

Symbolism: 1880s-90s

In reaction against both Realism and Impressionism, Symbolist painters stressed art's subjective, symbolic, and decorative functions and turned to the mystical and occult in an attempt to evoke subjective states of mind by visual means.

These notions were influenced by Romanticism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and were revived later in Surrealism.

Leading exponents: Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Puvis de Chavannes.

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes

Precursor of Symbolism

His subject matter - religious themes, allegories, mythologies, and historical events - was clearly in keeping with the academic tradition.

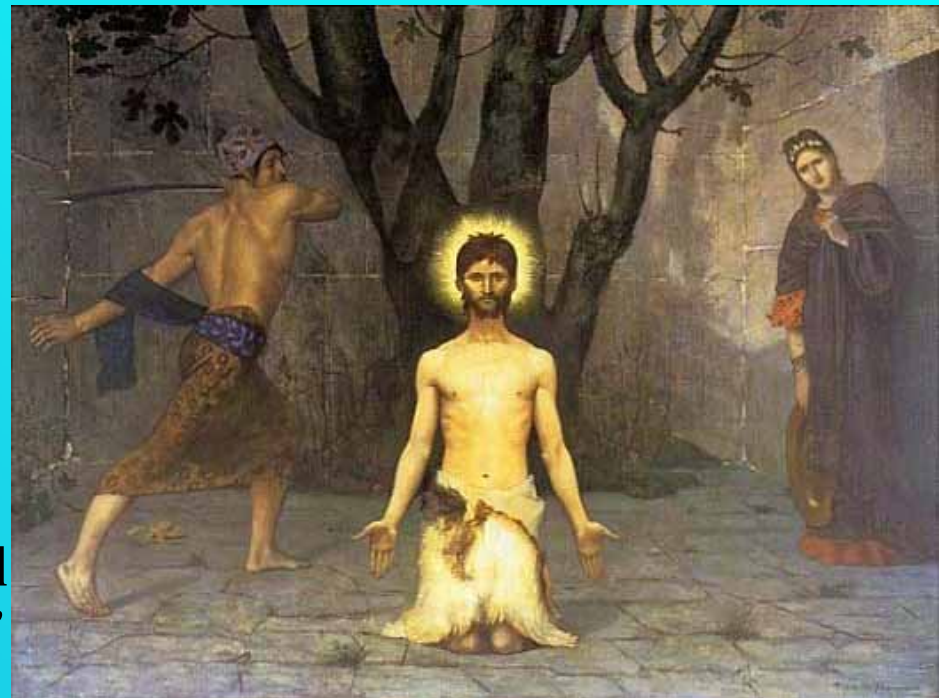
Puvis's paintings exhibited a serene and poetic range of feeling. His figures frequently seem to be wrapped in an aura of ritualistic mystery, as though they belong in a private world of dreams or visions.

Pale colors and flat, subdued color areas.

***Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, 1869, oil on canvas, 48 x 64"**



***Summer*, 1891. Oil on canvas. 4'11" X 7'7"**



The subject is loosely mythological. In the center of the composition, Puvis chose to represent the three Plastic Arts — painting, sculpture, and architecture — surrounded by the nine muses of classical antiquity and three androgynous youths making garlands.



PIERRE PUVIS DE CHAVANNES, *The Sacred Grove*
1884. Oil on canvas, 2' 11 1/2" x 6' 10". The Art Institute of Chicago.



GEORGES SEURAT, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*

1884–1886. Oil on canvas, approx. 6' 9" x 10'. The Art Institute of Chicago.

With its geometrically structured order, airless tranquility, and timelessness, the painting appealed directly to the visual imagination of the young Georges Seurat, who saw it at 1884, just before he began work on *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*,

PIERRE PUVIS DE CHAVANNES,

The Sacred Grove

1884. Oil on canvas, 2' 11 1/2" x 6' 10". The Art Institute of Chicago.



fin de siècle:

French phrase ('end of century') often used to refer to the characteristic world weary mood of European culture in the 1880s and 1890s, when writers and artists like Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and the French symbolists, under the slogan 'art for art's sake', adopted a 'decadent' rejection of any moral or social function for art. Reacting against realism and naturalism, they sought a pure beauty entirely removed from the imperfections of nature and from the drabness of contemporary society.

Moreau wrote, “Semele, penetrated by the divine effluence, regenerated and purified by this consecration, dies struck by lightning and with her dies the genius of terrestrial love, the genius with the goat hooves”.

GUSTAVE MOREAU
Jupiter and Semele

ca. 1875. Oil on canvas, approx. 7' x 3' 4".
Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.







Detail: The Great Pan (symbol of earth), a female figure with white lily representing Death, and figure of "Sadness."

GUSTAVE MOREAU
Jupiter and Semele

ca. 1875. Oil on canvas, approx. 7' x 3' 4".
Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.





Jupiter and Semele, 1894-95.
Detail: Jupiter's foot
resting on snake biting its own tail.

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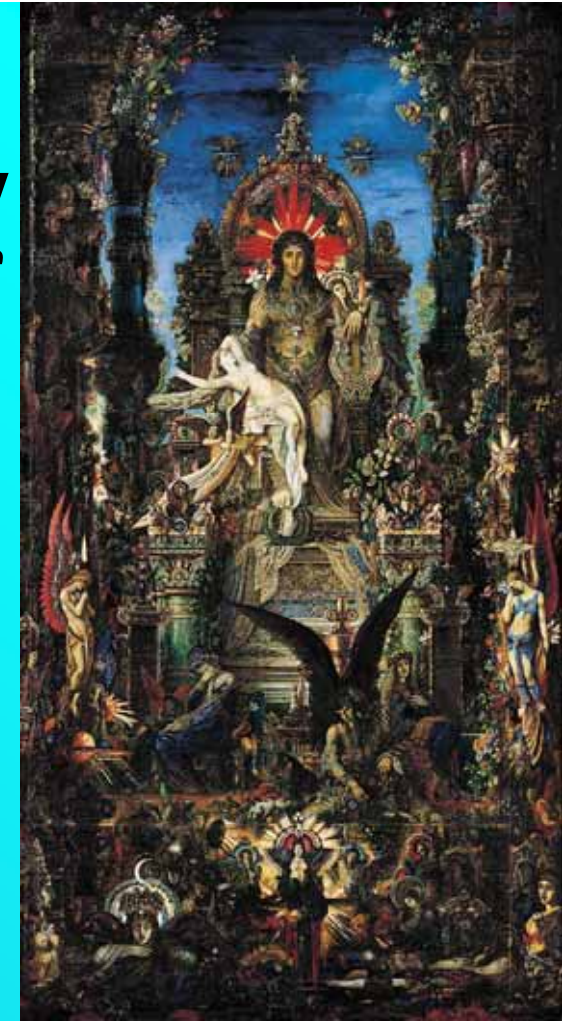


Comparison – Impressionism.
CLAUDE MONET, *Saint-Lazare Train Station*

1877. Oil on canvas, 2' 5 3/4" x 3' 5"

GUSTAVE MOREAU
Jupiter and Semele

ca. 1875. Oil on canvas, approx. 7' x 3' 4".



Comparison - Realism. GUSTAVE COURBET, *The Stone Breakers*,

1849. Oil on canvas, 5' 3" x 8' 6".

Gustave Moreau. *Oedipus and the Sphinx*. 1864. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (Neo-Classicism) . *Oedipus and the Sphinx*. 1808. Oil on canvas. Louver, Paris,





Knopff, Fernand. *The Sphinx, or, The Caresses*

1896. Oil on canvas. 19 5/8 x 59 in
Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels

Gustav Moreau, *The Apparition*

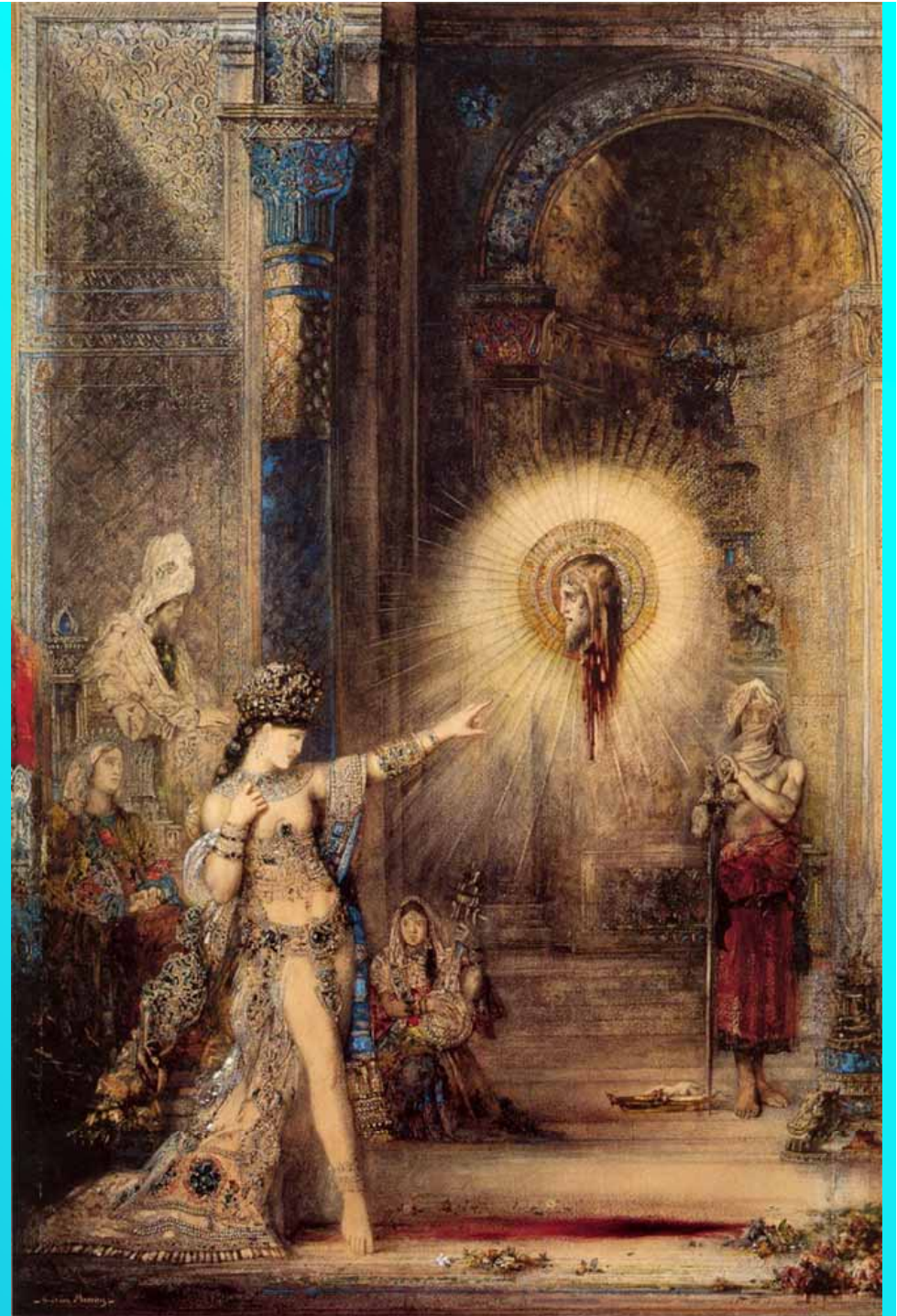
c. 1874-76

Oil on canvas

142 x 103 cm

Musee Gustave Moreau, Paris

***femme fatale*: a French phrase with the literal translation "fatal woman". A sensuous, alluring woman who seduces men and leads them into danger or trouble.**



Comparison – Renaissance.
Donatello, *Feast of Herod*, panel
on the baptismal font of Siena
Cathedral, Siena, Italy, 1423–1427.
Gilded bronze



Gustav Moreau, *The Apparition*

c. 1874-76

Oil on canvas

142 x 103 cm

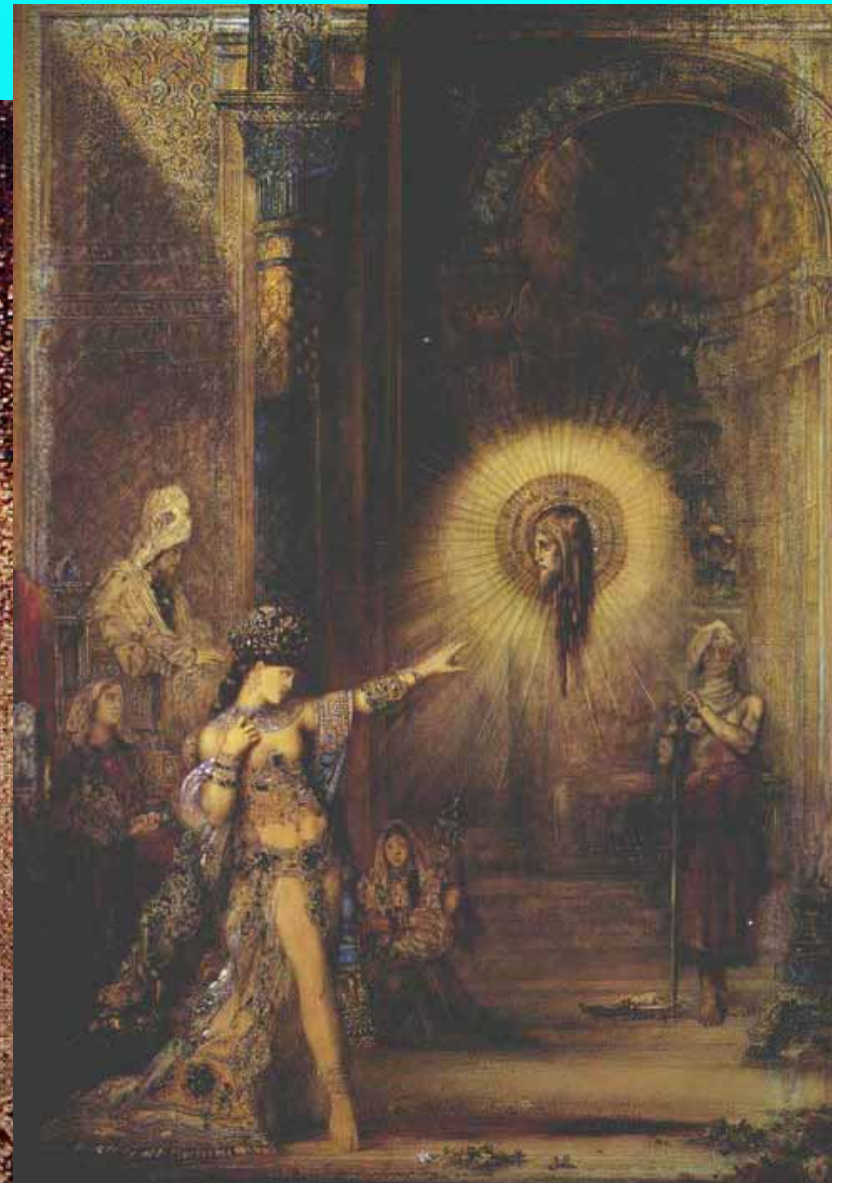
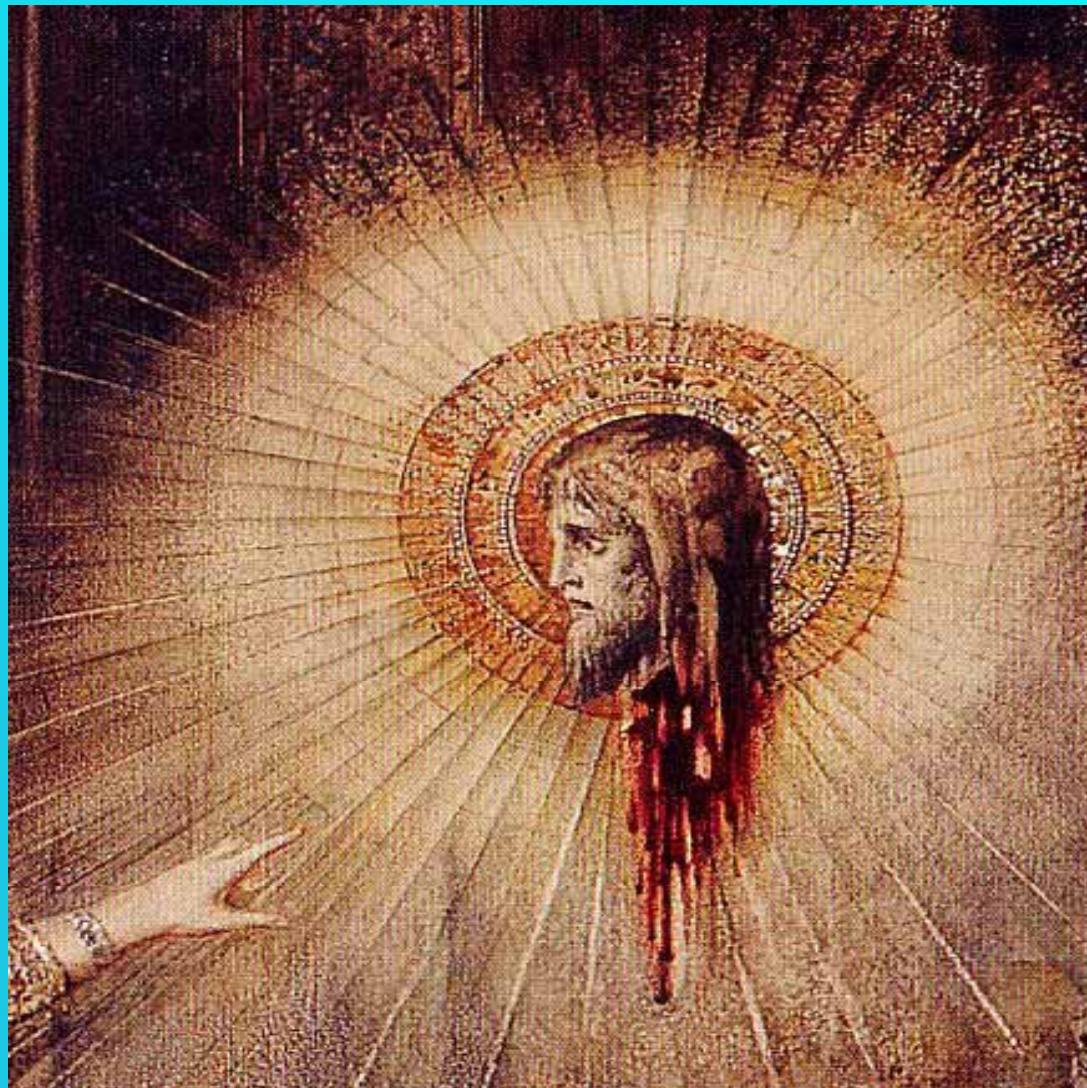
Musee Gustave Moreau, Paris



Gustav Moreau, *The Apparition*

c. 1874-76. Oil on canvas

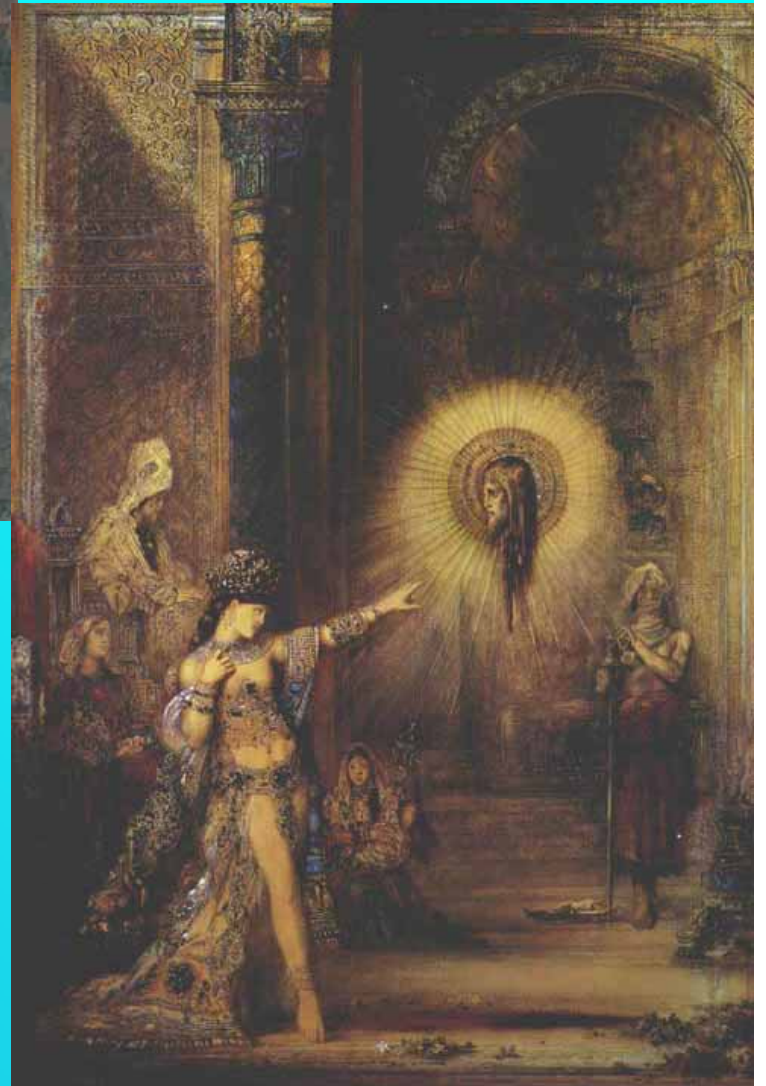
142 x 103 cm. Musee Gustave Moreau,
Paris





Comparison – Realism.
HONORÉ DAUMIER, *The Third-Class Carriage*,
ca. 1862. Oil on canvas, 2' 1 3/4" x 2' 11 1/2".

Gustav Moreau, *The Apparition*. c. 1874-76
Oil on canvas
142 x 103 cm



ODILON REDON
The Crying Spider
1881; Charcoal, 49.5 x 37.5 cm



“And behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.”

Book of Revelation 12:3



**ODILON
REDON**
*The Crying
Spider*

1881; Charcoal,
49.5 x 37.5 cm



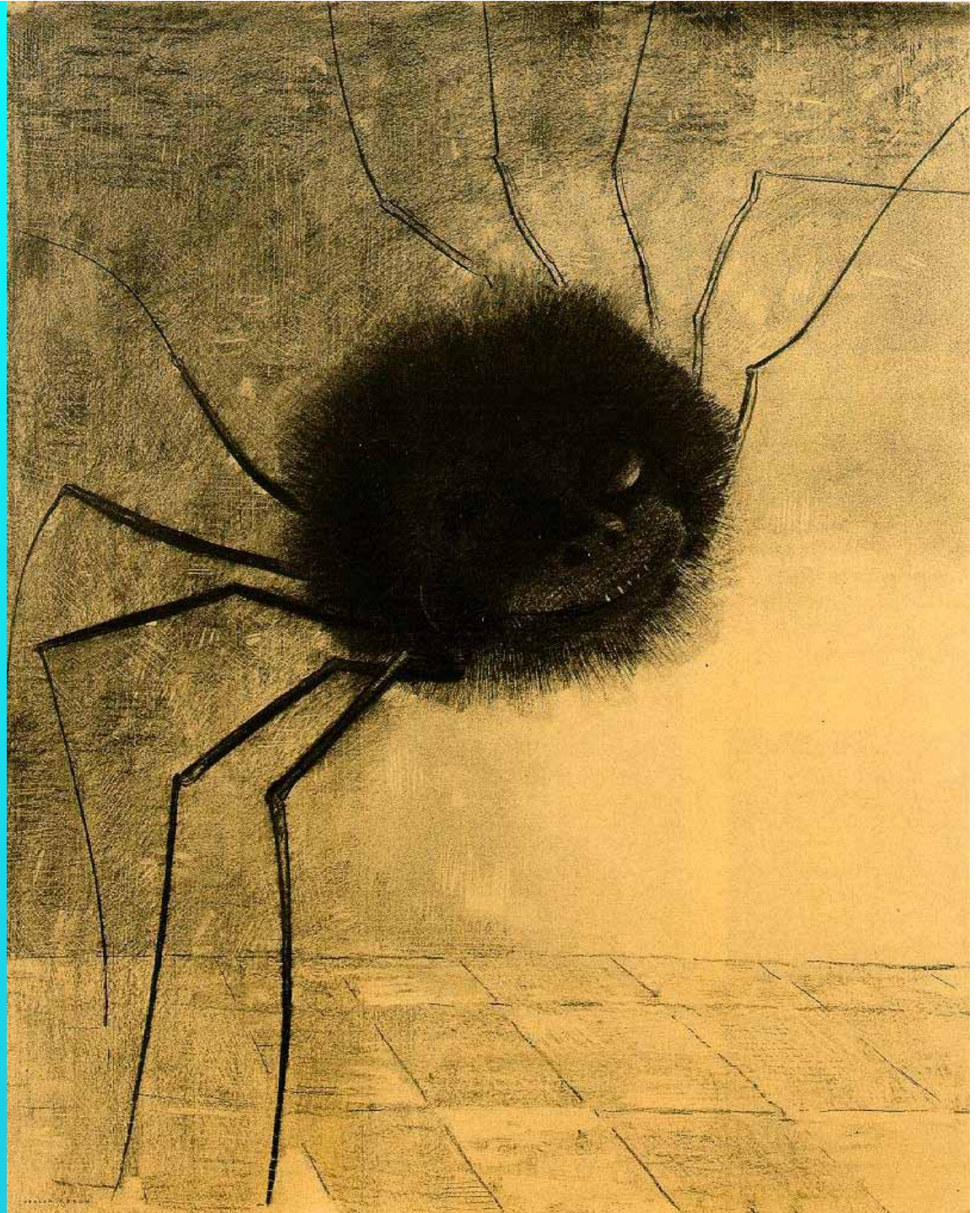
Comparison - Romanticism

**William Blake, *The Great
Red Dragon and the Woman
Clothed in Sun*, 1805-10,
watercolor, 16” x 13”**

ODILON REDON

The Smiling Spider

1881; Charcoal, 49.5 x
39 cm; Musee du
Louvre, Paris

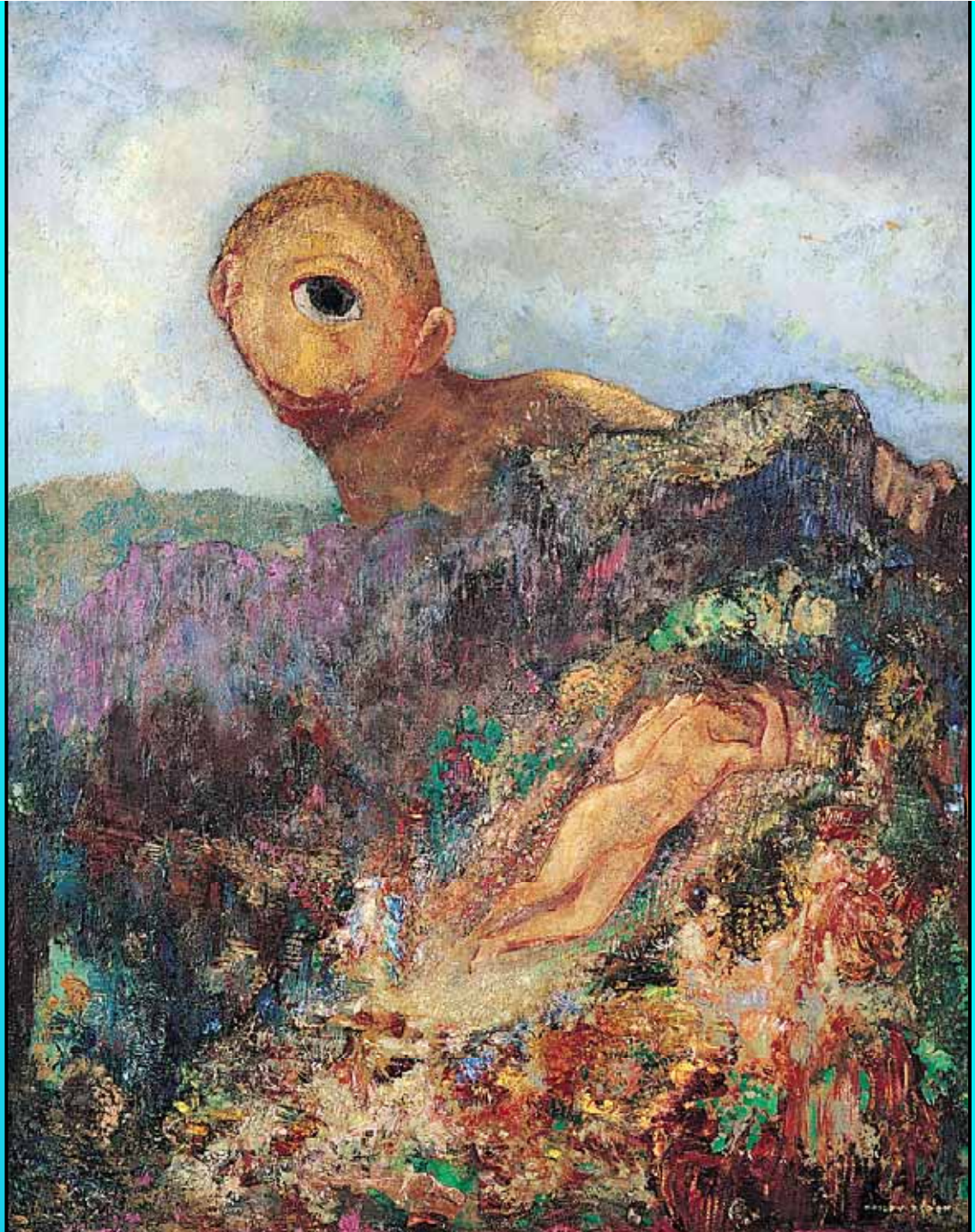


ODILON REDON
Spirit of the Forest, 1890



ODILON REDON
The Cyclops

1898. Oil on canvas, 2' 1" x 1'
8". Kröller-Müller Museum,
Otterlo, The Netherlands.



Naive Art

Term applied to the work of non-professional, self-taught artists. It is characterized by a careful, simplifying approach, non-scientific perspective, bright colors, and often literal depiction of imaginary scenes.



Henri Rousseau
(1844-1910)

After service in the army, he began working as a toll collector (not as a *douanier*, or customs officer, the epithet his friends later used). Completely self-taught, he exhibited at the Salon des Independant in 1886. In 1893 he retired to devote himself to painting. In spite of growing recognition he never made significant living from his painting and spent most of his post- retirement years in poverty.



Henri Rousseau. *Self Portrait*

<http://youtu.be/zHP4GNNH1ZY>
(4:50)



Henri Rousseau

Carnival Evening, 1886

Oil on canvas, 117.3 x 89.5 cm

Philadelphia Museum of Art



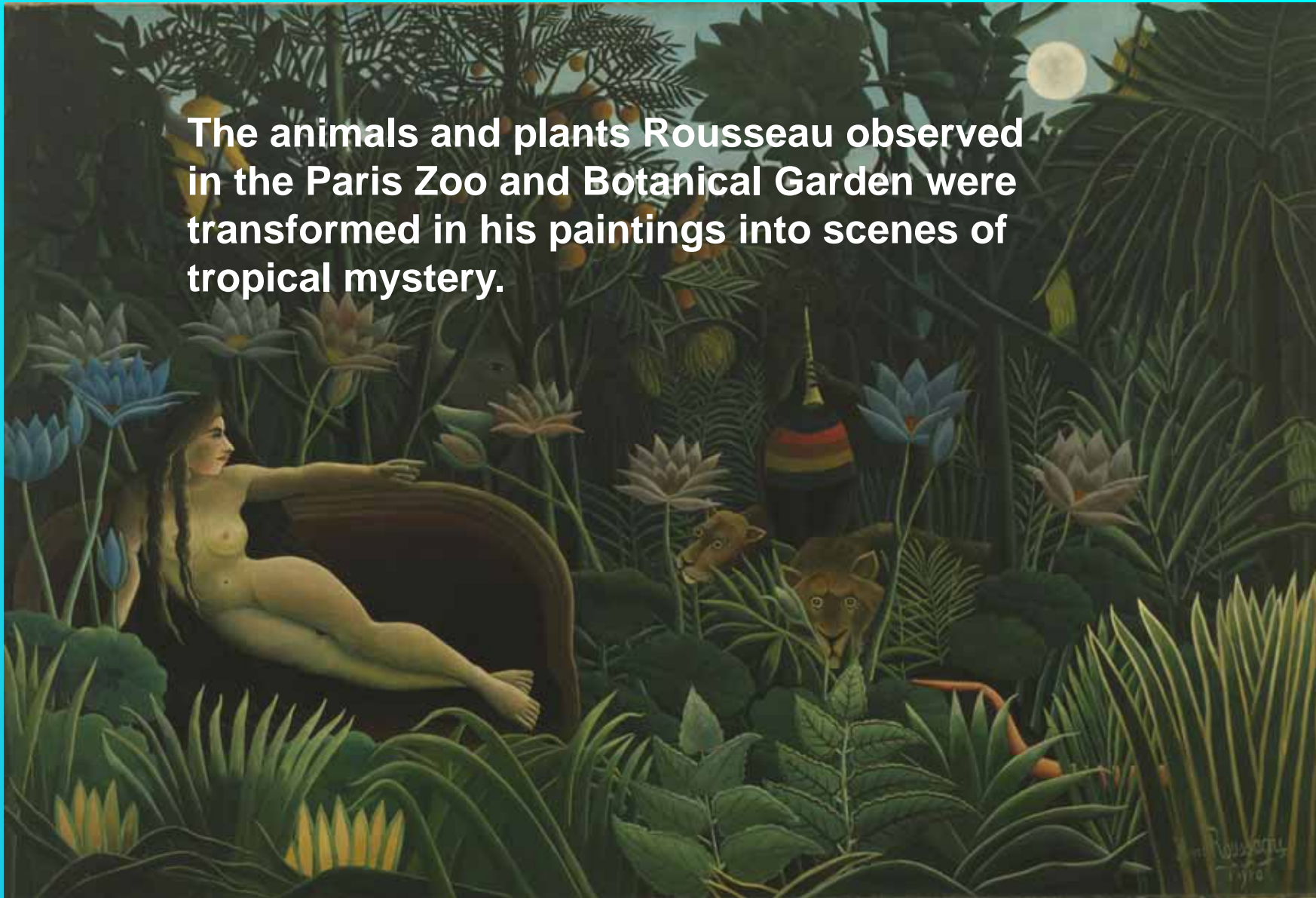
Henri Rousseau, *The Sleeping Gypsy*, 1897, Oil on canvas



HENRI ROUSSEAU, *The Sleeping Gypsy*

1897. Oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 7". Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The animals and plants Rousseau observed in the Paris Zoo and Botanical Garden were transformed in his paintings into scenes of tropical mystery.



Henri Rousseau. *The Dream.* 1910. Oil on canvas, 6' 8 1/2 " x 9' 9 1/2". The Museum of Modern Art, New York

