Modernism

In art, the twentieth century saw the most varied exploration of styles, materials, and modes of creation in history. The idea that art should primarily strive to be innovative—the concept of the avant-garde—was firmly established during this period. The century saw a quick succession of radical movements, such as Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, De Stijl, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, and Earth Art. All of these movements were concerned in some way with transforming the way art is made, understood, and even exhibited.

Artists of the twentieth century became less and less interested in the idea of representational art, or art that attempted to be beautiful or universal. In fact, it was as if artists made a list of the qualities of art at the beginning of the century—that it be recognizable, that it convey significant meaning, that it be aesthetically pleasing, that it be made of specific materials—and then spent the next hundred years eliminating those characteristics from their work. Imagery became increasingly difficult to read as abstraction came to the fore. Ultimately, many artists would explore totally non-objective art, or works that were interested primarily in formal characteristics such as color, line, and shape, rather than symbolism or traditional imagery.

Artists of the twentieth century were inspired by the rapid changes they saw in the world around them. The general dynamism and innovation present in modern art reflects the excitement many artists felt about the world. However, many other artists found aspects of that world to be disturbing and frightening. While much of modernism is hopeful and optimistic in its nature, we can also see much tension and anxiety in the art produced during this century.

inoculation largely eradicated the disease by the end of the century.

The list of technological inventions of the twentieth century is indeed abundant and diverse—it includes plastic, frozen food, scuba gear, the photocopier, the electric guitar, the vacuum cleaner, the parachute, sliced bread, the mobile phone, the air conditioner, the zipper, sunglasses, kitty litter, the laser, Post-it notes, the remote control, the flashlight, chemotherapy, nylon, the paper clip, the disposable razor, Velcro, the x-ray, and many, many more.

The Ford assembly line in 1913. Industrialism continued to flourish and expand in the twentieth century, as new technologies and inventions abounded.

The Development of Steel-Cage Construction

The use of cast iron construction, which was first used at the Iron Bridge in Coalbrookdale, became more and more prevalent throughout the nineteenth century.36 It was used in a variety of buildings, such as St. Anne’s Church in Liverpool (constructed 1770–72), where all of the interior columns are made of cast iron. Perhaps the most famous British example was the Crystal Palace, built for London’s