

Chapter 2: Romanticism

THE MOVEMENT

This movement was originated in late **18th century** and early to mid-19th centuries in Europe and America. It is a **Secular** and **Intellectual** movement in the **history of ideas**, influenced by ideology and events of **French Revolution**.

Romanticism refers to several distinct groups of artists, poets, writers, musicians, political, philosophical and social thinkers and the trends.

It followed the **Enlightenment period** and was inspired by a revolt against aristocratic socio-political norms of the previous period; a **reaction** against the **rationalization** of nature, which advocated rationality as a means to establish an authoritative system of **ethics**, **aesthetics**, and **knowledge**.¹

E.T.A. Hoffmann (German writer): - "infinite longing" is the essence of romanticism.

Charles Baudelaire: "Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of neither subject nor exact truth, but in a way of feeling."

CHARACTERISTICS

- It cannot be identified with a single style, technique, or attitude
- Romantic painting is characterized by a highly imaginative and subjective approach, emotional intensity, and a dreamlike or visionary quality.
- Where classical and neoclassical art is calm, clear, restrained in feeling and complete in expression, romantic art strives to express the states of feeling too intense, mystical or elusive to be clearly defined. It is a rejection of the order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization and rationality
- It stressed on strong emotions like; trepidation, awe, and horror as aesthetic experiences and legitimized the individual imagination as a critical authority that permitted freedom within or notions of form in art overturning previous social conventions.
- Some scholars see romanticism as completely continuous with the present, some see it as the inaugural moment of modernity,
- Many intellectual historians have seen Romanticism as a key movement in the Counter-Enlightenment, a reaction against the Age of Enlightenment. Whereas the thinkers of the Enlightenment emphasized the primacy of deductive reason, Romanticism emphasized intuition, imagination, and feeling, to a point that has led to some Romantic thinkers being accused of irrationalism.
- Heightened examination of human personality, mood and mental potentiality; preoccupation with the genius, the hero; his passion and inner struggles
- An obsessive interest in folk culture; the predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased and the satanic

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism>

- Romanticism deals with free organic shapes; in contrary to classicism with balanced arrangement of abstract geometric form bound within certain rules²

The three Central Concept of Romanticism:

- Emphasis on Materials, Craft and Creativity
- Feel for Nature
- Revolutionary spirit associated with passion and emotion

Major Aesthetic Principles of Romanticism:

- Architecture as non-conformist self-expression
- Emotion over thought
- Character over form

In Europe

The artistic movement in the Scandinavian Countries; known as **National Romanticism**. Flourished during 1890 – 1920, it was characterized by heightened interest in Nature; emphasis was on the individual expression of emotion and imagination. It is called national for its national and regional identity, inspired by several historic styles like; **Gothic**, **Romanesque etc**

Aesthetics in Romanticism was being Picturesque

Britain, the **romantic landscapes** exploited natural contours of land by setting irregular wildness in design of ponds, informal tree plantations etc



Lancelot Brown, Blenheim Palace grounds, 1758³

It is a rejection of the order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization and rationality expressed in classicism with balanced arrangement of abstract geometric form bound within certain rules of Neoclassical Gardens.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism>

³ <https://cached.imagescaler.hbpl.co.uk/resize/scaleWidth/885/cached.offlinehbpl.hbpl.co.uk/news/WOH/unnam-ed-20150424110148834.jpg>

Impact in Architecture

Romantic architecture appeared in the late 18th century. It was reaction against the rigid forms of neoclassical architecture. It was designed to evoke an emotional reaction, either respect for tradition or nostalgia. It was frequently inspired by the architecture of the Middle Ages, especially Gothic Architecture. It sometimes moved into the domain of historical eclecticism, with features assembled from different historic periods and regions of the world.

Among the revivals, Gothic Revival Architecture was a popular variant of the romantic style, particularly in the construction of churches, Cathedrals, and university buildings.

Notable examples:

1. Cologne Cathedral in Germany, by Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1880)

Schinkel followed the original design as much as possible, but used modern construction technology, including an iron frame for the roof.

2. In Britain, notable examples include the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, a romantic version of traditional Indian Architecture by John Nash (1815–1823)



Cologne Cathedral in Germany⁴

Another example is the Houses of Parliament in London, built in a Gothic revival style by Charles Barry (1840 -76)

⁴ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/7f/Brighton_royal_pavilion_Qmin.jpg/300px-Brighton_royal_pavilion_Qmin.jpg

In France, an example of the romantic building is Hamlet, Versailles, 1778 which was designed by Ar. Richard Mique appointed by Queen Marie Antoinette.

The lady was from Austria and hence the building was designed in Vernacular Architecture to evoke national character.



Hamlet, Versailles, 1778⁵

It is a small rustic hamlet created at the Palace of Versailles (1783-78). It consisted of twelve structures, ten of which still exist, in the style of villages in Normandy. It was designed for the Queen and her friends to amuse themselves by playing at being peasants, and included a farmhouse with a dairy, a mill, a boudoir, a pigeon loft, a tower in the form of a lighthouse from which one could fish in the pond, a belvedere, a cascade and grotto, and a luxuriously furnished cottage with a billiard room for the Queen.

The movement drew upon local and regional folk traditions and encouraged simple way of life.

Architects like Eliel Saarinen, Hans Poetzig and Martin Nylop looked into medieval even prehistoric times for their model to create architecture for the new millennium.

Some examples of Revival of renaissance in Europe

S. Marie's Grange, Alderbury, Wiltshire (1835-6)

This building had generous brick walls having recesses for shelves. It had stone mullioned windows

⁵https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/5c/Marie_Antoinette_amusement_at_Versailles.JPG/250px-Marie_Antoinette_amusement_at_Versailles.JPG

In America

There was a dynamic movement in America before the civil war; where the building forms and details were borrowed from the past; a **historical eclecticism**. During **1860's** two styles mainly flourished in the **US**.

One is "**Beaux Art Style**" popularized by architects who studied at **Ecole des Beaux Arts**.

It was the French School of Architecture having profound effect on America on later 19thcent. In its former days the study focused on hierarchical relationship of spaces, axes, 3 dimensions while on later it focused on Historical eclecticism; building forms/ details borrowed from the past ; superficial appearance.

Its major influences found in USA as colleges followed Beaux-arts into their "curriculum".

Amongst prominent architects were

1. **Richard Morris Hunt**

His buildings were characterized by flat or low pitched roof, rusticated stonework (exaggerated joints) at the first storey level; masonry walls usually of coloured stone, decorative garland, shield and brackets on the wall; arched windows with crown and paired column or pilasters. Examples:



Biltmore Estate, Ashville, North Carolina(1890- 95)-French renaissance revival⁶

⁶https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cd/Biltmore_Estate%2C_Asheville%2C_North_Carolina.jpg

- Administration building, World's Columbian exposition, Chicago 1893 "The White City" - Neo-classical revival

2. McKim, Mead and White

Example: Villard Houses, New York City, 1882-85

-Residential structure on designs of Roman palazzo

The **second style** was new architectural approach developed by the work of **H. H. Richardson**; **revival of Romanesque** architecture. E.g Trinity Church (1872)

Richardson developed a unique and highly personal idiom, adapting in particular the Romanesque of southern France.

Massive **dignified** buildings in sharp contrast to the surrounding eclecticism. Later **Louis Sullivan** furthered the style.

Other Architects such as Thomas U. Walter, John Haviland and John Nofman designed buildings in **Gothic, Romanesque, Renaissance, Baroque** and other styles.

Other Notable Architects of this movement are:

- **Philip Spearman Webb**
- **Henry Hobson Richardson**
- **Louis Henry Sullivan**
- **Bernard Ralph Maybeck**
- **Frank Lloyd Wright**
- **Elieel Saarinen**
- **Eero Saarinen**

Reference: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Morris_Hunt