

## Designer Roots: 50 Art History Sites Worth Bookmarking

Art history might seem archaic and suffocating, but it also provides resources for inspiration. In this article, Linda provides links to 25 art history Web sites and 25 art history blogs worth perusing for insights.



### ***From Cave Paintings to Style Skilling and Beyond...***

Unless you have a degree in visual communications, graphic design, or some other design program, you may not have thought much about your roots as a designer. While I'm not forcing anyone to learn more than he or she wants to learn, you might benefit from browsing through museums and art history books. But, if you cannot take time to do that much, then you might take a look at the 50 art Web sites and blogs compiled below.

The updated Web sites and blogs gathered for this list don't discuss graphic design all that much, and typography may not be mentioned until you reach the Dada Movement in fine art. But, as in any arts or

design project, you will encounter the elements and principles of design as you browse through images and read blog entries. You may gain some insight into colour combinations, balance, composition and texture.

You also may gain inspiration that could dispel your designer's block. You may even decide that a trip to a museum is on your upcoming agenda. Viewing an original piece of artwork after seeing it in a book is an experience. Just ask anyone who has seen the Mona Lisa – that painting by Leonardo da Vinci isn't as large



as you might think.

And, one day at an interview, when someone states that your work reminds them of abstract expressionism, you can look confused and state, "No, I'm totally into steampunk," or you can look sharp and state, "I've always admired Richard Pousette-Dart's work." (as in the image shown above)

That latter remark should turn some tables.

## **Art History Sites**

The following list of 50 sites is divided into two categories – one for art history Web sites, and another for art history blogs. Both categories contain 25 sites worth browsing.

### **Art History Sites**

1. [ArtHistory.net](http://ArtHistory.net) provides links to descriptions of various artistic styles and periods, including Neoclassicism, Medieval Art, and Surrealism. It provides information on different mediums, such as gouache and watercolor.
2. [Hunt For Art History](http://HuntForArtHistory.com) provides information about arts, artists and their creations organized by period, ranging from prehistoric to 20<sup>th</sup> Century American art. It covers different artistic styles and periods, including pop art, Romanticism, and Art Deco.
3. [World Wide Arts Resources](http://WorldWideArtsResources.com) provides links to the biographies of over 22,000 artists, direct links to images in museum collections, and art news.
4. [ArtHistory.cc](http://ArtHistory.cc) has a large gallery of master painters' artwork, with biographies and information about the paintings. This site has a timeline that lets you explore the history of art by eras and movements within the larger scope of world art history.

5. [Smarthistory.org](#) is an open, not-for-profit, art history textbook. The site provides a timeline of art history from 400 CE to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It has an in-site search engine and links to the biographies of many different artists and discussions of each major artistic movement from the Paleolithic era onward.
6. [Best History](#) provides access to a number of art history-oriented resources online, in a wide range of categories. Sites with educational content are emphasized but general resources and research-oriented sites have been included as well.
7. [Art cyclopedia](#) provides roughly 95,000 links to 180,000 world masterpieces. Visitors browse over 8,200 artists by name, movement, medium, or nationality. It is also possible to search for art by title or search by world region to connect with the world's most famous museums from the Louvre to the Rijksmuseum.
8. [CGFA: A Virtual Art Museum](#) contains on-line pictures by a wide variety of artists such as Michelangelo and Monet with biographies. The site is searchable by artist's name. It lists the artists in alphabetical order.
9. [About.com: Art History](#) contains short artist biographies as well as more extensive guides to figures of the art world. The site covers everything from famous artists and their patrons, to famous models and forgers. You can also browse online overviews and timelines of artistic movements and user articles on art and culture.
10. [Metropolitan Museum of Art: The Glory of Byzantium](#) explores art from the two golden ages of Byzantium, 324-740 and 843-1261, as well as the late period. You can browse artwork arranged by theme or period or read historical notes and descriptions.
11. [Cleopatra: Art History of the Ancient World](#) is a multimedia guide to the Ancient Art Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. On this website visitors can view art and artifacts from ancient Greece, Egypt, and Italy or browse artifacts on a timeline or by geographic region.
12. [Modern & Contemporary Artists and Art](#) deals with the major modern and contemporary visual artists. Art is listed by technique, art style and art movement. Famous, established and emerging artists since 1900 are represented with their portrait, biography and/or portfolio, with links to web resources to find out more about them.
13. [Social History of Art](#) lists essays, lectures and bibliographies on Western Art with a focus on late Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque. It provides an on-line art gallery and bibliography section for further reading.
14. [Art History Resources on the Web](#) contains links to information on art history covering everything from Prehistoric Art to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is organized by geographic location, including Asian, Greek and Roman, and Celtic and other early European art.
15. [The Art History Archive](#) provides links to short biographies of famous artists categorized by medium, such as sculptors and photographers. It has information on a limited number of art movements and periods, including Cubism and Impressionism.
16. [Native American Art](#), maintained by the non-profit organization Native Languages of the Americas, provides links to definitions and explanations of various art forms associated with Native American culture, including dreamcatchers, totem poles, and pottery, with a brief history of each.
17. [An Introduction to the History of Graphic Design](#) covers writing and typography from pictograms and handwriting through moveable type to digital printing. It includes book and poster design and advertising.
18. [Beyond Books: History of Painting](#) is part of a larger, education-based website, which provides a brief overview of art as a concept, and why humans create art. It covers art history from prehistoric cave painting to art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Other sections cover non-Western art, including Chinese, Japanese and Islamic.
19. [Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#) provides a comprehensive timeline of art history around the world, from 8000 BC to the present day. This timeline has sections for North and Central America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

20. [Web Gallery of Art](#) is an on-line gallery and searchable database for European painters and sculptors from 1000 BCE to 1850 CE. This site includes examples of each artist's work along with a brief biography of each and commentaries on their work.
21. [NGA Classroom: For Teachers and Students](#) is an interactive website featuring a wide variety of study aids for both teachers and students. "Featured Resources" link to interactive pages on Self Portraits in Art, the Dutch Golden Age and more.
22. [The Art Institute of Chicago: Art Explorer](#) allows the user to search through an on-line version of the Art Institute's gallery of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings. The site allows the user to search by the artist's name or by selecting them from a list.
23. [The Art Institute of Chicago](#) offers video and audio podcasts about the museum and its collection. Visitors may listen to audio podcasts discussing special exhibits, the lives of artists whose work is featured in the Institute, and explorations of individual works of art. The site also allows the user to view on-line art collections, searchable by subject.
24. [Kidipede: Ancient and Medieval Art](#) is a resource for middle-school students that includes an extensive section on art history organized by era and by categories of art, with separate entries for architecture, painting, sculpture and pottery.
25. [The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Works of Art](#) is an informational database that includes a searchable timeline of art history. This timeline provides links to works of art from the museum that are viewable on-line. It also provides links to thematic essays on art history that may be searched by geographic location or browsed.

## Art History Blogs

1. [The Black Art Depot Today](#) is for people interested in African American and other ethnic art. Articles are largely informed by racial politics of both the past and the present. It provides a chat log to allow visitors to ask questions about the website.
2. [The Art History Blog](#) is a chatty, informal site dedicated to making art history accessible to ordinary viewers. It also discusses the value of art. Articles provide discussions of art and artists and their lives, and often provide photographs of exhibits or individual pieces.
3. [Tate Blog](#) focuses on pieces from the museum's collection. It provides discussion of individual artists, with articles devoted to their lives and to several individual pieces of their work. It provides a wide range of articles on everything from classical painting and pottery to more contemporary pieces.
4. [The Earthly Paradise](#), according to its author "is inspired by the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, classic literature and mythology and the writings of William Morris and the Romantic Poets." It provides articles on both modern, pop culture art that draws inspiration from Pre-Raphaelite art, and in-depth discussion of the movement itself.
5. [When Art History Goes Bad](#) is a blog maintained by Nicole Jordan, who describes herself as "an art history nerd who likes to complain." It voices the author's opinion on a wide variety of art and artists, often tempered with sarcasm. However, her posts also demonstrate an understanding of art history, and a wide breadth of knowledge on the subject.
6. [Art History Newsletter](#) synthesizes news and opinion of interest to art historians and publishes its own reports on relevant conferences and lectures given by art historians. Its main focus is on the study of art history and providing a resource for academics. However, it does include articles discussing art and artists themselves.
7. [Famous Paintings Reviewed](#) is dedicated to an in-depth review of selected paintings by famous artists of all styles and periods. Reviews cover artists from Matisse to Georgia O'Keefe. Each review discusses the origins of the paintings and includes images of the paintings themselves.

8. [Painting History](#) examines paintings that record historical people and events. It covers a wide variety of paintings, from The “Colossus of Rhodes” by Antonio Muñoz Degrain to “The Doors of Tamerlane” by Vasily Vasilyevich Vereshchagi. The blog also offers a brief introduction to historic paintings as a genre.
9. [Notes on Early Modern Art](#) explores individual pieces of early modern art, with an emphasis on 17<sup>th</sup> Century Italy. This site examines not only the art itself, but the motivations behind each piece. It places the artists and their work into the time in which they lived.
10. [Women in the Bible](#) focuses on art derived from the Bible and its stories and the varying interpretations of each figure and theme. It provides explanations of the more obscure stories, and provides the artist’s name and the date of the piece.
11. [Art History Salon](#) “is a gathering place for art historians, students, and lovers of art in the tradition of the grand eighteenth-century salon.” The author, an assistant professor of art history at Brigham Young University, features a number of guest bloggers.
12. [Art History Ramblings](#) is the blog of a student of art history at Savannah College of Art and Design. The blog “rambles” through a wide variety of art history topics gleaned from the bloggers own experiences and also from various news sources.
13. [Van Gogh’s Chair](#) emphasizes the work and history of Vincent Van Gogh. Much attention is given to various pieces of art that were created by Van Gogh, where they are now, where they are being exhibited and where they will be shown in the future. There are also articles related to other artists or art pieces and some general history.
14. [Art History Blog](#) consists of short entries on Twitter, each one linking to a news article or website dealing with a wide variety of subjects ranging from the sale, restoration or rediscovery of artwork, to news on museum curators and other important figures in the art and art history world.
15. [Art History Today](#) focuses on the blogger’s experiences in the academic circles of art history in the United Kingdom. It discusses not only visits to various galleries and lectures but also the art itself. Although the focus is academic, the articles are of interest to the general public.
16. [Alberti’s Window](#) blends a study of classical and ancient pieces of art with articles about modern pop culture. It cover a wide variety of subjects, such as prehistoric cave art and art produced by and about slaves and abolitionists in the United States.
17. [The Textile Blog](#): examines “all aspects of the history of printed, woven and knitted textiles” and focuses on everything from rugs to tapestries and wallpaper. Each article features a different artist, with a brief history of their careers and elements of their artistic philosophies.
18. [African Painters](#) is devoted to African art, both “on and off the continent of Africa”. The content of this blog is quite mixed, covering everything from sculpture to painting to literature. Each entry provides pictures of the art being discussed, often in a slideshow format.
19. [Eye Level](#) is the blog of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. It uses the Smithsonian’s collection of art to introduce discussion on American art, and the way this art is tied into the nation’s culture and history.
20. [Reflections on Islamic Art and Architecture](#), a discussion on Islamic art and architecture with a focus divided between art history and preservation of artifacts in the Islamic world and a discussion of how Islamic art is viewed through a veil of current political opinion.
21. [Art History](#) provides a very comprehensive study of certain periods of art history, with emphasis on Byzantine, English and Flemish art. It also features quotes from famous artists and information on a handful of museums around the world.
22. [Culture Monster](#) discusses art exhibitions and performances from around the world, including many modern artists. Among the regular articles are brief descriptions and links to controversial art subjects, such as an article on Adolf Hitler and a look, through art, at his impact on Germany and the rest of the world.
23. [Jonathan Jones on Art](#), an art columnist for *The Guardian* deals largely with art showings and events

in the United Kingdom, including exhibitions of modern and classical art. He provides discussion of the art in question, and he has a firm grasp of history and a genuine concern for the preservation of art and the promotion of understanding why it is important.

24. [NYA Blog](#) is a look at art in and around the city of New York. Included on this site are reviews of modern art, as well as interviews with artists and art historians.

25. [Style Skilling](#) makes a study of pop culture art, with an emphasis on intricately designed costumes and clothing, fiber art, and a history of comic book design.

## **Conclusion**

The main reason to study art history is to learn more about the study of the visual arts in civilization throughout time. Art history examines changing values in fields such as visual culture, social history and even in religion. All arts are covered, including painting, sculpture, graphics and mass media – and all the forms are covered in their popular expressions at the time.

Additionally, by studying art history, you can gain insight into other disciplines such as literature, history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, critical theory, cultural studies and gender studies. You can advance a liberal arts education with this study as well as prepare to work in areas outside a studio. This study serves as a foundation for careers in teaching, arts administration, museums, galleries, historic preservation, art libraries, publishing, journalism, advertising, art conservation and art investment.

Lastly, as the world becomes more digitally-oriented and archival (and open access), this field may expand to include the arts that remain to be developed through technology.

In other words, a little art history never hurt anyone. Enjoy.