

## Modernism

Modernism was a movement that revolted against the literature, music, art, and architecture of Western culture. A group of visionaries emerging at the turn of the 20th century targeted the classical and romantic strains of European tradition as static and passé. Depressed by the militarism and chaos of the Great War, Modernist finally questioned fundamental values such as progress and enlightenment, which had long defined the Western tradition.

Modernism emerged in the visual arts as early as the 1860s, with Édouard Manet. Further developments in the natural and social sciences encouraged a new group of Europeans around the turn of the century. The art of this early modernism was abstract, innovative, and often utopian. The decades to follow saw a proliferation of bold new artists and movements, each challenging those that had come before: Futurism (Boccioni), Dada (Duchamp), Cubism (Braque, Picasso), and Expressionism (Kandinsky).

Literary modernism flourished during the years between the world wars — effectively, the movement's second generation. Modernist technique in poetry and fiction relied on such devices as shifting perspective, stream-of-

consciousness narration, non-linear structure, and symbolic fragmentation. In the hands of James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner, the great legacy of the Enlightenment and 19th-century realism crumpled beneath the force of a sustained literary revolt.

The struggle for the artistic soul of the West reached out to the built environment as well. International School architects like Le Corbusier and Mies van de Rohe stressed simplicity, transparency, glass, steel, and concrete—an affront to the tradition that extended from systematic Classical temples through intricate Gothic cathedrals and Baroque palaces to the overcrowded urban jungle. The industrial neighborhoods of the West soon heralded the new vision of architects who subscribed to the dictum that “form follows function.”

In the music of Stravinsky, the mythmaking of Joyce, or the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Modernism stamped the 20th century with an indelible mark. Fueled by innovations in the sciences, Modernism critiqued Western tradition until, by mid-century, it had itself become a part of that tradition.