



# EARLY AMERICAN ART HISTORY

Prehistory to 1877

Colonial • Revolutionary • American

Dana Palmer

## AMERICAN ART: WHAT SETS IT APART?

America is unique.

Those that immigrated here were separated from their home and culture.

They had no immediate contact with Europe, and were forced to create their own identity.

Image by Albert Bierstadt





# EUROPEAN ART

LEADING UP TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE AMERICAS

Notable Time Periods:

STONE AGE 30,000 – 2,500 b.c.

MESOPOTAMIAN 3,500– 539 b.c.

EGYPTIAN 3,100 – 30 b.c.

GREEK AND HELLENISTIC 850 – 31 b.c.

ROMAN 500 b.c. – a.d. 476

BYZANTINE AND ISLAMIC 476 – 1453

MIDDLE AGES 500 – 1400

EARLY AND HIGH RENAISSANCE 1400 – 1550

VENETIAN / NORTHERN RENAISSANCE

1430 - 1550





# AMERICAN ART

LEADING UP TO EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

- Native American art was similar to that of the Eastern World during the Stone Age.
- Art always had a purpose. It was used to influence reality.
- There were six distinct regions, each with a unique style of art
  - Arctic
  - Eastern Woodlands
  - Great Plains
  - Southwest
  - California
  - Pacific Northwest





# COLONIAL ART

1492 - 1607

- When North America was first being settled, art was not a priority
- Art was created mainly for documentation and mass production
- European art movements brought over where
  - Mannerism – tried to mimic the style of Renaissance art
  - Baroque – art was made to be crowded and elaborate

Image by Theodor de Bry





# COLONIAL ART

1607 - 1660

- As more people began to settle in the Americas, so did more artists
- Most art was created by
  - Sign Painters
  - Carriage Decorators
  - Limners – unskilled portrait painters
- As time went on, quality improved

Image by Unknown Artist



# COLONIAL ART

1660 - 1750

- The American people began to develop their own identity,
- While some ideas came from Europe, for the most part American art began to develop a unique style because of its isolation
  - Pro – Isolation caused unhindered artistic exploration
  - Con – There were no great works of art to model art after

Image by John Simbert





# REVOLUTIONARY ART

1763 - 1783

- Now, the British colonies were completely focused on the conflict with England
- More newspapers were produced, and political cartoons gained popularity
- Romanticism – style of art emphasizing individuality and imagination
- John Singleton Copley introduced a gentler and more refined style of portrait painting

Image by John Singleton Copley



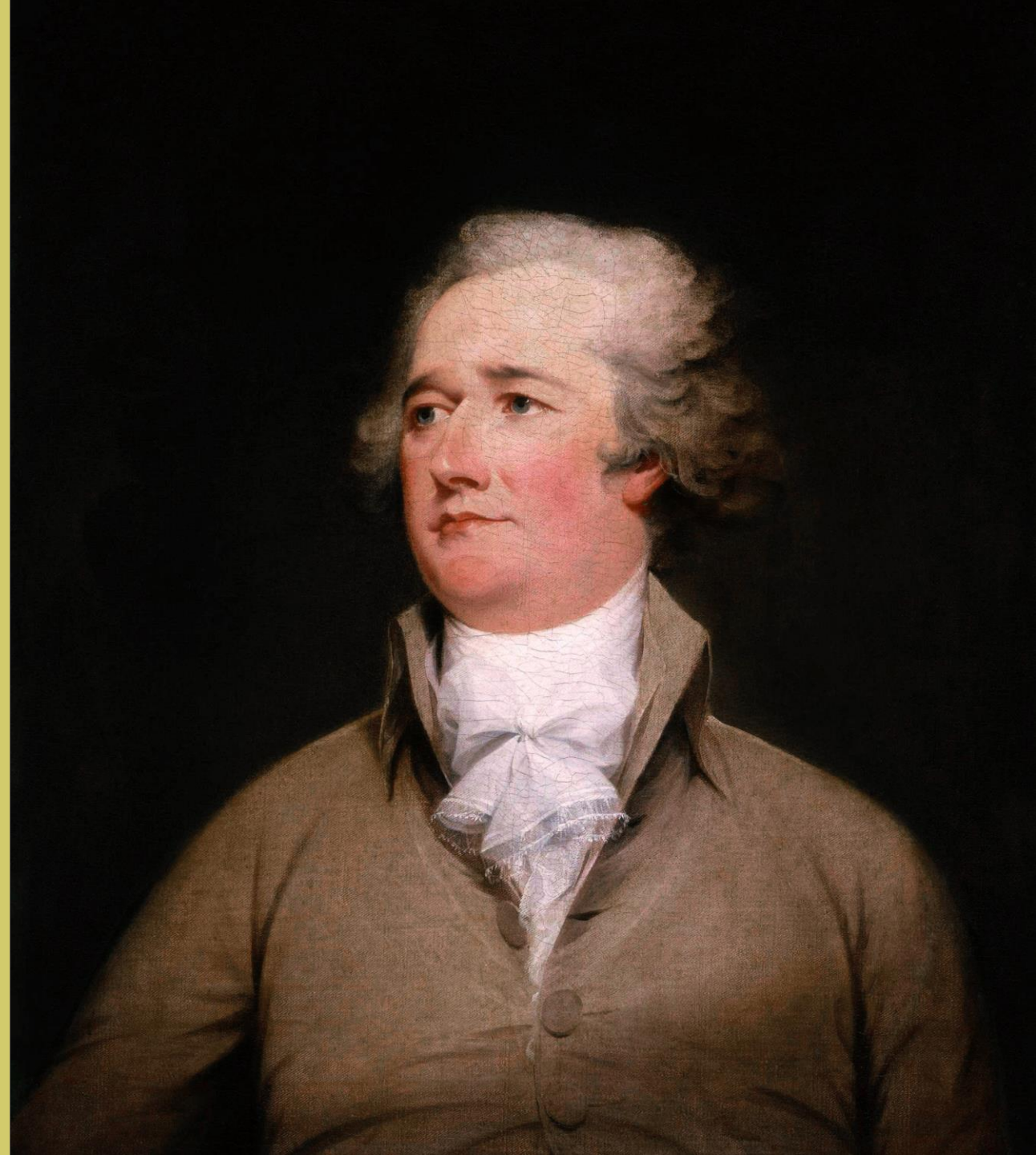


# POST-REVOLUTIONARY ART

1783 - 1791

- Coming out of the Revolution, the people – and the art – focused on the new government
- Artistic power was used to
  - Create grand and beautiful government buildings
  - Capture the images of the founding fathers
  - Commemorate victorious battles

Image by John Trumbull





# POST-REVOLUTIONARY ART

1791 - 1815

- During this time period the American people began to settle down and expand.
- Between the War of 1812 and the Louisiana Purchase, there began to be themes of grandeur and pride in American art.

Image by Thomas Cole





# AMERICAN ART

1815 - 1840

- America was now its own.
- Everyday people created art for pleasure rather than profit. Their simple style was known as “primitivism”
- At the same time, the Hudson River School was created, dedicated to depicting American landscapes
- John James Audubon traveled the country, creating over 400 scientifically accurate paintings of American birds

Image by John James Audubon





# AMERICAN ART

Highlighting the effects of the Market Revolution:

- The rise of factory work and city life led to two major art movements
  - Romantic Allegory – highly emotional art that told a story to the viewer – was often Biblical, Mythological, or historical
  - Genre Painting – scenes of people from everyday life
- Also, still life painting rose in popularity

Image by Raffaele Peale



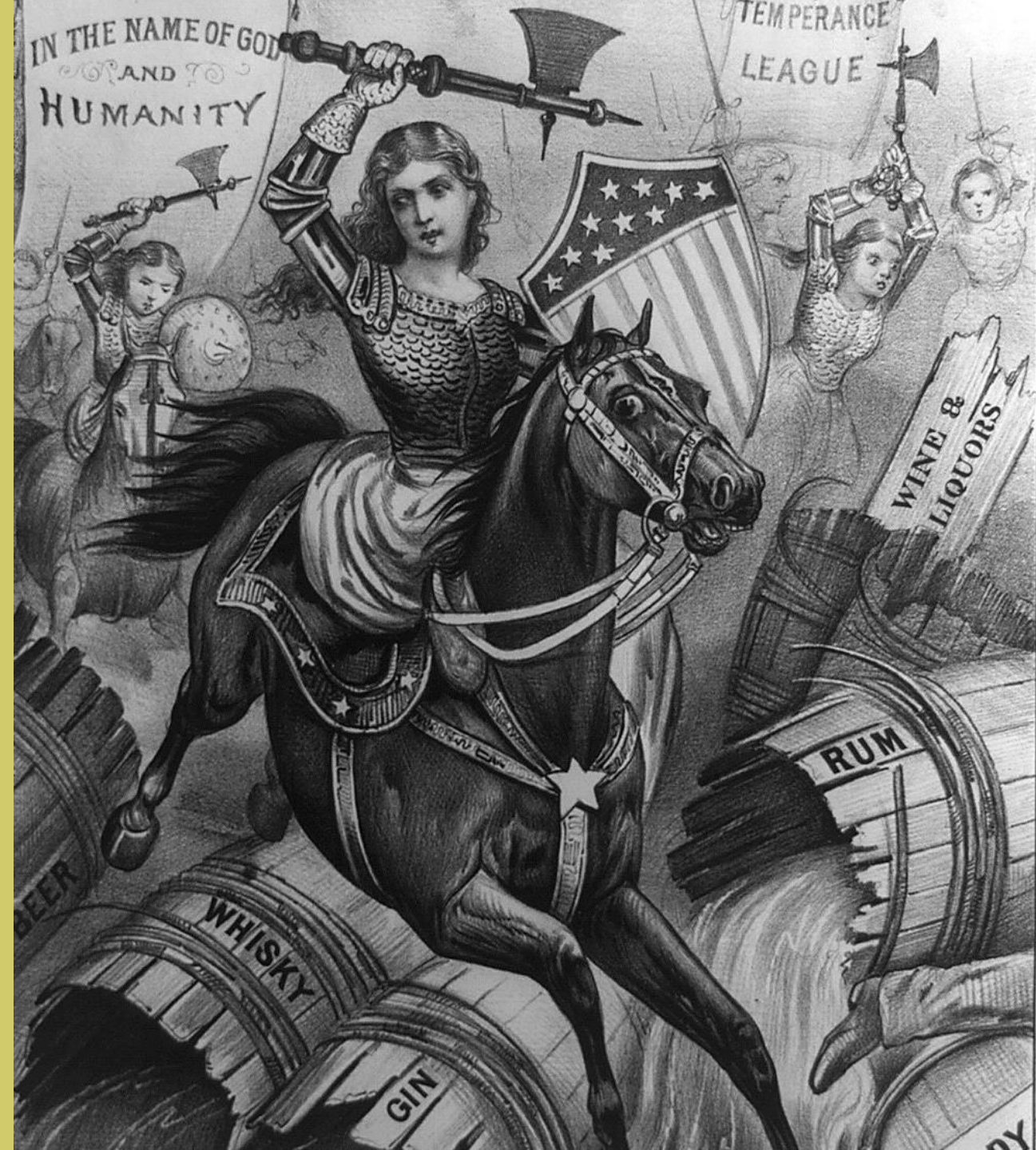


## AMERICAN ART

Highlighting the effects of the social movements of Abolition, Temperance and Feminism

- With the rise of these social causes, also came a surge of political cartoons and propaganda
  - Propaganda – the purposeful spreading of ideas in order to either promote or harm a person or idea

Image published by Courier & Ives





# AMERICAN ART

1840 - 1861

- Photography was perfected in 1837, and inspired change in other art mediums
- Mid-Century Realism – movement of more realistic artwork
- What was left of the Hudson River School focused on creating realistic landscapes

Image by Frederick E. Church





# AMERICAN ART

1861 - 1865

- There was little fine art created during the Civil War – the entire South was blockaded and was unable to receive art supplies
- Matthew Brady realized the documenting power of the camera, and captured iconic photographs of the aftermath of Civil War battles

Image by Matthew Brady





# AMERICAN ART

1865 - 1877

- The recent conflict led to a rise in political cartoons
- Many Americans were dissatisfied with their country, and brought in foreign ideas of art, ending America's artistic isolation
- Abstract Art – inspired more by emotions than reality

Image by James Abbott McNeill Whistler

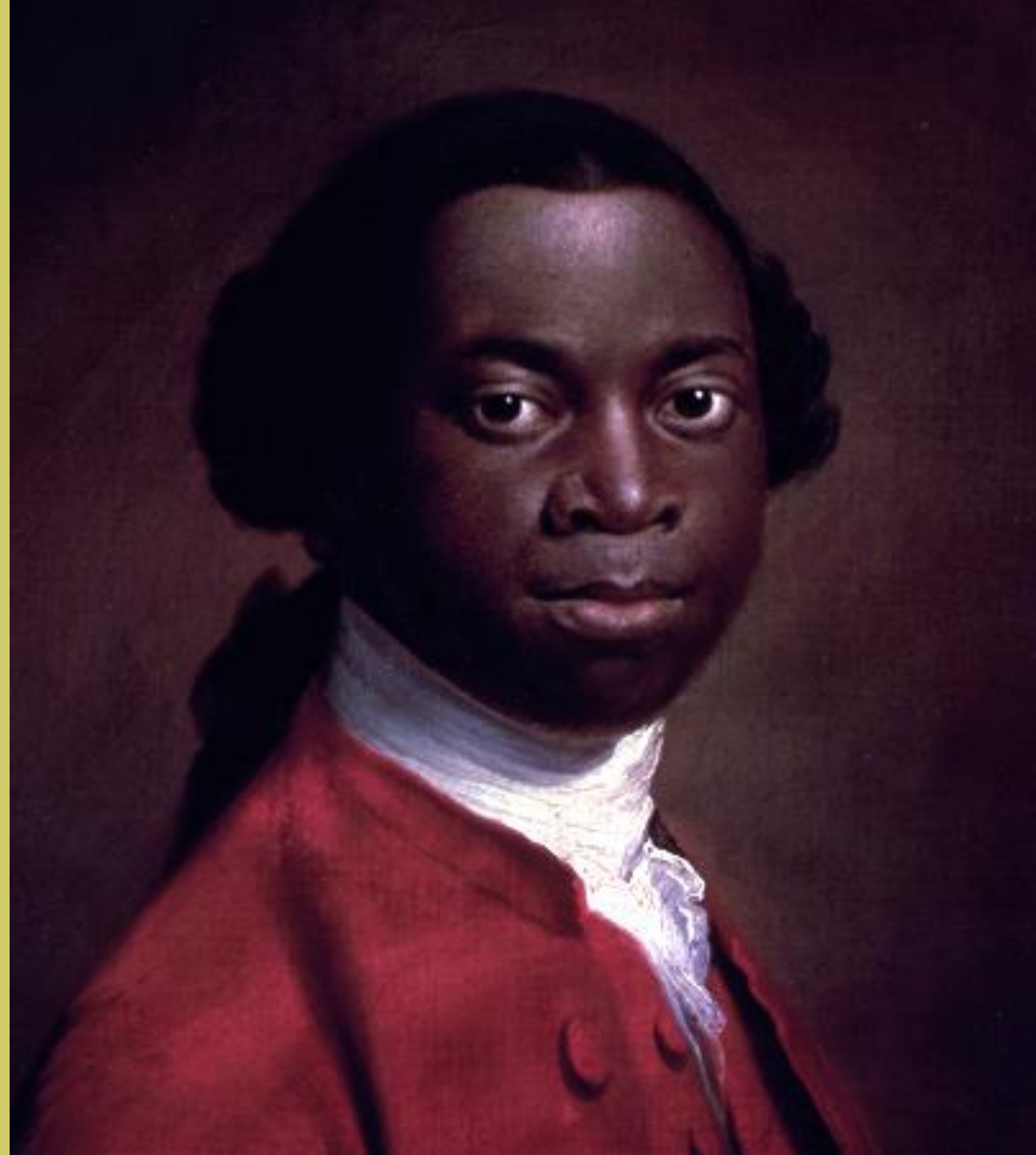




## HIGHLIGHTING AFRICAN AMERICANS

- In early colonial America, race had nothing to do with social status
- As time progressed and racism grew, African Americans were painted in a less flattering light
- Oftentimes artists of color would go uncredited for their work
- During the time of the Civil War came a movement of "Sentimental" art, which was meant to elicit sympathy for slaves and promote the ideas of abolition

Image by Unknown Artist





## HIGHLIGHTING WOMEN

- In Colonial America, women were portrayed as very stiff and formal
- Women were commonly only seen as important because they were going to raise the next generation of male leaders, so in art they were often shown as mothers and wives
- Yet, American art borrowed from the European idea of female mythical figures, so concepts like “Liberty” are often personified as female

Image by Samuel Jennings



## AMERICAN ART: A STUDY IN INDEPENDENCE

American art has been set apart by its countries early isolation.

The people embraced independence and created a unique style.

American artists resisted common conceptions of beauty and created their own.

Image by George Caleb Bingham





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