

Migration period art essay sample



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Migration Period art is the artwork of Germanic peoples during the Migration period of 300 to 900. It includes the Migration art of the Germanic tribes on the continent, as well the start of the Insular art or Hiberno-Saxon art of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic fusion in the British Isles. It covers many different styles of art including the polychrome style and the animal style. Migration Period art is one of the major periods of medieval art.

Pre-Romanesque art and architecture

The royal palace, later church, of Santa María del Naranco, an example of Asturian architecture of the Ramirense period. Pre-Romanesque art and architecture is the period in Western European art from either the emergence of the Merovingian kingdom in about 500 or from the Carolingian Renaissance in the late 8th century, to the beginning of the 11th century Romanesque period. The term is generally used in English only for architecture and monumental sculpture, but here all the arts of the period are briefly described. The primary theme during this period is the introduction and absorption of classical Mediterranean and Christian forms with Germanic ones creating innovative new forms, leading to the rise of Romanesque art in the 11th century. In the outline of Medieval art it was preceded by what is commonly called the Migration Period art of the “barbarian” peoples: Hiberno-Saxon in the British Isles and predominantly Merovingian on the Continent.

Celtic art

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The reverse side of a British bronze mirror, 50 BC – 50 AD, showing the spiral and trumpet decorative theme of the late “ Insular” La Tène style.

Muiredach’s High Cross, Ireland, early 10th century.

Celtic art is the art associated with the peoples known as Celts; those who spoke the Celtic languages in Europe from pre-history through to the modern period, as well as the art of ancient peoples whose language is uncertain, but have cultural and stylistic similarities with speakers of Celtic languages.

Celtic art is a difficult term to define, covering a huge expanse of time, geography and cultures. A case has been made for artistic continuity in Europe from the Bronze Age, and indeed the preceding Neolithic age however archaeologists generally use “ Celtic” to refer to the culture of the European Iron Age from around 1000BC onwards, until the conquest by the Roman Empire of most of the territory concerned, and art historians typically begin to talk about “ Celtic art” only from the La Tène period (broadly 5th to 1st centuries BC) onwards.[1] The Early Medieval art of Britain and Ireland, which produced the Book of Kells and other masterpieces, and is what “ Celtic art” evokes for much of the general public in the English-speaking world, is part of Insular art in art history.

Both styles absorbed considerable influences from non-Celtic sources, but retained a preference for geometrical decoration over figurative subjects, which are often extremely stylised when they do appear; narrative scenes only appear under outside influence.[2] Energetic circular forms, triskeles and spirals are characteristic. Much of the surviving material is in precious metal, which no doubt gives a very unrepresentative picture, but apart from Pictish stones and the Insular high crosses, large monumental sculpture,

even with decorative carving, is very rare; possibly the few standing male figures found, like the Warrior of Hirschlanden and the so-called “ Lord of Glauberg”, were originally common in wood. Also covered by the term is the visual art of the Celtic Revival (on the whole more notable for literature) from the 18th century to the modern era, which began as a conscious effort by Modern Celts to express self-identification and nationalism, and became popular well beyond the Celtic nations, and whose style is still current in various popular forms, from Celtic cross funerary monuments to interlace tatoos. Another influence was that of late La Tène “ vegetal” art on the Art Nouveau movement.

Typically, Celtic art is ornamental, avoiding straight lines and only occasionally using symmetry, without the imitation of nature central to the classical tradition, often involving complex symbolism. Celtic art has used a variety of styles and has shown influences from other cultures in their knotwork, spirals, key patterns, lettering, zoomorphics, plant forms and human figures. As the archaeologist Catherine Johns put it: “ Common to Celtic art over a wide chronological and geographical span is an exquisite sense of balance in the layout and development of patterns. Curvilinear forms are set out so that positive and negative, filled areas and spaces form a harmonious whole. Control and restraint were exercised in the use of surface texturing and relief. Very complex curvilinear patterns were designed to cover precisely the most awkward and irregularly shaped surfaces”.^[3]

Gothic art

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The Western (Royal) Portal at Chartres Cathedral (ca. 1145). These architectural statues are the earliest Gothic sculptures and were a revolution in style and the model for a generation of sculptors.

Later Gothic depiction of the Adoration of the Magi from Strasbourg Cathedral.

Gothic sculpture, late 15th century.

Gothic art was a Medieval art movement that developed in France out of Romanesque art in the mid-12th century, led by the concurrent development of Gothic architecture. It spread to all of Western Europe, but took over art more completely north of the Alps, never quite effacing more classical styles in Italy. In the late 14th century, the sophisticated court style of International Gothic developed, which continued to evolve until the late 15th century. In many areas, especially Germany, Late Gothic art continued well into the 16th century, before being subsumed into Renaissance art.

Primary media in the Gothic period included sculpture, panel painting, stained glass, fresco and illuminated manuscript. The easily recognisable shifts in architecture from Romanesque to Gothic, and Gothic to Renaissance styles, are typically used to define the periods in art in all media, although in many ways figurative art developed at a different pace. The earliest Gothic art was monumental sculpture, on the walls of Cathedrals and abbeys.

Christian art was often typological in nature (see Medieval allegory), showing the stories of the New Testament and the Old Testament side by side. Saints' lives were often depicted. Images of the Virgin Mary changed from the

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Byzantine iconic form to a more human and affectionate mother, cuddling her infant, swaying from her hip, and showing the refined manners of a well-born aristocratic courtly lady.

Secular art came in to its own during this period with the rise of cities, foundation of universities, increase in trade, the establishment of a money-based economy and the creation of a bourgeois class who could afford to patronize the arts and commission works resulting in a proliferation of paintings and illuminated manuscripts. Increased literacy and a growing body of secular vernacular literature encouraged the representation of secular themes in art. With the growth of cities, trade guilds were formed and artists were often required to be members of a painters' guild—as a result, because of better record keeping, more artists are known to us by name in this period than any previous; some artists were even so bold as to sign their names.