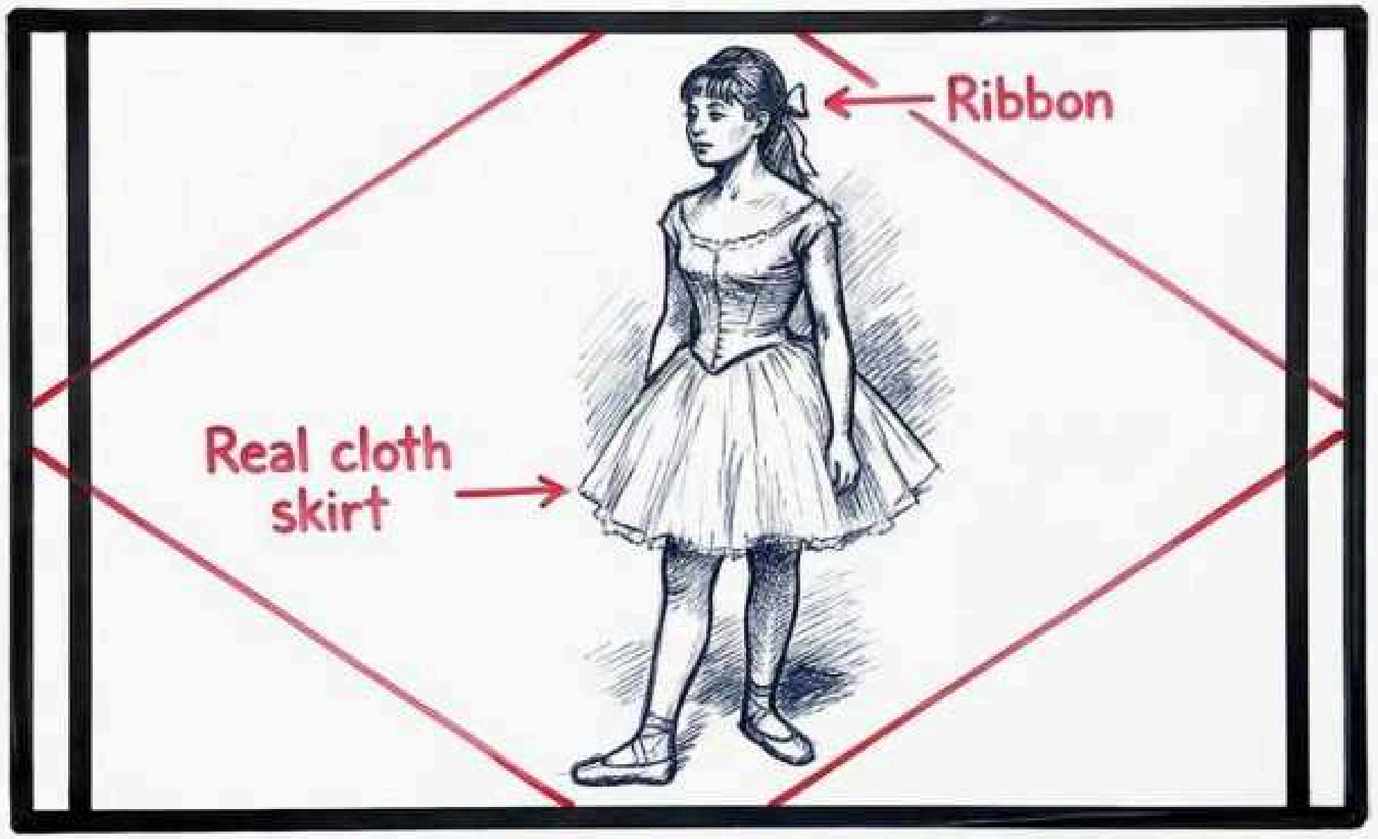
Mary Cassatt (American, joined in 1879).

Legacy: Work currently valued for immense freshness and intelligence.



Edgar Degas: Calculating Movement and Angle

¶ 4.9



Focus equation: Movement > Sunlight.

Influences: Photography + Japanese prints.

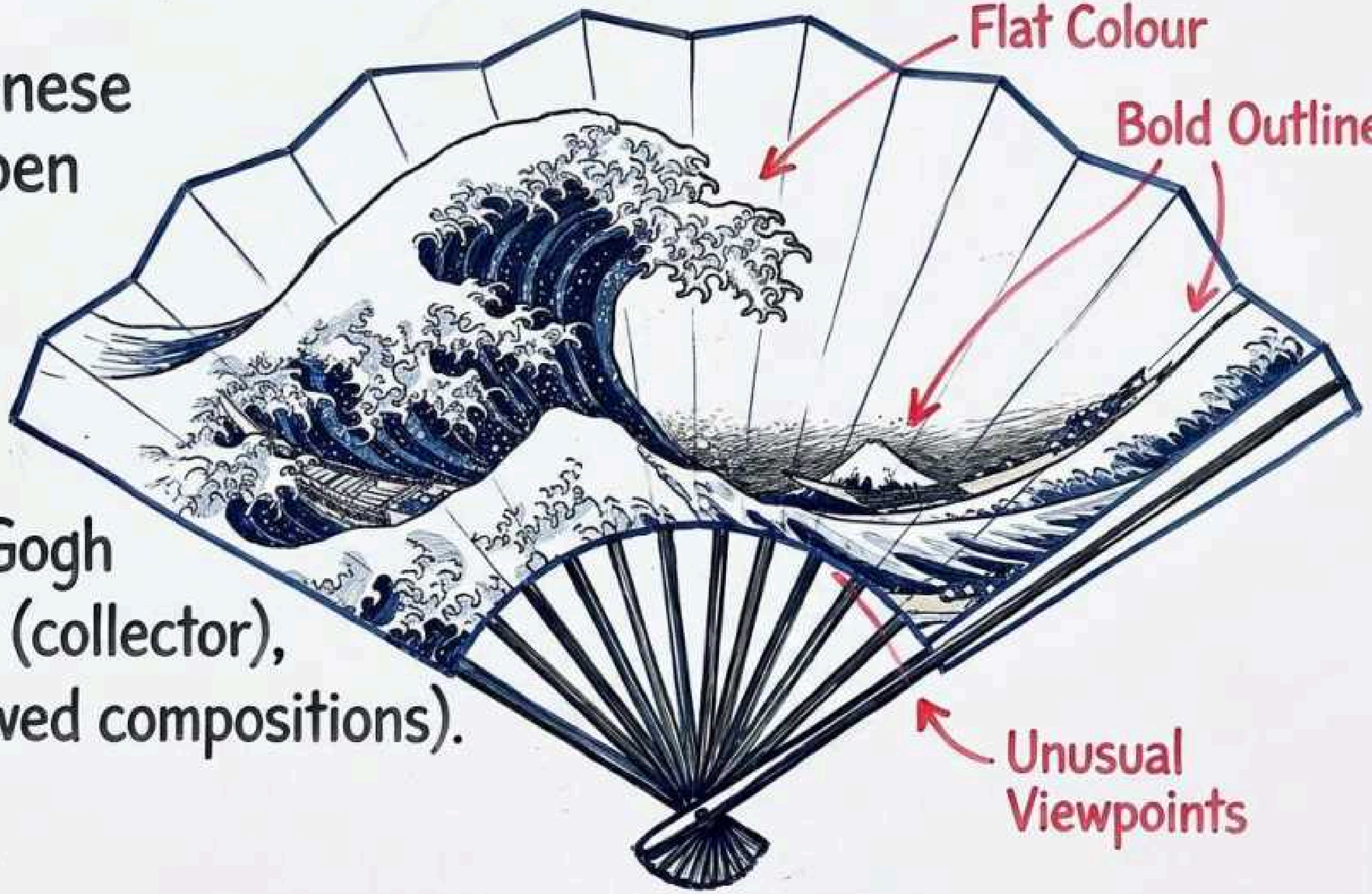
Core Subjects: Ballet dancers, laundresses, racetracks.

The Geometry of Japonisme

¶ 4.10

Catalyst: Japanese ports forced open in the 1850s (prints, fans, ceramics).

Adoption: Van Gogh (copyist), Monet (collector), Whistler (borrowed compositions).



¶ 4.11

Auguste Rodin: Sculptural Energy & Anguish

Key Works:
The Thinker,
Burghers of
Calais.



Camille Claudel:
Gifted pupil and
partner, struggled
for recognition. A
stark reminder of
women's overshadowed
work in the era.

Polished
Perfection
= Zero Energy



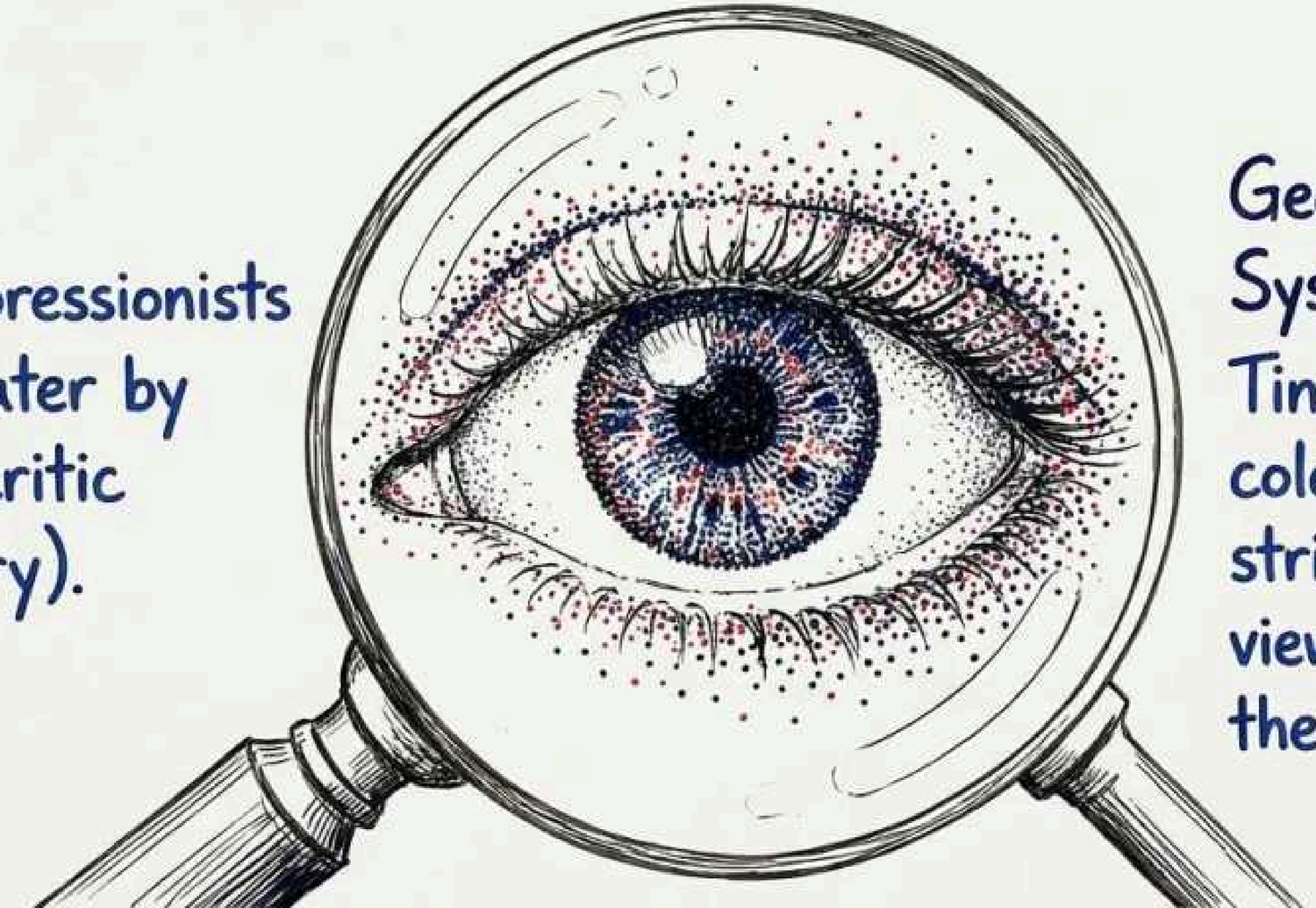
Rough Surfaces +
Strained Bodies
= High Kinetic Energy

¶ 4.12

Post-Impressionism: The Optics of Color

Colour A ● + Colour B ● → [Distance] Perceived Colour AB (Optical Blend)

Term:
Post-Impressionists
(coined later by
English critic
Roger Fry).



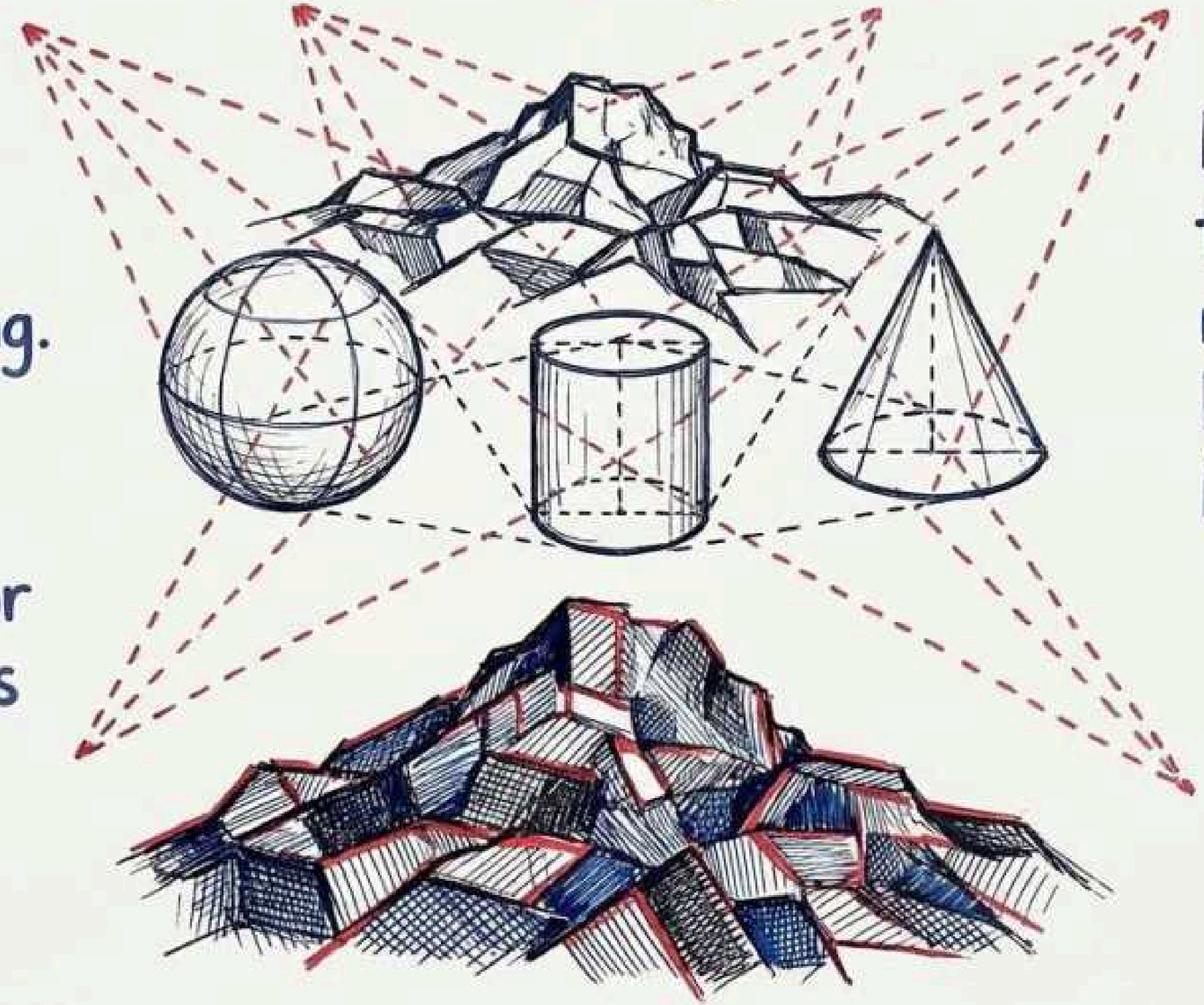
Georges Seurat's
System: Pointillism.
Tiny dots of pure
color that blend
strictly in the
viewer's eye, not on
the palette.

¶ 4.13

Paul Cézanne: Solidifying Impressionism

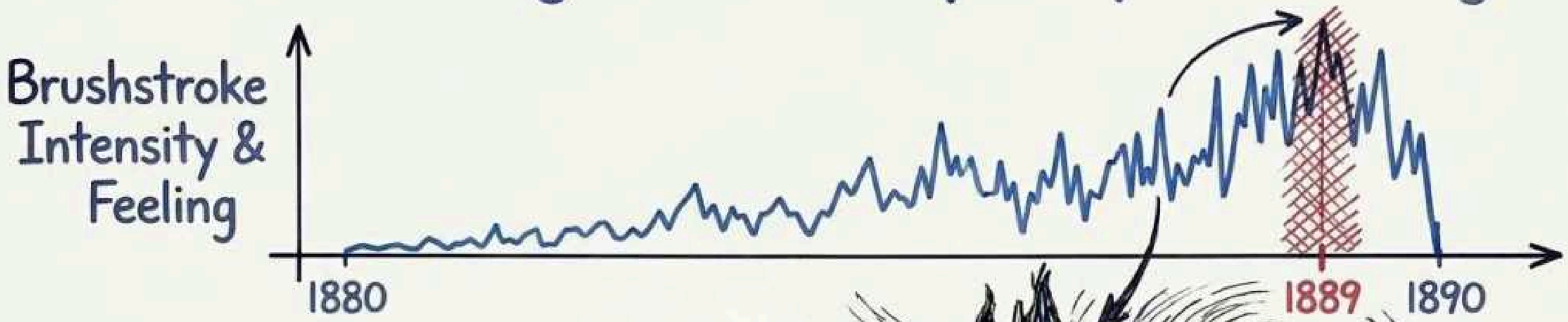
Goal: Make Impressionism solid and lasting.

Method:
Patches of color
+ Simple shapes
+ Simultaneous viewpoints.



Legacy: Named the father of modern art by Picasso and Matisse.

Vincent van Gogh: The Frequency of Feeling



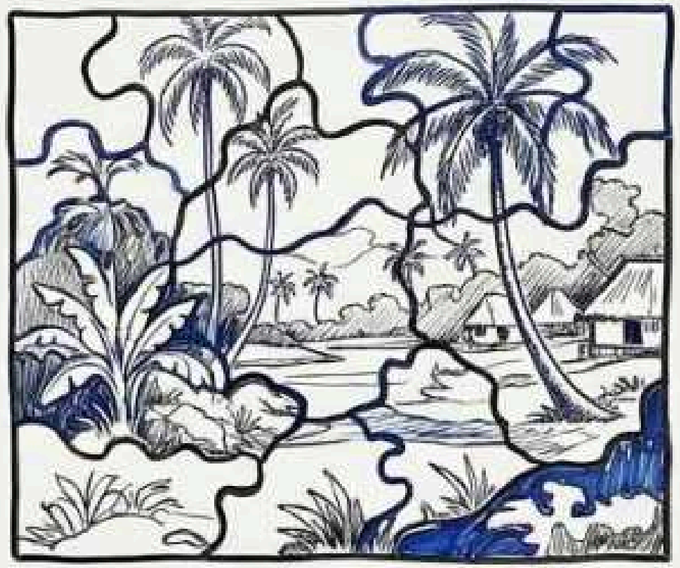
- **Output:** ~2,000 works in a brief 10-year career. Sold very few.
- **Method:** Thick, swirling brushwork + vivid color = Strong feeling.
- Painted *The Starry Night* in Saint-Rémy asylum; died the next year at age 37.



¶ 4.15

Paul Gauguin: Bold Colors and Ethical Equations

Artistic Influence (Flat, bold color pushing art forward)



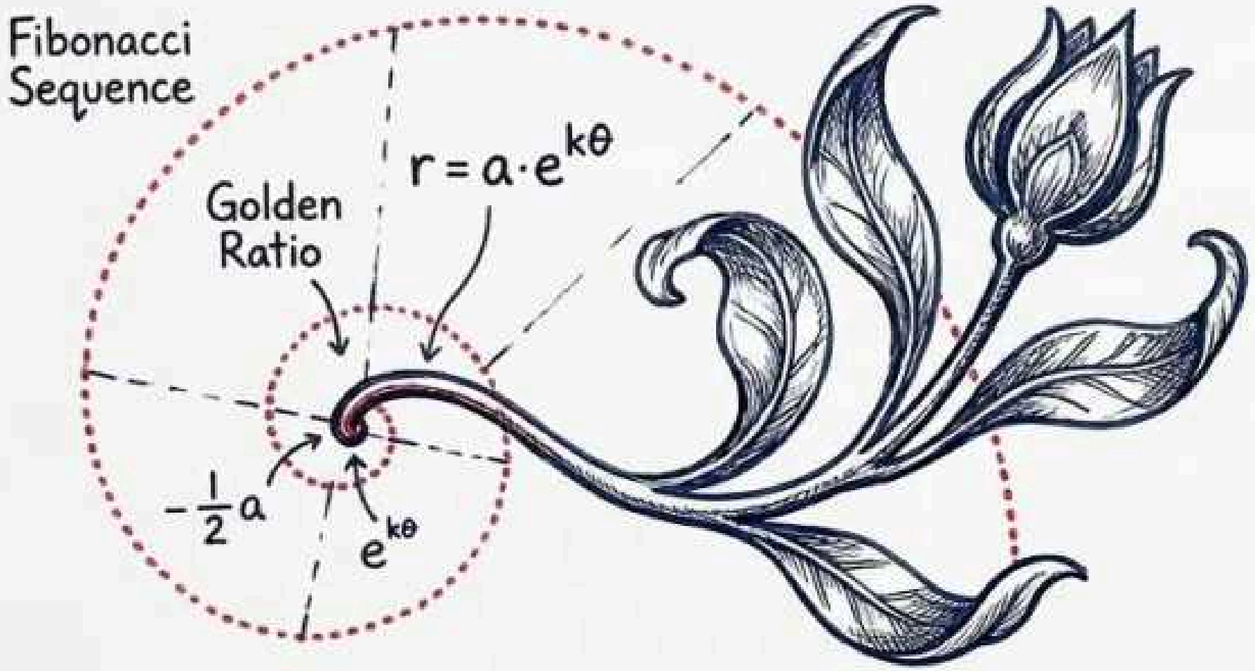
Ethical/Colonial Critique (Treatment of young Tahitian women)

Left France for Tahiti (1891) seeking a simpler way of life.
Modern scholars severely criticize his colonial attitudes.

Core Dilemma: How do we judge great work created by deeply flawed people?

Art Nouveau & The Curves of the Street

¶ 4.16





Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1891): Brought colour lithography to the streets of Montmartre.

Art Nouveau (1890s): Spread through posters, jewellery, and buildings using distinct plant forms and the whiplash curve.

Engineering vs. The Handmade

¶ 4.17

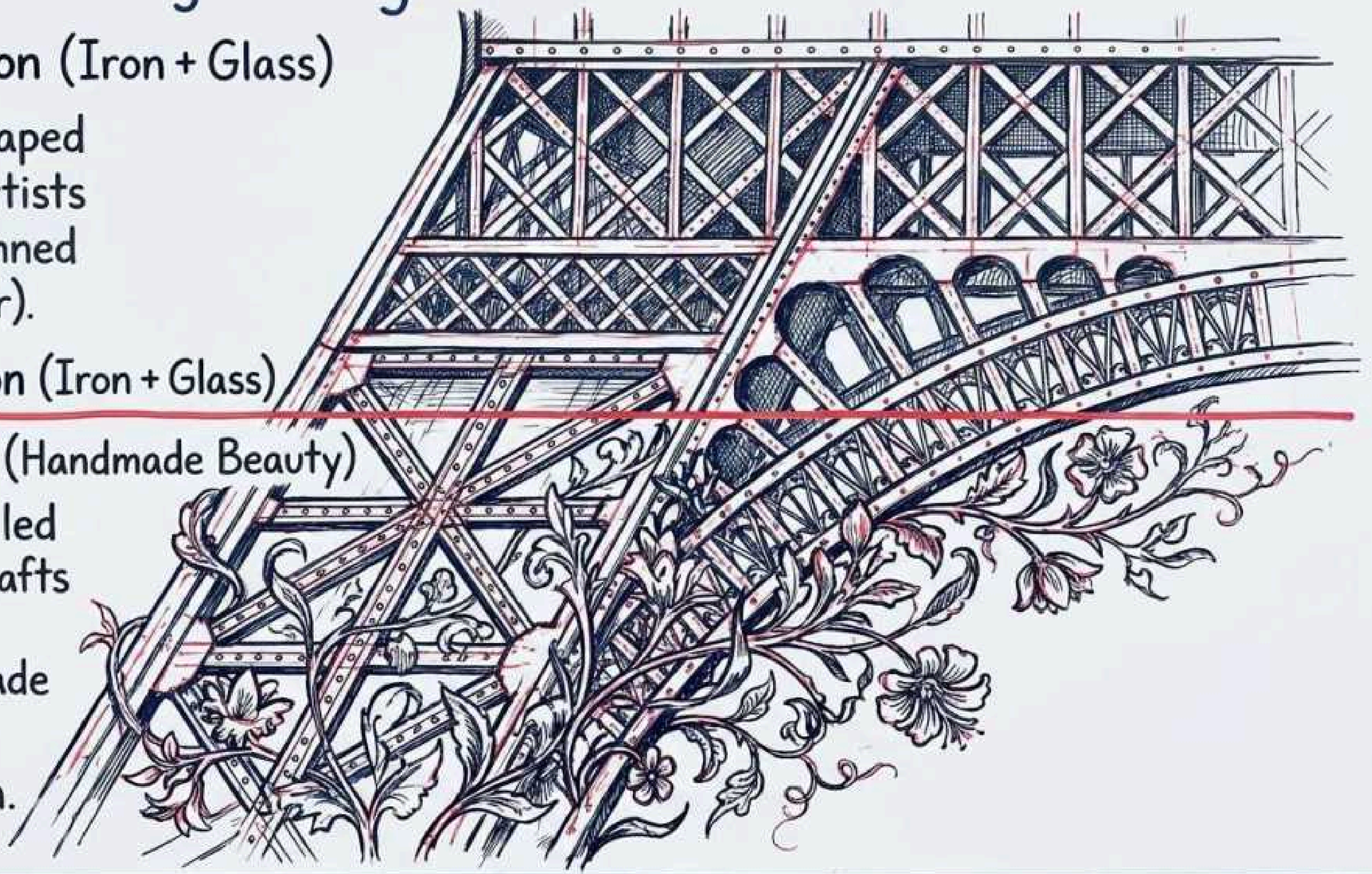
Mass Production (Iron + Glass)

Engineers reshaped the horizon (artists initially condemned the Eiffel Tower).

Mass Production (Iron + Glass)

Arts & Crafts (Handmade Beauty)

William Morris led the Arts and Crafts reaction, praising handmade beauty against mass production.



Shifting Demographics: Expanding the Institution

¶4.18

Art becomes increasingly international, though prejudice remains strong.

Institutional Prejudice

1897: The leading École des Beaux-Arts finally admits women.

1891: Henry Ossawa Tanner moves to Paris; wins Salon medals.



Synthesis: 1850–1900

¶ 4.19

Realists:
Ordinary labour →
→ Shocked Paris.

Impressionists:
Light & modern life
→ Monet, Morisot,
Cassatt, Degas.



Post-Impressionists:
Structure & feeling →
→ Seurat, Cézanne,
van Gogh, Gauguin.

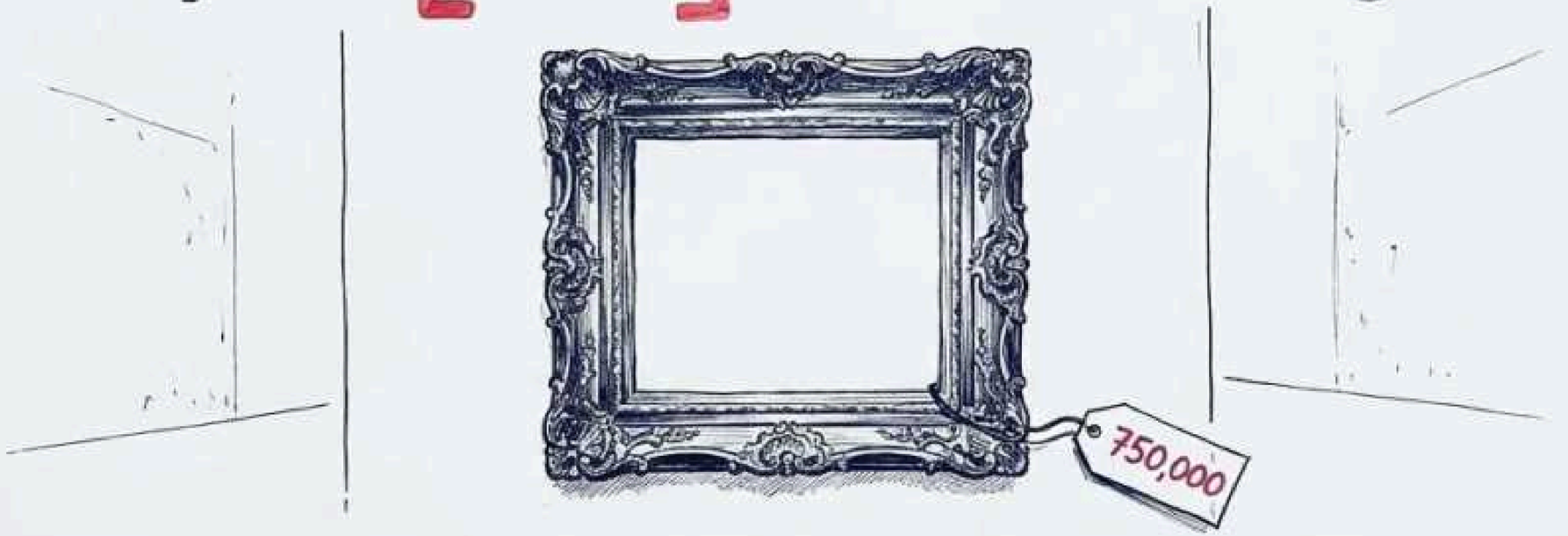
Expansions:
Iron, glass, posters,
Japanese prints.

Pushing painting toward structure, deep feeling, and a vastly wider definition of what art could be.

The Durability Function

¶4.20

Novelty – [?] = Enduring Legacy



The Impressionists were rejected at first; today they hang in every great museum.
How do we tell between work that is simply new and work that will last?
What might we be dismissing today?

¶ 4.21

Looking Ahead: The Twentieth Century Approaches

