Early in the fifteenth century, a figure known as La Pittura—literally, “the picture”—began to appear in Italian art (Fig. 280). As art historian Mary D. Garrard has noted, the emergence of the figure of La Pittura, the personification of painting, could be said to announce the cultural arrival of painting as an art. In the Middle Ages, painting was never included among the liberal arts—those areas of knowledge that were thought to develop general intellectual capacity—which included rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and music. While the liberal arts were understood to involve inspiration and creative invention, painting was considered merely a mechanical skill, involving, at most, the ability to copy. The emergence of La Pittura announced that painting was finally something more than mere copywork, that it was an intellectual pursuit equal to the other liberal arts, all of which had been given similar personification early in the Middle Ages.

![Giorgio Vasari, The Art of Painting, 1542. Fresco of the vault of the Main Room, Arezzo, Casa Vasari. Canali Photobank, Capriolo, Italy.](image-url)
In her Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting (Fig. 281), Artemisia Gentileschi presents herself as both a real person and as the personification of La Pittura. Iconographically speaking, Gentileschi may be recognized as La Pittura by virtue of the pendant around her neck that symbolizes imitation. And Gentileschi can imitate the appearance of things very well—she presents us with a portrait of herself as she really looks. Still, in Renaissance terms, imitation means more than simply copying appearances: It is the representation of nature as seen by and through the artist’s imagination. On the one hand, Gentileschi’s multicolored garment alludes to her craft and skill as a copyist—she can imitate the effects of color—but on the other hand, her unruly hair stands for the imaginative frenzy of the artist’s temperament. Thus, in this painting, she portrays herself both as a real woman and as an idealized personification of artistic genius, possessing all the intellectual authority and dignity of a Leonardo or a Michelangelo. Though in her time it was commonplace to think of women as intellectually inferior to men—“women have long dresses and short intellects” was a popular saying—here Gentileschi transforms painting from mere copywork, and, in the process, transforms her own possibilities as a creative person.

Nevertheless, from the earliest times, one of the major concerns of Western painting has been representing the appearance of things in the natural world. There is a famous story told by the historian Pliny about a contest between the Greek painters Parrhasius and Zeuxis as to who could make the most realistic image:

Zeuxis produced a picture of grapes so dexterously represented that birds began to fly down to eat from the painted vine. Whereupon Parrhasius designed so lifelike a picture of a curtain that Zeuxis, proud of the verdict of the birds, requested that the curtain should now be drawn back and the picture displayed. When he realized his mistake, with a modesty that did him honor, he yielded up the palm, saying that whereas he had managed to deceive only birds, Parrhasius had deceived an artist.

This tradition, which views the painter’s task as rivaling the truth of nature, has survived to the present day.

In this chapter, we will consider the art of painting, paying particular attention to how its various media developed in response to artists’ desires to imitate reality and express themselves more fluently. But before we begin our discussion of these various painting media, we should be familiar with a number of terms that all the media share and that are crucial to understanding how paintings are made.

From prehistoric times to the present day, the painting process has remained basically the same. As
in drawing, artists use pigments, or powdered colors, suspended in a medium or binder that holds the particles of pigment together. The binder protects the pigment from changes and serves as an adhesive to anchor the pigment to the support, or the surface on which the artist paints—a wall, a panel of wood, a sheet of paper, or a canvas. Different binders have different characteristics. Some dry more quickly than others. Some create an almost transparent paint, while others are opaque—that is, they cannot be seen through. The same pigment used in different binders will look different because of the varying degrees of each binder’s transparency.

Since most supports are too absorbent to allow the easy application of paint, artists often prime (pre-treat) a support with a paint-like material called a ground. Grounds also make the support surface smoother or more uniform in texture. Many grounds, especially white grounds, increase the brightness of the final picture.

Finally, artists use a solvent or vehicle, a thinner that enables the paint to flow more readily and that also cleans brushes. All water-based paints use water for a vehicle. Other types of paints require a different thinner—in the case of oil-based paint, turpentine.

Each painting medium has unique characteristics and has flourished at particular historical moments. Though many media have been largely abandoned as new media have been discovered—media that allow the artist to create a more believable image or that are simply easier to use—almost all media continue to be used to some extent, and older media, such as encaustic and fresco, sometimes find fresh uses in the hands of contemporary artists.

**ENCAUSTIC**

Encaustic, made by combining pigment with a binder of hot wax, is one of the oldest painting media. It was widely used in classical Greece, most famously by Polygnotus, but his work, as well as all other Greek painting except that on vases, has entirely perished. (The contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius was probably conducted in encaustic.)

Most of the surviving encaustic paintings from the ancient world come from Faiyum in Egypt, which, in the second century CE, was a thriving Roman province about 60 miles south of present-day Cairo. The Faiyum paintings are funeral portraits, which were attached to the mummy cases of the deceased, and they are the only indication we have of the painting techniques used by the Greeks. A transplanted Greek artist may, in fact, have been responsible for Mummy Portrait of a Man (Fig. 282), though we cannot be sure.

What is clear, though, is the artist’s remarkable skill with the brush. The encaustic medium is a demanding one, requiring the painter to work quickly so that the wax will stay liquid. Looking at Mummy Portrait of a Man, we notice that while the neck and shoulders have been rendered with simplified forms, which gives them a sense of
strength that is almost tangible, the face has been painted in a very naturalistic and sensitive way. The wide, expressive eyes and the delicate modeling of the cheeks make us feel that we are looking at a “real” person, which was clearly the artist’s intention.

The extraordinary luminosity of the encaustic medium has led to its revival in recent years. Of all contemporary artists working in the medium, no one has perfected its use more than Jasper Johns, whose encaustic *Three Flags* (see Fig. 19) we saw in Chapter 1.

**FRESCO**

Wall painting was practiced by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, as well as by Italian painters of the Renaissance. Numerous examples survive from Aegean civilizations of the Cyclades and Crete (see Fig. 568), to which later Greek culture traced its roots. In the eighteenth century, a great many frescoes were discovered at Pompeii and nearby Herculaneum, where they had been buried under volcanic ash since the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE. A series of still-life paintings was unearthed in 1755–57 that proved so popular in France that they led to the renewed popularity of the still-life genre. This *Still Life with Eggs and Thrushes* (Fig. 283), from the Villa of Julia Felix, is particularly notable, especially the realism of the dish of eggs, which seems to hang over the edge of the painting and push forward into our space. The fact that all the objects in the still life have been painted life-size adds to the work’s sense of realism.

The preferred medium for wall painting for centuries was fresco, in which pigment is mixed with limewater (a solution containing calcium hydroxide, or slaked lime) and then applied to a lime plaster wall that is either still wet or hardened and dry. If the paint is applied to a wet wall, the process is called *buon*...
**fresco** (Italian for “good” or “true fresco”), and if it is applied to a dry wall, it is called **fresco secco**, or “dry fresco.” In **buon fresco**, the wet plaster absorbs the wet pigment, and the painting literally becomes part of the wall. The artist must work quickly, plastering only as much wall as can be painted before the plaster dries, but the advantage of the process is that it is extremely durable. In **fresco secco**, on the other hand, the pigment is combined with binders such as egg yolk, oil, or wax and applied separately, at virtually any pace the artist desires. As a result, the artist can render an object with extraordinary care and meticulousness. The disadvantage of the **fresco secco** technique is that moisture can creep in between the plaster and the paint, causing the paint to flake off the wall. This is what happened to Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper* in Milan (see Fig. 99), which has peeled away to such a tragic degree that the image almost disappeared. Today it is being carefully restored.

Nevertheless, in extremely dry environments, such as the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, India, **fresco secco** has proven extremely durable (Fig. 284). Painting in the fifth century CE, the artists at Ajanta covered the walls of the caves with a mixture of mud and cow dung, bound together with straw or animal hair. Once dry, this mud mixture was smoothed over a layer of gypsum or lime plaster, which served as the ground for the painting. The artists’ technique is fully described in the *Samarangana Sutra Dhara*, an encyclopedic work on Indian architecture written in the early eleventh century CE. The artist first outlined his subject in iron ore, then filled in the outline with color, building up the figure’s features from darker to lighter tones to create the subtle gradations of modeling required to achieve a sense of a three-dimensional body. Protruding features, such as shoulders, nose, brow, and, on this figure especially, the right hand, thus resonate against the dark background of the painting, as if reaching out of the darkness of the cave into the light.

This figure is a **bodhisattva**, an enlightened being who, in order to help others achieve enlightenment, postpone joining Buddha in **nirvana**—not exactly heaven, but the state of being freed from suffering and the cycle of rebirth. It is one of two large **bodhisattvas** that flank the entrance to a large hall in Cave I at Ajanta built into the caves around the sides of which are monks’ cells with a Buddha shrine at the back. Lavishly adorned with jewelry, including long strands of pearls and an ornate crown, the delicate gesture of the right hand forming the teaching **mudra** (see Chapter 2), the figure seems intended to suggest to the viewer the joys of following the path of Buddha.

![Fig. 284 Bodhisattva, detail of a fresco wall painting in Cave I, Ajanta, Maharashtra, India, c. 475 CE. Photo: Lars Göhler, India Project.](image)
In Europe, the goal of creating the illusion of reality dominates fresco painting from the early Renaissance in the fourteenth century through the Baroque period of the late seventeenth century. It is as if painting at the scale of the wall invites, even demands, the creation of “real” space. In one of the great sets of frescoes of the early Renaissance, painted by Giotto in the Arena Chapel in Padua, Italy, this realist impulse is especially apparent.

The Arena Chapel was specially designed, possibly by Giotto himself, to house frescoes, and it contains 38 individual scenes that tell the stories of the lives of the Virgin and Christ. In the Lamentation (Fig. 285), the two crouching figures with their backs to us extend into our space in a manner similar to the bowl of eggs in the Roman fresco. Here, the result is to involve us in the sorrow of the scene. As the hand of the left-most figure cradles Christ’s head, it is almost as if the hand were our own. One of the more remarkable aspects of this fresco, however, is the placement of its focal point—Christ’s face—in the lower-left-hand corner of the composition, at the base of the diagonal formed by the stone ledge. Just as the angels in the sky seem to be plummeting toward the fallen Christ, the tall figure on the right leans forward in a sweeping gesture of grief that mimics the angels’ descending flight.

Lines dividing various sections of Giotto’s fresco are clearly apparent, especially in the sky. In the lower half of the painting these divisions tend to follow the contours of the various figures. These sections, known as giornata, literally a “day’s work” in Italian, are the areas that Giotto was able to complete in a single sitting. Since in buon fresco the paint had to be applied on a wet wall, Giotto could only paint an area that he could complete before the plaster coat set. If the area to be painted was complex—a face, for instance—the giornata might be no larger. Extremely detailed work would be added later, as in fresco secco.
Fig. 286  Fra Andrea Pozzo, *The Glorification of Saint Ignatius*, 1691–94.
Ceiling fresco. Nave of Sant’Ignazio, Rome.
Scala / Art Resource, NY.
The fresco artists’ interest in illusionism culminated in Michelangelo’s frescoes for the Sistine Chapel (see Works in Progress, pp. 228–229) and in the Baroque ceiling designs of the late seventeenth century. Among the most remarkable of these is The Glorification of Saint Ignatius (Fig. 286), which Fra Andrea Pozzo painted for the church of Sant’ Ignazio in Rome. Standing in the nave, or central portion of the church, and looking upward, the congregation had the illusion that the roof of the church had been removed, revealing the glories of Heaven. A master of perspective, about which he wrote an influential treatise, Pozzo realized his effects by extending the architecture in paint one story above the actual windows in the vault. Saint Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuit order, is shown being transported on a cloud toward the waiting Christ. The foreshortening of the many figures, becoming ever smaller in size as they rise toward the center of the ceiling, greatly adds to the realistic, yet awe-inspiring, effect.

To early Renaissance eyes, Giotto’s Madonna and Child (Fig. 287) represented, like his frescoes in the Arena chapel, a significant “advance” in the era’s increasingly insistent desire to create increasingly realistic work. It is possible, for instance, to feel the volume of the Madonna’s knee in Giotto’s altarpiece, to sense actual bodies beneath the draperies that clothe his models. The neck of Giotto’s Madonna is modeled and curves round beneath her cape. Her face is sculptural, as if real bones lie beneath her skin.

What motivated this drive toward realism? Painting, it should be remembered, can suggest at least as much, and probably more, than it portrays. Another way to say this is that painting can be understood in terms of its connotation as well as its denotation. What a painting denotes

**TEMPERA**

Most artists in the early Renaissance who painted frescoes also worked in tempera, a medium made by combining water, pigment, and some gummy material, usually egg yolk. The paint was meticulously applied with the point of a fine red sable brush. Colors could not readily be blended, and, as a result, effects of chiaroscuro were accomplished by means of careful and gradual hatching. In order to use tempera, the painting surface, often a wood panel, had to be prepared with a very smooth ground, not unlike the smooth plaster wall prepared for buon fresco. Gesso, made from glue and plaster of Paris or chalk, is the most common ground, and, like wet plaster, it is fully absorbent, combining with the tempera paint to create an extremely durable and softly glowing surface unmatched by any other medium.
On May 10, 1506, Michelangelo received an advance payment from Pope Julius II to undertake the task of frescoing the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome. By the end of July, a scaffolding had been erected. By September 1508, Michelangelo was painting, and for the next four and a half years, he worked almost without interruption on the project.

According to Michelangelo’s later recounting of events, Julius had originally envisioned a design in which the central part of the ceiling would be filled with “ornaments according to custom” (apparently a field of geometric ornaments) surrounded by the 12 apostles in the 12 spandrels. Michelangelo protested, assuring Julius that it would be “a poor design” since the apostles were themselves “poor too.” Apparently convinced, the pope then freed Michelangelo to paint anything he liked. Instead of the apostles, Michelangelo created a scheme of 12 Old Testament prophets alternating with 12 sibyls, or women of classical antiquity said to possess prophetic powers. The center of the ceiling would be filled with nine scenes from Genesis.

As the scaffolding was erected, specially designed by the artist so that he could walk around and paint from a standing position, Michelangelo set to work preparing hundreds of drawings for the ceiling. These drawings were then transferred to full-size cartoons, which would be laid up against the moist surface of the fresco as it was prepared, their outlines traced through with a stylus. None of these cartoons, and surprisingly few of Michelangelo’s drawings, have survived.

One of the greatest, and most revealing, of the surviving drawings is a Study for the Libyan Sibyl (Fig. 288). Each of the sibyls holds a book of prophecy—though not Christian figures, they prophesy the revelation of the New Testament in the events of the Old Testament that they surround. The Libyan Sibyl (Fig. 289) is the last sibyl that Michelangelo would paint. She is positioned next to the Separation of Light from Darkness, the last of the central panels, which is directly over the altarpiece. The Libyan Sibyl herself turns to close her book and place it on the desk behind her. Even as she does so, she steps down from her throne, creating a stunning opposition of directional forces, an exaggerated, almost spiral contrapposto. She abandons her book of prophecy as she turns to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist on the altar below.

The severity of this downward twisting motion obviously came late in Michelangelo’s work on the figure. In the drawing, the sibyl’s hands are balanced evenly, across an almost horizontal plane. But the idea of dropping the left hand, in order to emphasize more emphatically the sibyl’s downward movement, came almost immediately, for just below her left arm is a second variation, in which the upper arm drops perceptively downward and the left hand is parallel to the face instead of the forehead, matching the positions of the final painting. In the drawing, the sibyl is nude, and apparently Michelangelo’s model is male, his musculature more closely defined than in the final painting. Furthermore, in the drawing,
the model’s face is redone to the lower left, her lips made fuller and feminized, the severity of the original model’s brow and cheek softened. The magnificently foreshortened left hand is redone in larger scale, as if in preparation for the cartoon, and so is the lower-left foot. There are, in fact, working upward from the bottom of the drawing, three versions of the big toe, and, again, the second and third are closer to the final painted version than the first, more fully realized foot, the second toe splaying more radically backward, again to emphasize downward pressure and movement. It is upon this foot that, in the final painting, Michelangelo directs our attention, illuminating it like no other portion of the figure, the fulcrum upon which the sibyl turns from her pagan past to the Christian present.
is clearly before us: Giotto has painted a Madonna and Child surrounded by angels. But what this painting connotes is something else. To a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Italian audience, the altarpiece would have been understood as depicting the ideal of love that lies between mother and child—and, by extension, the greater love of God for humanity. Although the relative realism of Giotto’s painting is what secures its place in art history, its didacticism—that is, its ability to teach, to elevate the mind, in this case, to the contemplation of salvation—was at least as important to its original audience. Its truth to nature was, in fact, probably inspired by Giotto’s desire to make an image with which its audience could readily identify. It seemed increasingly important to capture not the spirituality of religious figures, but their humanity.

Sandro Botticelli’s *Primavera* (Fig. 290), painted for a chamber next to the bedroom of his patron Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’Medici, is one of the greatest tempera paintings ever made. As a result of its restoration in 1978, we know a good deal about how it was painted. The support consists of eight poplar panels, arranged vertically and fastened by two horizontal strips of spruce. This support was covered with a gesso ground that hid the seams between the panels. Botticelli next outlined the trees and his human figures on the gesso and then painted the sky, laying blue tempera directly on the ground. The figures and trees were painted on an undercoat—white for the figures, black for the trees. The transparency of the drapery was achieved by layering thin yellow washes of transparent medium over the white undercoat. As many as 30 coats of color, transparent or opaque depending on the relative light or shadow of the area being painted, were required to create each figure.

The kind of detail the artist is able to achieve using egg tempera is readily apparent in *Braids* (Fig. 291) by Andrew Wyeth, one of the few contemporary artists to work almost exclusively in the medium. Wyeth’s brushwork is so fine that each strand
of hair escaping from his model’s braids seems caught individually in the light. In fact, the most obvious effect that Wyeth achieves with the medium is that of light. Wyeth’s figures often seem posed in the most intense late-afternoon sun. The intensity is achieved by Wyeth’s setting his palette of warm colors against a deep black background. Thus, the inherently glowing surface of the tempera medium seems to glow even more acutely.

**OIL PAINTING**

Even as Botticelli was creating stunning effects by layering transparent washes of tempera on his canvases, painters in northern Europe were coming to the realization that similar effects could be both more readily and more effectively achieved in oil paint. Oil paint is a far more versatile medium than tempera. It can be blended on the painting surface to create a continuous scale of tones and hues, many of which, especially darker shades, were not possible before oil paint’s invention. As a result, the painter who uses oils can render the most subtle changes in light and achieve the most realistic three-dimensional effects, rivaling sculpture in this regard. Thinned with turpentine, oil paint can become almost transparent. Used directly from the tube, with no thinner at all, it can be molded and shaped to create three-dimensional surfaces, a technique referred to as impasto. Perhaps most important, because its binder is linseed oil, oil painting is slow to dry. Whereas with other painting media artists had to work quickly, with oil they could rework their images almost endlessly.

The ability to create such a sense of reality is a virtue of oil painting that makes the medium particularly suitable to the celebration of material things. By glazing the surface of the painting with thin films of transparent color, the artist creates a sense of luminous materiality. Light penetrates this glaze, bounces off the opaque underpainting beneath, and is reflected back up through the glaze (Fig. 292). Painted objects thus seem to reflect light as if they were real, and the play of light through the painted surfaces gives them a sense of tangible presence.
Although the ancient Romans had used oil paint to decorate furniture, the medium was first used in painting in the early fifteenth century in Flanders. The so-called Master of Flémalle, probably the artist Robert Campin, was among the first to recognize the realistic effects that could be achieved with the new medium. In *The Mérode Altarpiece* (Fig. 292), the Christian story of the Annunciation of the Virgin, the revelation to Mary that she will conceive a child to be born the Son of God, takes place in a fully realized Flemish domestic interior. The archangel Gabriel approaches Mary from the left, almost blocking the view of the two altarpiece’s donors, the couple who commissioned it, dressed in fashionable fifteenth-century clothing and standing outside the door at the left. Seven rays of sunlight illuminate the room and fall directly on Mary’s abdomen. On one of the rays, a miniature Christ, carrying a cross, flies into the scene (Fig. 293). Campin is telling the viewers that the entire life of Christ, including the Passion itself, enters Mary’s body at the moment of conception. The scene is not idealized. In the right-hand panel, Joseph the carpenter works as a real fifteenth-century carpenter might have. In front of him is a recently completed mousetrap. Another mousetrap sits outside on the window ledge, apparently for sale.


These are real people with real daily concerns. The objects in the room—from the vase and flowers to the book and candle—seem to possess a material reality that lends a sense of reality to the story of the Annunciation itself. In fact, the archangel Gabriel appears no less (and no more) “real” than the brass pot above his head.

Another noteworthy aspect of Campin’s altarpiece is its astonishingly small size. If its two side panels are closed over the central panel, as they are designed to work, the altarpiece is just over two feet square—making it entirely portable. This little altarpiece is itself a material object, so intimate and detailed that it functions more like the book that lies open on the table than a painting. It is very different from the altarpieces being made in Italy during the same period. Most of those were monumental in scale and painted in fresco, permanently embedded in the wall, and therefore not portable. Campin’s altarpiece is made to be held up close, in the hands, not surveyed from afar, suggesting its function as a private, rather than public, devotional object.

By 1608, the Netherlands freed itself from Spanish rule and became, by virtue of its almost total dominance of world trade, the wealthiest nation in the world. By that time, artists had become extremely skillful at using the medium of oil paint to represent these material riches. One critic has called the Dutch preoccupation with still life “a dialogue between the newly affluent society and its material possessions.” In a painting such as Jan de Heem’s Still Life with Lobster (Fig. 294), we are witness to the remains of a most extravagant meal, most of which has been left uneaten. This luxuriant and conspicuous display of wealth is deliberate. Southern fruit in a cold climate is a luxury, and the peeled lemon, otherwise untouched, is a sign of almost wanton consumption. For de Heem, the painting was at least in part a celebration, an

Fig. 294 Jan de Heem, Still Life with Lobster, late 1640s.
Oil on canvas, 25½ x 33¼ in. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio. Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey.
invitation to share, at least visually and thus imaginatively, in its world. The feast on the table was a feast for the eyes.

But de Heem’s painting was also a warning, an example of *vanitas* painting. The *vanitas* tradition of still-life painting is specifically designed to induce the spectator to a higher order of thought. *Vanitas* is the Latin term for “vanity,” and *vanitas* paintings, especially popular in northern Europe in the seventeenth century, remind us of the vanity, or frivolous quality, of human existence. If one ordinarily associates the contemplation of the normal subjects of still-life paintings with the enjoyment of the pleasurable things in life, here they take on another connotation as well. The overturned goblet, the half-peeled lemon, the oyster on the half-shell (which spoils quickly), the timepiece beside it, all remind the viewer that the material world celebrated in the painting is not as long-lasting as the spiritual, and that spiritual well-being may be of greater importance than material wealth.

Contemporary Spanish artist Antonio López García has revisited the *vanitas* tradition in many of his highly realistic still lifes and interiors. *New Refrigerator* (Fig. 295) is a modern still life, the objects of traditional still life removed from the tabletop into the refrigerator. Of particular note in López García’s painting is the contrast between the extreme attention he pays to capturing the light in the room—note
the light reflecting off the white tiled floor and the
 tiled wall behind the refrigerator—and the way he has
 rendered the objects in the open refrigerator, which
 are simply abstract blotsches of local color. In fact, the
 abstraction of the still-life objects is echoed in the
 white blotch on the upper wall, which appears to be a
 highly realistic rendering of a plaster patch. In this
 painting, the complex interchange between reality
 and spirituality that vanitas still-life painting embodies
 is transformed into an interchange between the objec-
tive and the subjective, between the material world
 and the artist’s mental or emotional conception of
 that world.

 Virtually since its inception, oil painting’s
 expressive potential has been recognized as fundamen-
tal to its power. Much more than in fresco, where the
 artist’s gesture was lost in the plaster, and much more
 than in tempera, where the artist was forced to use
 brushes so small that gestural freedom was absorbed
 by the scale of the image, oil paint could record and trace
 the artist’s presence before the canvas.

 Pat Passlof begins with abstraction. Her painting
 *Dancing Shoes* (Fig. 296), like many of her larger
 paintings, began with leftover paint from a smaller
 work, which she distributed in odd amounts over the
 surface of the 11-foot canvas. The painting developed
 as a predominantly yellow field that threatened, even
 with its syncopation of darker, loosely rectangular
 medium-yellow shapes, to flatten out. In response to
 these yellow shapes, Passlof added sap green blocks
 of color, so dark that they read as black. These imme-
 diately animated the surface, creating an uneven
 choreography of short leaps and intervals across the
 painting’s surface that at first glance seems to fit into a
 grid but reveals itself to be much freer, the space
 between elements lengthening itself out across the
 canvas with a greater and greater sense of abandon.

 From her husband, the painter Milton Resnick,
 Passlof learned to appreciate a sense of discontinu-
ty or displacement between elements in a composi-
tion that creates surprise, excitement, and even a
 degree of existential trembling, a sense of being
 frightened before the work (see *Works in Progress*,
 pp. 236–237). It is, perhaps, this leap that *Dancing
 Shoes* so successfully exploits, as each “step” or
 block in the composition stands in surprising rela-
tion to the next, not as an impossible “next move,”
 but not in the rhythm of a natural pace either. It is
 as if, in looking at the painting, we can hear the
 syncopation of its jazz beat.

 ![Fig. 296 Pat Passlof, Dancing Shoes, 1998.](image)

 Oil on linen, 80 × 132 in.
 Courtesy of the artist and Elizabeth Harris Gallery, New York.
On July 25, 1995, Abstract Expressionist painter Milton Resnick began five new large paintings. They would sum up, he hoped, what he had learned over the years as a painter. He had left home in his late teens to become an artist and lived through the heyday of Abstract Expressionist painting in New York, where, as one of the leaders of what would come to be known as the New York School, he had worked with Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Franz Kline. He had continued to work up to the present, longer than any of his contemporaries. These new paintings would take Resnick full circle, back to his beginnings and forward again into the present. And it was, in fact, beginnings that would lend the new paintings their theme—Genesis, the first book of the Bible, Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the serpent, Satan. Pat Passlof, Resnick’s wife and fellow painter, suggested that the figures in the new work had a more general significance as well, that they were “you and me.” The name stuck, though modified to U/H11001 Me, because, Resnick says, “it’s easier to write.”

On July 25, Resnick painted on all five canvases in his Eldridge Street studio in Chinatown, a two-story brick-walled space with large windows that had been, in the first decades of the twentieth century, a Jewish synagogue. It is Resnick’s practice to begin painting without a plan and without preliminary drawings—with nothing but a brushmark and a feeling about where he’s going. “This feeling doesn’t have to be physical,” he says, “but it has to be as if I come at you and you’re frightened. That’s the feeling. It’s like if you have a glass and there’s something in it and it’s a kind of funny color. And someone says, ‘Drink it.’ And you say, ‘What’s in it?’ And they say, ‘Drink it or else!’ And so you have to drink it. So that’s the feeling. I’m going to drink something, and I don’t know what’s going to happen to me.”

Pictured on these pages is one of the U/H11001 Me paintings at three different stages in its development—two studio photographs taken on each of the first two days, July 25 and July 26 (Fig. 297), and the finished painting as it appeared in February 1996 in an exhibition of the new U/H11001 Me paintings at the Robert Miller Gallery in New York (Fig. 298).

In the first stages of the painting there are two figures, the one on the right kicking forward to meet the other, who seems to be striding forward in greeting. The major difference in the work from day one to day two is color. The exuberant red and yellow of the first brushstrokes is suppressed in an overall brownish-green over-painting. The figures are smaller and darker, the gestural marks appear denser, and the surface begins to have a much more layered feel.
The final painting, in fact, is a culmination of layer upon layer of paint being added to the work over the course of several months, each revealing itself at different points across the canvas. For instance, the second day’s brownish-green layer can be seen in the final work above the top of the tree, and rich dapples of differently colored layers appear throughout the dark layer of paint of the ground behind the figures and tree.

If the final work seems dramatically different from its beginnings, that is not least of all because Resnick has added a tree. “I put it in the middle,” he says, “because that’s the most difficult place”—difficult because the tree makes the painting so symmetrical and balanced that it risks losing any sense of tension or energy. But Resnick’s tree also has symbolic resonance, prefiguring the cross. By looking forward to the crucifixion from the Garden of Eden, Resnick changes the image. The figures have changed as well, giving up their sense of physical motion. “The figures have to have a vitality but not be in motion,” Resnick says. “They have to be animated with some force . . . with some energy. That’s what the paint is doing. Paint has the energy.”
WATERCOLOR

Of all the painting media, watercolor is potentially one of the most expressive. The ancient Egyptians used it to illustrate papyrus scrolls, and it was employed intermittently by other artists down through the centuries, notably by Albrecht Dürer and Peter Paul Rubens. The medium, it quickly became evident, was especially suitable for artists who wished to explore the expressive potential of painting, rather than pursue purely representational ends.

Watercolor paintings are made by applying pigments suspended in a solution of water and gum arabic to dampened paper. Historically, it has often been used as a sketching tool. Certainly, as a medium, watercolor can possess all of the spontaneity of a high-quality sketch. Working quickly, it is possible to achieve gestural effects that are very close to those possible with brush and ink, and, in fact, the roots of Chinese watercolor techniques can be traced back to the sixteenth-century ink paintings of Xu Wei. Xu Wei led a troubled life. Suffering from severe depression and paranoia, he attempted suicide on several occasions, and then murdered his wife, an act for which he was imprisoned at age 46 in 1567. Upon his release seven years later, he supported himself, as best he could, by selling paintings. Grapes (Fig. 299) is testament to both his failure as an artist and his genius.

Until Xu Wei, Chinese watercolor had been dominated by meticulous, finely detailed rendering that employed carefully controlled line. Xu Wei introduced a more free-form and expressive style, known as xie yi, meaning “sketching idea.” Grapes is painted with ink mixed with gelatin and alum, a water-soluble, transparent mineral. The vines and grapes are composed of areas of wash, some more transparent than others, depending upon the amount of ink in the gelatin and alum binder. The aim is to capture the spirit or essence of nature, not copy it in precise detail.

Despite the inventiveness of his style, in the poem at the top of the painting Xu Wei expresses his frustration as an artist. In essence, it reads:

Being frustrated in the first half of my life,
Now I have become an old man.
Standing lonely in my studio, I cry loudly in the evening wind,
There’s nowhere to sell the bright pearls from my brush,
I have to cast them, now and then, into the wild vine.

Xu Wei’s work was, in fact, never appreciated in his lifetime, but after his death, his style would come to absolutely dominate Chinese painting.
Depending on the absorbency of the paper and the amount of watercolor on the brush, like Xu Wei’s ink, watercolor spreads along the fibers of the paper when it is applied. Thin solutions of pigment and binder have the appearance of soft, transparent washes, while dense solutions can become almost opaque. The play between the transparent and the opaque qualities of the medium is central to Winslow Homer’s A Wall, Nassau (Fig. 300). Both the wall and the sky behind it are transparent washes, and the textural ribbons and spots of white on the coral limestone wall are actually unpainted paper. Between these two light bands of color lies the densely painted foliage of the garden and, to the right, the sea, which becomes a deeper and deeper blue as it stretches toward the horizon. A white sailboat heads out to sea on the right.

Almost everything of visual interest in this painting takes place between the sky above and the wall below. Even the red leaves of the giant poinsettia plant that is the painting’s focal point turn down toward this middle ground. Pointing up from the top of the wall, framing this middle area from below, is something far more ominous—dark, almost black shards of broken glass. Suddenly, the painting is transformed. No longer just a pretty view of a garden, it begins to speak of privacy and intrusion, and of the divided social world of the Bahamas at the turn of the century, the islands given over to tourism and its associated wealth at the expense of the local black population. The wall holds back those outside it from the beauty and luxury within, separating them from the freedom offered, for instance, by the boat as it sails away.

Fig. 300 Winslow Homer, A Wall, Nassau, 1898.
Photo © 1995 Metropolitan Museum of Art.
It is worth comparing Homer’s watercolor style with that of a more contemporary watercolorist, Laurie Reid. Reid began her career working in a traditional vein, painting representational watercolor still lifes. But over the years she became increasingly interested in the ways in which watercolor reacts with paper. She was interested, she says, in “how the fruit, when it bruises, was similar to the way pigment settles in on paper. . . . I started investigating the way the paper acts. Eventually the imagery just dropped away.” Ruby Dew (Pink Melon Joy) (Fig. 301) consists of a single curve, or necklace, of watercolor droplets that extends across four giant pieces of paper that hang vertically. Unanchored at the bottom, the fall of the paper echoes the curved fall of the watercolor necklace—a visual manifestation of gravity that echoes the fall of the watercolor droplet from brush to ground, even as it evokes, in deliberate understatement, the drips of a Jackson Pollock oil painting (see Figs. 172–174). The subtitle of Reid’s work, Pink Melon Joy, is the name of a short work by modernist writer Gertrude Stein, one of her more metaphorically erotic pieces. It suggests that these “dew”-like droplets are meant to possess a certain sensuality, like water dripping from someone’s mouth as he or she eats a honeydew melon, as well as the sensuality of watercolor as a medium in its own right.

**GOUACHE**

Derived from the Italian word guazzo, meaning “puddle,” **gouache** is essentially watercolor mixed with Chinese white chalk. The medium is opaque, and,
while gouache colors display a light-reflecting brilliance, it is difficult to blend brushstrokes of gouache together. Thus, the medium lends itself to the creation of large, flat, colored forms. It is this abstract quality that attracted Jacob Lawrence to it. Everything in the painting *You can buy bootleg whiskey for twenty-five cents a quart* (Fig. 302) tips forward. This not only creates a sense of disorienting and drunken imbalance, but also emphasizes the flat two-dimensional quality of the painting’s space. Lawrence’s dramatically intense complementary colors blare like the jazz we can almost hear coming from the radio.

**SYNTHETIC MEDIA**

Because of its slow-drying characteristics and the preparation necessary to ready the painting surface, oil painting lacks the sense of immediacy so readily apparent in more direct media like drawing or watercolor. For the same reasons, the medium is not particularly suitable for painting out-of-doors, where one is continually exposed to the elements.

The first artists to experiment with synthetic media were a group of Mexican painters, led by David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera, whose goal was to create large-scale revolutionary mural art (see Fig. 698, Chapter 21). Painting outdoors, where their celebrations of the struggles of the working class could easily be seen, Siqueiros, Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco—Los Tres Grandes, as they are known—worked first in fresco and then in oil paint, but the sun, rain, and humidity of Mexico quickly ruined their efforts. In 1937, Siqueiros organized a workshop in New York, closer to the chemical industry, expressly to develop and experiment with new synthetic paints. One of the first media used at the workshop was pyroxylin, commonly known as Duco, a lacquer developed as an automobile paint.

In the early 1950s, Helen Frankenthaler gave up the gestural qualities of the brush loaded with oil paint...
and began to stain raw, unprimed canvas with greatly thinned oil pigments, soaking color into the surface in what has been called an art of “stain-gesture” by moving the unprimed, unstretched canvas around to allow the paint to flow over it. Her technique soon attracted a number of painters who were themselves experimenting with Magna, a paint made from acrylic resins—materials used to make plastic—mixed with turpentine. Staining canvas with oil created a messy, brownish “halo” around each stain or puddle of paint, but the painters realized that the “halo” disappeared when they stained the canvas with Magna, the paint and canvas really becoming one.

At almost exactly this time, researchers in both Mexico and the United States discovered a way to mix acrylic resins with water, and by 1956, water-based acrylic paints were on the market. These media were inorganic and, as a result, much better suited to staining raw canvas than turpentine or oil-based media, since no chemical interaction could take place that might threaten the life of the painting.

Inevitably, Frankenthaler gave up staining her canvases with oil and moved to acrylic in 1963. With this medium, she was able to create such intensely atmospheric paintings as Flood (Fig. 303). Working on the floor and pouring paint directly on the canvas,
the artist was able to make the painting seem spontaneous, even though it is quite large. “A really good picture,” Frankenthaler says, “looks as if it’s happened at once. . . . It looks as if it were born in a minute.”

The usefulness of acrylic for outdoor mural painting was immediately apparent. Once dried, the acrylic surface was relatively immune to the vicissitudes of weather. Judith F. Baca, whose mural for the University of Southern California student center we considered in Chapter 8, put the medium to use in 1976 for *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, a mural that would be more than a mile long. It is located in the Tujunga Wash of the Los Angeles River, which had been entirely concreted over by developers as Los Angeles grew. The river, as a result, seemed to Baca “a giant scar across the land which served to further divide an already divided city.” She thought of her mural, which depicts the history of the indigenous peoples, immigrant minorities, and women of the area from prehistory to the present, as a healing gesture: “Just as young Chicanos tattoo battle scars on their bodies, *Great Wall of Los Angeles* is a tattoo on a scar where the river once ran.” Illustrated here (Fig. 304) is a 13-foot-high section depicting the intersection of four major freeways in the middle of East Los Angeles, the traditional center of Chicano life in the city, freeways that divided the community and weakened it. To the right, for instance, a Mexican woman protests the building of Dodger Stadium, which displaced the traditional Mexican community in Chavez Ravine, a theme Baca also explores in the mural at USC.

Baca worked on the *Great Wall* project more as a director and facilitator than as a painter. Nearly 400 inner-city youth, many of them recruited through the juvenile justice system from rival gangs, did the actual painting and design. They represented, in real terms, the divided city itself. “The thing about muralism,” Baca says, “is that collaboration is a requirement. . . . [The] focus is cooperation.”

**MIXED MEDIA**

All of the painting media we have so far considered can be combined with other media, from drawing to fiber and wood, as well as found objects, to make new works of art. In the twentieth century in particular, artists purposefully and increasingly combined various media. The result is mixed media work. The motives for working with mixed media are many, but the primary formal one is that mixed media violate the integrity of painting as a medium. They do this by introducing into the space of painting materials from the everyday world.

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Collage
The two-dimensional space of the canvas was first challenged by Pablo Picasso and his close associate Georges Braque when they began to utilize collage in their work. Collage is the process of pasting or gluing fragments of printed matter, fabric, natural material—anything that is relatively flat—onto the two-dimensional surface of a canvas or panel. Collage creates, in essence, a low-relief assemblage.

A good example of collage is one created soon after Picasso and Braque began using the new technique by their colleague Juan Gris. Although no one would mistake The Table (Fig. 305) painting for an accurate rendering of reality, it is designed to raise the question of just what, in art, is “real” and what is “false” by bringing elements from the real world into the space of the painting. The woodgrain of the tabletop is both woodgrain-printed wallpaper and paper with the woodgrain drawn on it by hand. Thus it is both “false” wood and “real” wallpaper, as well as “real” drawing. The fragment of the newspaper headline—it’s a “real” piece of newspaper, incidentally—reads “Le Vrai et le Faux” (“The True and the False”). A novel lies open at the base of the table. Is it any less “real” as a novel just because it is a work of fiction? The key in the table drawer offers us a witty insight into the complexity of the work, for in French the word for “key,” clé, also means “problem.” In this painting, the problematic interchange between art and reality that painting embodies is fully highlighted. If painting is, after all, a mental construction, an artificial reality and not reality itself, are not mental constructions as real as anything else?

Because it brings “reality” into the space of painting, collage offers artists a direct means of commenting on the social or political environment in which they work (for an example of a Nazi-era political collage, see Works in Progress, pp. 246–247). The African-American artist Romare Bearden was inspired particularly by the African-American writer Ralph Ellison’s 1952 novel Invisible Man. One of Ellison’s narrator’s most vital realizations is that he must assert, above all else, his blackness, not hide from it. He must not allow himself to be absorbed into white society. “Must I strive toward colorlessness?” he asks.

But seriously, and without snobbery, think of what the world would lose if that should happen. America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain. . . . Our fate is to become one, and yet many—this is not prophecy, but description.
There could be no better description of Bearden’s collages. Bearden had worked for two decades in an almost entirely abstract vein, but, inspired by Ellison, in the early 1960s, he began to tear images out of *Ebony*, *Look*, and *Life* magazines and assemble them into depictions of the black experience. *The Dove* (Fig. 306)—so named for the white dove that is perched over the central door, a symbol of peace and harmony—combines forms of shifting scale and different orders of fragmentation, so that, for instance, a giant cigarette extends from the hand of the dandy, sporting a cap, at the right, or the giant fingers of a woman’s hand reach over the windowsill at the top left. The resulting effect is almost kaleidoscopic, an urban panorama of a conservatively dressed older generation and hipper, younger people gathered into a scene nearly bursting with energy—the “one, and yet many.” As Ellison wrote of Bearden’s art in 1968:

Bearden’s meaning is identical with his method. His combination of technique is in itself eloquent of the sharp breaks, leaps of consciousness, distortions, paradoxes, reversals, telescoping of time and surreal blending of styles, values, hopes, and dreams which characterize much of American history.

Mixed media, in other words, provide Bearden with the means to bring the diverse elements of urban African-American life into a formally unified, yet still distinctly fragmented, whole.
Given collage's inclusiveness, it is hardly surprising that it is among the most political of media. In Germany, after World War I, as the forces that would lead to the rise of Hitler's Nazi party began to assert themselves, a number of artists in Berlin, among them Hannah Höch, began to protest the growing nationalism of the country in their art. Reacting to the dehumanizing speed, technology, industrialization, and consumerism of the modern age, they saw in collage, and in its more representational cousin, photomontage—collage constructed of photographic fragments—the possibility of reflecting the kaleidoscopic pace, complexity, and fragmentation of everyday life. Höch was particularly friendly with Raoul Hausmann, whose colleague Richard Hulsenbeck had met a group of so-called Dada artists in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1916. The anarchic behavior of these “anti-artists” had impressed both men, and with Höch and others they inaugurated a series of Dada evenings in Berlin, the first such event occurring on April 12, 1918. Hulsenbeck read a manifesto, others read sound or noise poetry, and all were accompanied by drums, instruments, and audience noise. On June 20, 1920, they opened a Dada Fair in a three-room apartment covered from floor to ceiling with a chaotic display of photomontages, Dada periodicals, drawings, and assemblages, one of which has been described as looking like “the aftermath of an accident between a trolley car and a newspaper kiosk.” On one wall was Hannah Höch’s photomontage *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany* (Fig. 308).

We are able to identify many of the figures in Höch’s work with the help of a preparatory drawing (Fig. 307). The top right-hand corner is occupied by the forces of repression. The recently deposed emperor Wilhelm II, with two wrestlers forming his mustache, gazes out below the words “Die anti-dadistische Bewegung,” or “the anti-Dada movement,” the leader of what Höch calls in her title “the Weimar beer belly.” On Wilhelm’s shoulder rests an exotic dancer with the head of General Field Marshal Friedrich von Hindenburg. Below them are other generals and, behind Wilhelm, a photograph of people waiting in line at a Berlin employment office.

The upper left focuses on Albert Einstein, out of whose brain Dada slogans seem to burst, as if the theory of relativity, overturning traditional physics as it did, was a proto-Dada event. In the very center of the collage is a headless dancer, and above her floats the head of printmaker Kathë Kollwitz. To the right of her are the words “Die grosse Welt dada,” and then, further down, “Dadaisten,” “the great dada World,” and “Dadaists.” Directly above these words are Lenin, whose head tops a figure dressed in hearts, and Karl Marx, whose head seems to emanate from a machine. Raoul Hausmann stands just below in a diver’s suit. A tiny picture of Höch herself is situated at the bottom right, partially on the map of Europe that depicts the progress of women’s enfranchisement. To the left a figure stands above the crowd shouting “Tretet Dada bei”—“Join Dada.”
Hannah Höch’s *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*

Fig. 308 Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*, 1919.
Collage, $44\frac{7}{8} \times 35\frac{7}{16}$ in. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz Nationalgalerie/NG57/61.
Painting toward Sculpture

One of the most important results of mixed media has been to extend what might be called “the space of art.” If this space was once defined by the picture frame—if art was once understood as something that was contained within that boundary and hung on a wall—that definition of space was extended in the hands of mixed-media artists, out of the two-dimensional and into the three-dimensional space.

Although it begins hanging squarely on the wall, in the manner of a traditional, two-dimensional painting, Marcia Gygli King’s Springs Upstate (Fig. 309) travels off the wall into three-dimensional space. Half painting, half sculpture, it is as if King’s deeply impastoed painting style has gone wild. In fact, King’s working method is unique. Her impasto brushwork is built up on a surface that is created by what she calls “once-removed painting.” She begins, that is, by painting her image on a sheet of Plexiglas, which she then presses wet onto her prepared canvas, allowing the paint to spread out in every direction. This highly tactile, even sensual surface creates the “ground” for her landscape. But the “ground” is just the beginning. It is as if her paint seeks to flow out into the world, to squirt out over the edge, beyond the frame. The stream and boulders on the floor and the frame

Fig. 309 Marcia Gygli King, Springs Upstate, 1990–92.
Oil on canvas, mixed media sculptural projection and frame: 6 ft. × 9 ft. × 10 ft. 6 in.; painting: 9 ft. × 5 ft. × 7 in.
© 2006 Marcia Gygli King. Photo: Allan Finkelman.
of the painting itself are created with carved styrofoam that is covered with epoxy and fiberglass. When originally shown at the Hal Katzen Gallery in New York in 1992, this styrofoam river of paint spilled out the gallery door and onto the street until rain and passersby carried it away. King’s intention, in fact, was to engage the viewer more fully in the work—in 1992, New York was suffering through a severe water shortage—and this insistence on moving painting into the space of the audience is the primary motivation for moving painting out of two dimensions into three.

Patricia Patterson’s The Kitchen (Fig. 310) is a celebration of family life on the island of Inishmore, the largest of the Aran Islands in Galway Bay on the west coast of Ireland. On the gallery wall to the right hangs Patterson’s painting Cóilín and Patricia, in which Cóilín Hernon, head of the Inishmore Hernon family, gives the artist a jovial hug. The human warmth of the scene extends beyond the frame into a replication of the Hernon family kitchen itself, with its table and hearth. On the mantel is a watercolor of Nan Hernon and a drawing of the Hernon family dog, along with a ceramic rooster and chicken, an alarm clock, and other objects—like the table and chairs, all duplicates of objects in the actual Hernon home. The colors Patterson employs in the tile and walls are the same as those found on the doors, windows, and furniture of Inishmore itself. In fact, Patterson, who was born in New Jersey to Irish-American parents, began visiting Inishmore regularly beginning in 1960 and was moved not only by the warmth of its people but by their steadfast loyalty to Irish culture and the Irish language. In its quiet orderliness, The Kitchen brings something of that world out of the painting’s frame and into the museum.

Fig. 310 Patricia Patterson, The Kitchen, 1985.
Table, chairs, mantel, objects, floor tiles, and casein on canvas painting; painting: 60 × 107 in; overall dimensions vary with each installation (as illustrated: 80 × 144 × 180 in.). Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. Museum Purchase, 90:11.1–43.
This movement is nowhere more forcefully stated than in the work of Robert Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg’s painting *Monogram* (Fig. 311) literally moves “off the wall”—the title of Calvin Tomkins’s biography of the artist—onto the floor. A *combine-painting*, or high-relief collage, Rauschenberg worked on the canvas over a five-year period from 1955 to 1959.

The composer John Cage once defined Rauschenberg’s *combine-paintings* as “a situation involving multiplicity.” They are a kind of collage, but more lenient than other collages about what they will admit into their space. They will, in fact, admit anything, because unity is not something they are particularly interested in. They bring together objects of diverse and various kinds and simply allow them to coexist beside one another in the same space. In Rauschenberg’s words, “A pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting with than wood, nails, turpentine, oil, and fabric.” Nor, apparently, is a stuffed Angora goat.

Rauschenberg discovered the goat in a second-hand office-furniture store in Manhattan. The problem it presented, as Tomkins has explained, was how “to make the animal look as if it belonged in a painting.” In its earliest recorded state (Fig. 312) the goat is mounted on a ledge in profile in the top half of a 6-foot painting. It peers over the edge of the painting and casts a shadow on the wall. Compared to later states of the work, the goat is integrated into the two-dimensional surface, or as integrated as an object of its size could be.
In the second state (Fig. 313), Rauschenberg brings the goat off its perch and sets it on a platform in front of another combine-painting, this one nearly 10 feet high. Now it seems about to walk forward into our space, dragging the painting behind it. Rauschenberg has also placed an automobile tire around the goat’s midsection. This tire underscores its volume, its three-dimensionality.

But Rauschenberg was not happy with this design, either. Finally, he put the combine-painting flat on the floor, creating what he called a “pasture” for the goat. Here, Rauschenberg manages to accomplish what seems logically impossible: The goat is at once fully contained within the boundaries of the picture frame and totally liberated from the wall. Painting has become sculpture.
Fig. 314  Fred Tomaselli, *Airborne Event*, 2003.
Mixed media, acrylic, and resin on wood, 84 × 60 × 1 1/2 in.
Courtesy of James Cohan Gallery, New York.
In this chapter, we have considered all of the painting media—encaustic, fresco, tempera, oil paint, watercolor, gouache, acrylic paints, and mixed media—and we have discussed not only how these media are used but also why artists have favored them. One of the most important factors in the development of new painting media has always been the desire of artists to represent the world more and more faithfully. But representation is not the only goal of painting. If we recall Artemisia Gentileschi’s Self-Portrait at the beginning of this chapter (see Fig. 281), she is not simply representing the way she looks but also the way she feels. In her hands, paint becomes an expressive tool. Some painting media—oil paint, watercolor, and acrylics—are better suited to expressive ends than others because they are more fluid or can be manipulated more easily. But the possibilities of painting are as vast as the human imagination itself. In painting, anything is possible.

And, as we have seen in the last section of this chapter, the possibilities of painting media can be extended even further when they are combined with other media. The art of Fred Tomaselli is a case in point. In the late 1980s, Tomaselli began producing mixed-media works that combine pills (over-the-counter medicines, prescription pharmaceuticals, and street drugs), leaves (including marijuana leaves), insects, butterflies, and various cutout elements, including floral designs, representations of animals, and body parts. The resulting images constitute for Tomaselli a kind of cartography—he sees them as “maps” describing his place in the world. Airborne Event (Fig. 314) might well be considered an image of a psychedelic high. But Tomaselli, born in the late 1950s, is well aware of the high price first hippie and then punk cultures have paid for their hallucinogenic indulgences. Another way to read this painting is as a critique of what has been called “the jewel-like nature of a pill.” That is, Tomaselli’s work might also be considered an essay on the toxic nature of beauty or “airborne events” such as disease or disaster. How does it suggest that the world it depicts is as artificial as it is visionary? In order to answer this question, it might be useful to compare Tomaselli’s mixed-media work to Fra Andrea Pozzo’s Glorification of Saint Ignatius (see Fig. 286).