

# Here to stay - classical conventions in art

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



The human form, landscapes and still life were naturalistic, without any attempt to interpret. Because of this rigour, art reached an exquisite level of representation, until the arrival of photography, which did it all in a flash. The door was open to artists to do more than just picture perfectly: they started expressing abstract concepts, and insert their own content into form.

Exciting movements such as impressionism, cubism and Dada followed, but artists had to know the rules they were breaking. To understand the limits they were breaking out of, those limits had to be understood. Artists today still need to know classic conventions of perspective, colour, light, and shade and so on, in order to break out of them in their own way. In that sense, the conventions are here to stay.

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The difference between Medieval Plainchant and a Madrigal by Lassus  
Although they do not sound that different to my modern ear, the madrigal by Lassus must have been scandalously witty and playful. Besides, it imitated church music and turned it secular, if not profane. Pious people listening to this music would expect sedate rhythm and pious words. Instead they get different voices tripping over each other and suggestive words! In conservative Europe of the mid-1500s, it would have been outrageous, even though Lassus was a respected Maestro di Cappella. I liked it because the men seem to be smiling as they sang. In any medieval plainchant, you can hear the serious holy intention, like: no funny business, these are God's songs. I do not know enough music to hear if Lassus used the Devil's Interval, a note (C and F#) that was not allowed to be played by the strict

church of the time, because it gave people too much pleasure. But I think that came later, after about another 200 years.