

# Exploring historical art



This video comprises of three paintings. The first one of British origin by William Holman Hunt is called *Strayed Sheep or On English Coasts*. It was painted in 1852 just four years after the formation of Prerafilites Brotherhood. This was the Paleolithic period. The painting challenges the English Academy by putting away the formulas of landscaping. For instance, according to the academy, the horizon lines should have trees and the landscapes classical, but this painting deviates with sheep painting on the horizon. Most attention is on the sheep than any other feature. It has a moral mission and depicts the British as followers of Christ; thus, opposes the criticism of the Church of England and its political leaders. The painting contrasts with Claude Morat's painting named *Boulevard des Capucines* of 1873 of Paris, France. It depicts a misty day and rejects all baggage of the class of academy. The sense of specificity of vision is not clear because it takes the impression of the heart, but of the brain e. g. the carriages, which always have spoke wheels, are not clearly shown. Human figures are shown by black strokes, though they should be the central part of the painting. The third painting by Vincent Van Gogh, *Potato eaters* of 1885 was painted in the border of Belgium and Northern France. He wanted to be a minister, and that is why the painting has a religious outlook. It is homebound with an intimate impression of the truth. The relationship of man and nature is clear as they dug their potatoes to obtain food. All the three paintings seek a type of truth, and there is a beautiful marriage between color and light.

The next video describes a painting of Neolithic origin in Ancient Egypt called *Seated Scribe* of 2620-2500 B. C. It is a painted limestone carving with rock crystal, arsenic inlay for the eye and wood for the nipples. The painting is

approximately 4600 years old and portrays the Egyptian tradition to have a rigid pictorial tradition which is informal. The man is cross-legged and seated on the ground as he holds a pirates scroll. He looks naturally human than the way we always see Egyptian figures, in a war-heraldic way. It shows that he is not of a kingly divine but significant in the society. He is fat around his navel, which is a sign of wealth, and middle age as he has lost muscles in his arms and chest. Big ears, thin lips and innocent eyes show that he is alive and wise. He is painted with red ochre, black hair; looks relaxed, but can only be seen from the front. The painting depicts transcendence – showing an after-life of humans.

It is essential to know the historical context, artist biography, background or intent in order to appreciate or even understand works of art. For example, the painting by Vincent Van Gogh, Potato eaters of 1885 clearly has a vital background history. The painter wanted to be a minister, but turned to painting, and that is why his painting has a religious outlook and expresses some truth.