Definition: **baroque** from *The Chambers Dictionary*

(also **barock'** or **barocco** /bɪˈrɒk/ (pl. **barocc'os**)) a bold, vigorous, exuberant style in architecture, decoration, and art generally, that arose with the Counter-Reformation and prevailed in Louis XIV's time, degenerating into tasteless extravagance in ornament; a comparable style in music, or literature; the period dominated by this style; **orig** a jeweller's term applied to a rough pearl.

adj

in baroque style; whimsical; flamboyant; rococo. [Fr from Port and Sp; of architecture, from Ital]

Summary Article: **baroque, in art and architecture**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(bɔrˈōk'), in art and architecture, a style developed in Europe, England, and the Americas during the 17th and early 18th cent.

Image from: **The Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist ('The Montalto Madonna') in National Gallery Collection**

The baroque style is characterized by an emphasis on unity among the arts. With technical brilliance, the baroque artist achieved a remarkable harmony wherein painting, sculpture, and architecture were brought together in new spatial relationships, both real and illusionary, often with spectacular visual effects. Although the restrained and classical works created by most French and English artists look very different from the exuberant works favored in central and southern Europe and in the New World, both trends in baroque art tend to engage the viewer, both physically and emotionally. In painting and sculpture this was achieved by means of highly developed naturalistic illusionism, usually heightened by dramatic lighting effects, creating an unequaled sense of theatricality, energy, and movement of forms. Architecture, departing from the classical canon revived during the Renaissance, took on the fluid, plastic aspects of sculpture.

**Baroque Painting**

Painters and sculptors built and expanded on the naturalistic tradition reestablished during the Renaissance. Although religious painting, history painting, allegories, and portraits were still considered the most noble subjects, landscapes, still lifes, and genre scenes were painted by such artists as Claude Lorrain, Jacob van Ruisdael, Willem Kalf, and Jan Vermeer. Caravaggio and his early followers were especially significant for their naturalistic treatment of unidealized, ordinary people. The illusionistic effects of deep space interested many painters, including Il Guercino and Andrea Pozzo. Other baroque painters opened up interior spaces by representing long files of rooms, often with extended views through doors, windows, or mirrors, as in the works of Diego Velázquez and Vermeer.

Color was manipulated for its emotional effects, ranging from the clear calm tones of Nicholas Poussin, to the warm and shimmering colors of Pietro da Cortona, to the more vivid hues of Peter Paul Rubens. A heightened sense of drama was achieved through chiaroscuro in the works of Caravaggio and Rembrandt. Carracci and Poussin portrayed restrained feeling in accordance with the academic principles of dignity and decorum. Others, including Caravaggio, Rubens, and Rembrandt depicted

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religious ecstasy, physical sensuality, or individual psychology in their paintings.

**Baroque Sculpture**

Baroque sculptors felt free to combine different materials within a single work and often used one material to simulate another. One of the great masterpieces of baroque sculpture, Giovanni Bernini's St. Theresa from the Cornaro Chapel, for example, succumbs to an ecstatic vision on a dull-finished marble cloud in an alabaster and marble niche in which bronze rays descend from a hidden source of light. Many works of Baroque sculpture are set within elaborate architectural settings, and they often seem to be spilling out of their assigned niches or floating upward toward heaven.

**Baroque Architecture**

Buildings of the period are composed of great curving forms with undulating facades, ground plans of unprecedented size and complexity, and domes of various shapes, as in the churches of Francesco Borromini, Guarino Guarini, and Balthasar Neumann. Many works of baroque architecture were executed on a colossal scale, incorporating aspects of urban planning and landscape architecture. This is most clearly seen in Bernini's elliptical piazza in front of St. Peter's in Rome, or in the gardens, fountains, and palace at Versailles, designed by Louis Le Vau, Jules Hardouin-Mansart, and André Le Nôtre.

**Divisions of the Baroque Period**

For convenience the baroque period is divided into three parts:

**Early Baroque, c.1590–c.1625**

The early style was preeminent under papal patronage in Rome where Carracci and Caravaggio and his followers diverged decisively from the artifice of the preceding mannerist painters (see mannerism). Bernini abandoned an early mannerism in his sculpture, allowing him to express a new naturalistic vigor. In architecture, Carlo Maderno's facades for Sta. Susanna and St. Peter's moved toward a more sculptural treatment of the classical orders.

**High Baroque, c.1625–c.1660**

The exuberant trend in Italian art was best represented by Bernini and Borromini in architecture, by Bernini in sculpture, and by da Cortona in painting. The classicizing mode characterized the work of the expatriate painters Poussin and Claude Lorrain. This period produced an astonishing number and variety of international painters of the first rank, including Rembrandt, Rubens, Velázquez, and Anthony van Dyck.

**Late Baroque, c.1660–c.1725**

During this time Italy lost its position of artistic dominance to France, largely due to the patronage of Louis XIV. The late baroque style was especially popular in Germany and Austria, where many frescoes by the Tiepolo family were executed. The extraordinarily theatrical quality of the architecture in these countries is best seen in the work of Neumann and Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach. From Europe the baroque spread across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World. Gradually the massive forms of the baroque yielded to the lighter, more graceful outlines of the rococo.

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