
16 & 17 May 2025Emotions in 17th Century Art

Fear

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Lecture summary:

This week in the first session we will investigate how artists expressed fear in terms of facial expression in a number of self-portraits from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before going on to look at paintings that are compelling for the complexity of the psychological states they portray. In the second session we explore the emotion of fear by means of Poussin's remarkable painting of a man who flees in terror at the sight of a corpse encircled by a snake. In this lecture I want to argue that Poussin's depiction of emotion in this work was directly influenced by the writings of Leonardo da Vinci. Poussin's major patron, Cassiano dal Pozzo, initiated a project during the 1630s to copy the extant writings on painting by Leonardo with a view of publishing them. The history of these manuscripts and who copied what is immensely complicated, but the important point is that dal Pozzo commissioned Poussin to produce the figure drawings that would illustrate figures in movement to accompany Leonardo's text, necessitating Poussin's close scrutiny of some of these manuscripts. This initiative eventually led to the publication of Leonardo da Vinci's *Trattato della Pittura* for the first time in 1651. Poussin's experimentation with the expression of individual emotions in several works in the 1640s can be directly linked to Leonardo's writings on affect and physiognomy, and his *Landscape with man killed by a snake* not only epitomizes his interest in emotional expression, it also illustrates his understanding of fear's capacity for contagion as alarm ripples through the landscape from foreground to background.

Slide list

1. Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Wildens, *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*, c. 1618, oil on canvas, 224 x 209 cm, Alte Pinacothek, Munich.
2. Eugene Delacroix, *Death of Sardanapalus (detail)*, 1827, oil on canvas, 392 x 496 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.
3. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Medusa*, 1598-99, oil on canvas, mounted on wood, 60 x 55 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.
4. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Damned Soul and Blessed Soul*, 1629, marble, Spanish Embassy to the Holy See, Rome.
5. Pieter Van Laer, *Self-portrait with Magic Scene*, ca 1635-37, oil on canvas, 80 x 114.9 cm, Leiden Collection, New York.
6. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *David and Goliath*, 1609-10, oil on canvas, 125 x 101 cm, Galleria Borghese, Rome.
7. Angelo Caroselli, *La Negromante (Necromancer)*, no date, oil on canvas, 44 x 35 cm, Pinacoteca Civica "F. Podesti", Ancona.
8. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-portrait, staring*, Etching only state, 5.1 x 4.6 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
9. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-portrait, open mouthed*, Etching first state, 8.3 x 7.2 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
10. Adriaen Brouwer, *The bitter Tonic*, oil on panel, 47.3 x 35.3 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt.

11. Sofonisba Anguissola, *Self-portrait*, 1556, oil on parchment, 8.3 x 6.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
12. Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, 1615-17, 71.4 x 69 cm, National Gallery, London.
13. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1610, 170 cm x 119 cm, Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden.
14. Tintoretto, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1555-56, oil on canvas, 146 x 193.6 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
15. Guido Reni, *Susannah and the Elders*, 1622-23, oil on canvas, 116 x 150.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
16. Rembrandt, *Susannah and the Elders*, 1647, oil on panel, 76.6 x 92.8 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
17. Charles Le Brun, *Fear*, charcoal on paper, 25.2 x 20.1 cm Louvre Museum, Paris.
18. Jean Audran, *Fear*, engraving after Le Brun's drawing of fear in his 'Expression des Passions'.
19. B. Picart, 1713, *Face of a frightened soldier (left); the human face in an animal state of fear (right)*, after Charles Le Brun, platemark 9.7 x 5.9 cm, Wellcome Collection, London
20. Joseph Ducreux, *Self-portrait entitled 'The Surprise in Terror'*, 1790s, oil on canvas, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.
21. Charles Verlat, *Self-portrait as a terrified Man*, 1844, drawing, charcoal heightened with white, 62.2 x 45.1 cm, Art Market.
22. Gustave Courbet, *The Desperate Man (The man made mad by fear)*, 1843-44, oil on paper mounted on canvas, National Gallery, Oslo.
23. Gustave Courbet, 'The Desperate Man', 1844-45, oil on canvas, 45 x 55 cm, Private collection.
24. Eugène Delacroix, *A study for Massacre at Chios*, c. 1822, oil on canvas, 41 x 33 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Orléans.
25. Eugène Delacroix, *The Massacre at Chios*, 1824, oil on canvas, 419 x 354 cm Louvre Museum, Paris.
26. Francisco Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas, 266 x 345 cm Museo del Prado, Madrid.
27. Horace Vernet, *Portrait of Jean-Louis-André-Théodore Géricault*, c. 1822-3, oil on canvas, 47.3 x 38.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
28. Théodore Géricault, *The Compulsive Gambler*, oil on canvas, 77 x 65 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.
29. Théodore Géricault, *The woman suffering from obsessive envy*, oil on canvas, 72 x 58 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, Lyon.
30. Leon Cogniet, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1824, oil on canvas, 265 x 235 cm, Museum of Fine Arts Rennes, Rennes.
31. Henri-Pierre Danloux, *Scene of Misery (fragment)*, 139 x 135 cm, oil on canvas, Louvre Museum, Paris.
32. Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*, 1936, Photographic film, Gelatin silver print, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis.
33. Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake*, 1648, oil on canvas, 118 x 198 cm. National Gallery, London.
34. Nicolas Poussin, *Self-portrait*, 1649-50, oil on canvas, 98 x 74 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.
35. Nicolas Poussin, *Confirmation*, 1645, 117 x 178 cm, oil on canvas, previously in the collection of His Grace the Duke of Sutherland.
36. Photograph of Anthony Blunt.
37. Nicolas Poussin, *Massacre of the Innocents*. Oil on canvas, c. 1633, 148.5 x 174.5 cm. Musée Condé, Chantilly.

38. Matteo di Giovanni, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1482, panel, 240 x 240 cm. Siena, S. Maria della Scala.
39. Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael), *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1513-15, engraving, 28.1 x 43 cm.
40. Nicolas Poussin, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1628-9, pen and brown ink and wash on paper, 14.7 x 16.9 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille.
41. Nicolas Poussin, *The Israelites Receiving the Manna*, 1637-9, oil on canvas, 149 x 200 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.
42. Ancient Roman statue of Niobe, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
43. French edition of Leonardo da Vinci's *Trattato della Pittura*, translated by Roland Fréart and published in Paris in 1651.
44. Nicolas Poussin, *Drawing of Man throwing a Spear*, illustration for Cassiano dal Pozzo's edition of Leonardo's *Trattato della Pittura*.
45. Nicolas Poussin, *The Saving of the Infant Pyrrhus*, c. 1638, 116 x 153 cm, oil on canvas Louvre Museum, Paris.
46. Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with Man Recoiling from a Snake*, oil on canvas, c. 1637-9, 65 x 76 cm, Montreal Museum of Art, Montreal.
47. Nicolas Poussin, *The Death of Cato*, c. 1636-38, pen and brown ink, black chalk, 9.5 x 14.9 cm, Royal Collection, Windsor.
48. Nicolas Poussin, *Medea Killing her Children*, c. 1649-50. pen and brown ink, pale brown wash, 25.5 x 19.9 cm, Royal Collection, Windsor
49. Joseph Le Doux, Diagram from *The Emotional Brain*.

References

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