

PICTURING THE OTHER

ORIENTALISM IN EUROPEAN ART

IMAGES OF RACE IN AMERICAN ART

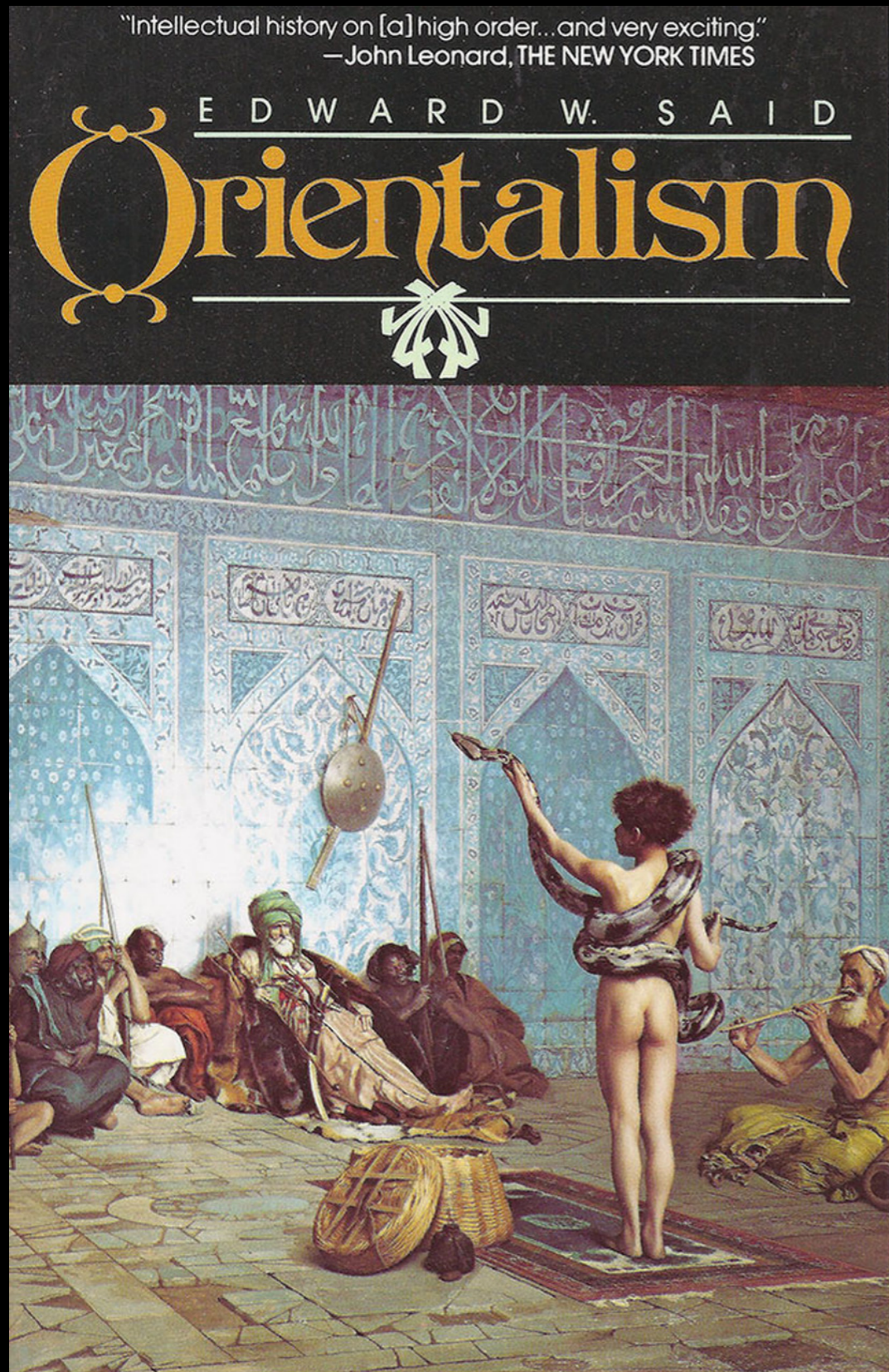


ORIENTALISM IN EUROPEAN ART

Key Concepts

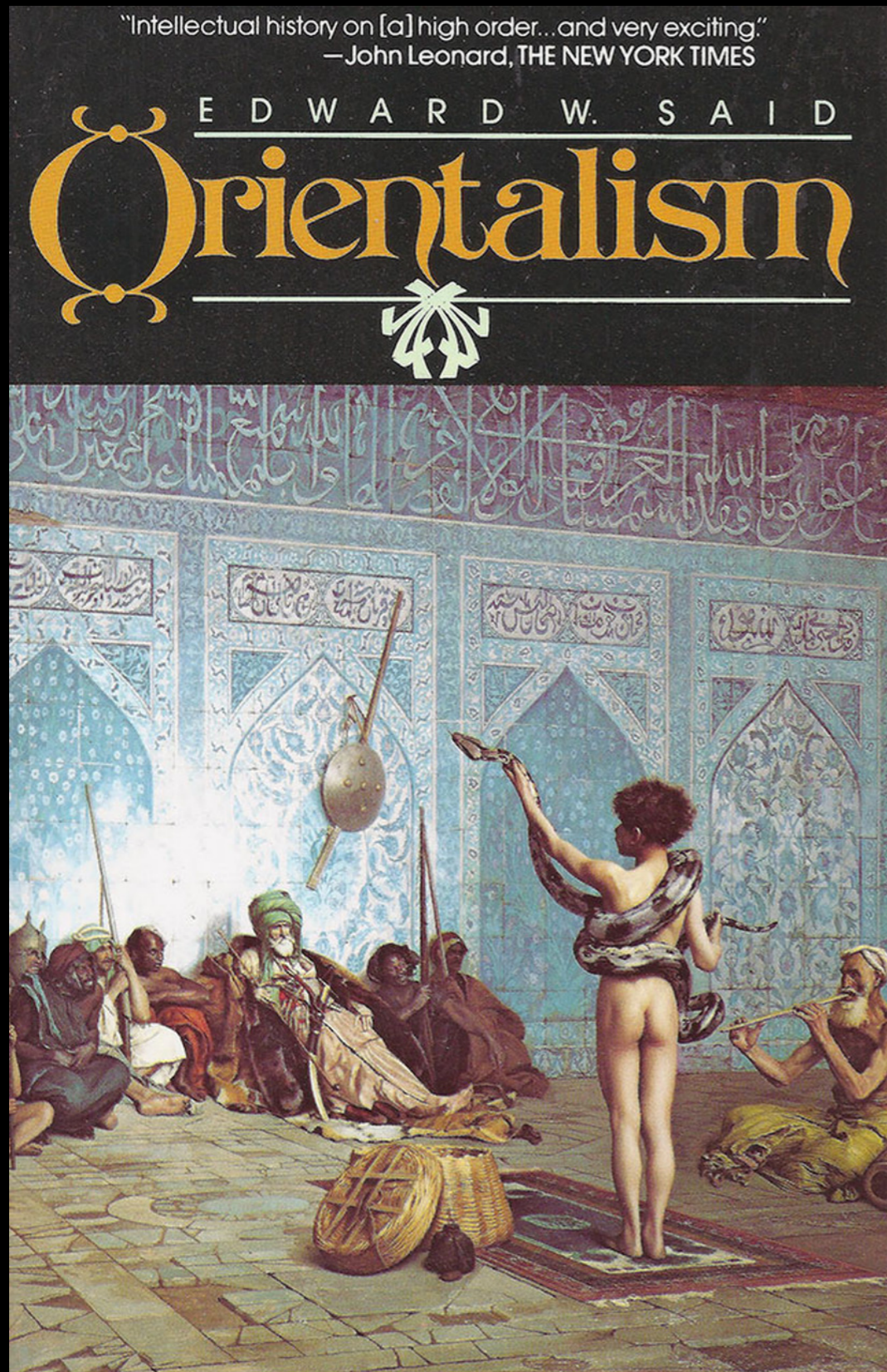
- ▶ Questions of "truth" or "fiction"
- ▶ Perceptions of the "Other"
- ▶ Representing unknown or imagined worlds

What is "Orientalism"?



Book cover of *Orientalism* by Edward Said, 1978

What is "Orientalism"?



Book cover of *Orientalism* by Edward Said, 1978

- ▶ The "Orient": referred to the regions of the Middle East, North Africa and Asia
- ▶ Broadly refers to the depiction of the "Eastern" world in art, literature, culture etc.
- ▶ Edward Saïd argued that a dominant European political ideology created the notion of the Orient in order to subjugate and control it; "presumed cultural inferiority of the Islamic Orient"

Orientalism in Art History

- ▶ Refers to depictions of the Orient in 19th century paintings for European viewers
- ▶ **Absence of history:** the Oriental world depicted as timeless, mystical, exotic, untouched by development or progress
- ▶ Included images of **snake charmers, veiled women, courtesans**
- ▶ **Style:** detailed, realistic, highly stylised and picturesque paintings



Unknown Venetian artist
*The Reception of the Ambassadors
in Damascus*
1511
Louvre

Realism: 19th century artistic movement characterised by subjects painted from everyday life in a naturalistic manner; the term is also generally used to describe artworks painted in a realistic almost photographic way



Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Snake Charmer*, c. 1879, oil on canvas (Sterling Francine Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts)

Historical Context

- ▶ Began as a fully fledged movement with **Napoleon Bonaparte's** conquest of Egypt in 1798, and his occupation of the country until 1801
- ▶ 19th century Orientalist paintings were intended as **propaganda** in support of **French imperialism**
- ▶ Depicted the East as a place of barbarism and lawlessness that needed to be tamed



Antoine-Jean Gros
*Bonaparte Visiting the Plague
Victims of Jaffa*
1804 (Louvre Museum)

Historical Context (continued)

Imperialism: a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force.

Colonialism: The physical act of taking control over another nation by setting up colonies

- ▶ Was a result of **imperialism, tourism** and **consumerism**- new fascination with goods like textiles, fashion, porcelain and carpets from the East in Europe
- ▶ Was furthered by **World's Fairs** and cultural-national pavilions, beginning with Crystal Palace in 1851



Department of India.
Dickinson's Comprehensive
Pictures of The Great Exhibition
of 1851, London, 1854.



Crystal Palace, The Great Exhibition. London, 1851.

GENRE PAINTINGS

Scenes of everyday life in Eastern cities and settlements



Jean-Léon Gérôme
Bashi-Bazouk
1868-69

Bashi-Bazouk = Turkish mercenary soldier



Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps
The Turkish Patrol

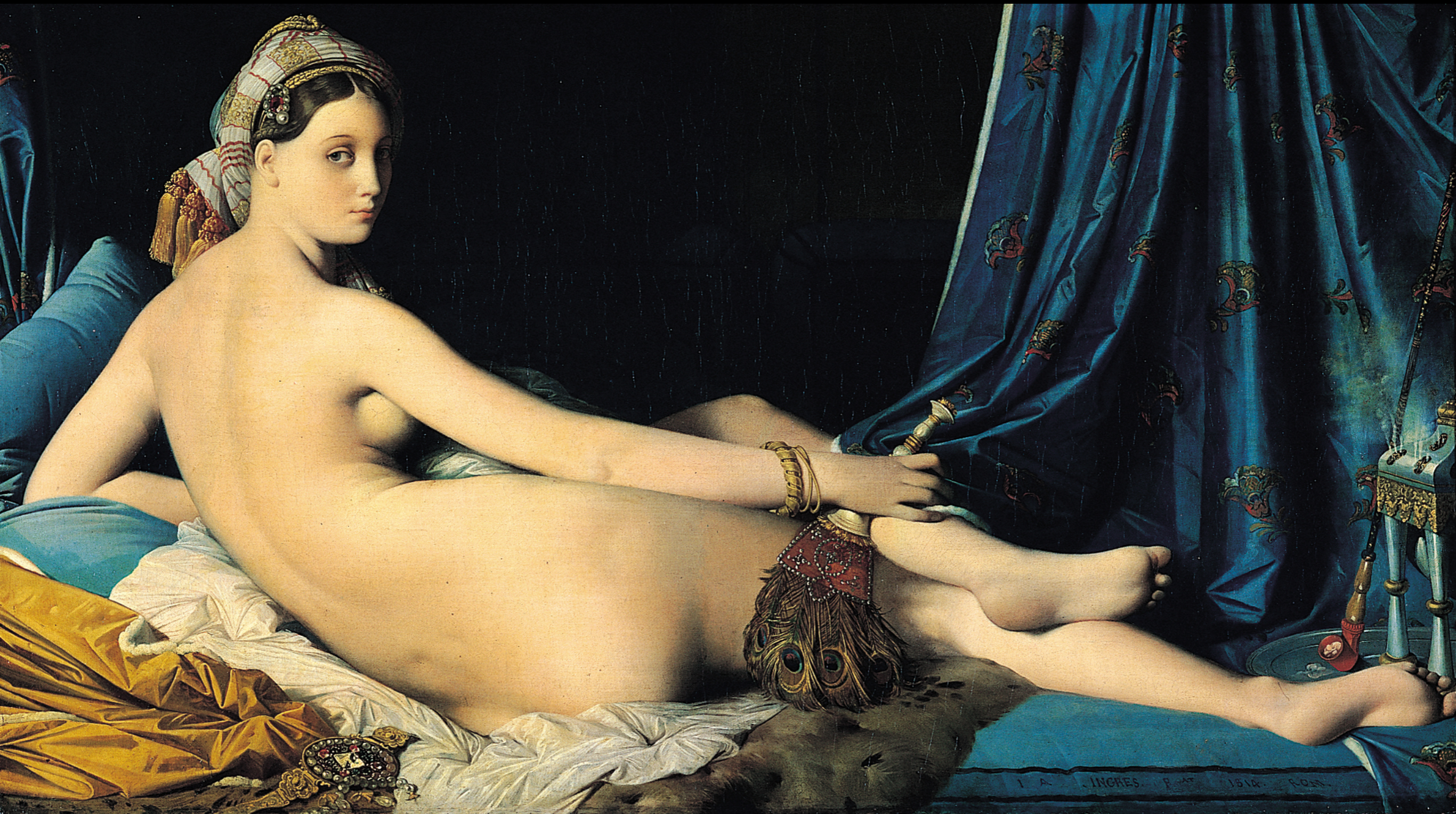
THE HAREM PICTURE



Chasseriau, Theodore, *Orientalist Interior*, 1850-52
(Private Collection)

- ▶ Harem scenes were a common genre of Orientalist painting
- ▶ Male artists would have been denied entrance and relied on **hearsay and their imagination** (Notion of the “male gaze”)
- ▶ Depicted **opulent and luxuries interiors**- mosaic tiles, detailed carpets, Eastern architectural motifs (**Setting of the harem** was used to conjure an erotic ideal of the Orient)
- ▶ females slaves/concubines in the nude or in stereotypical Oriental attire

Odalisque: French term for concubine in a harem

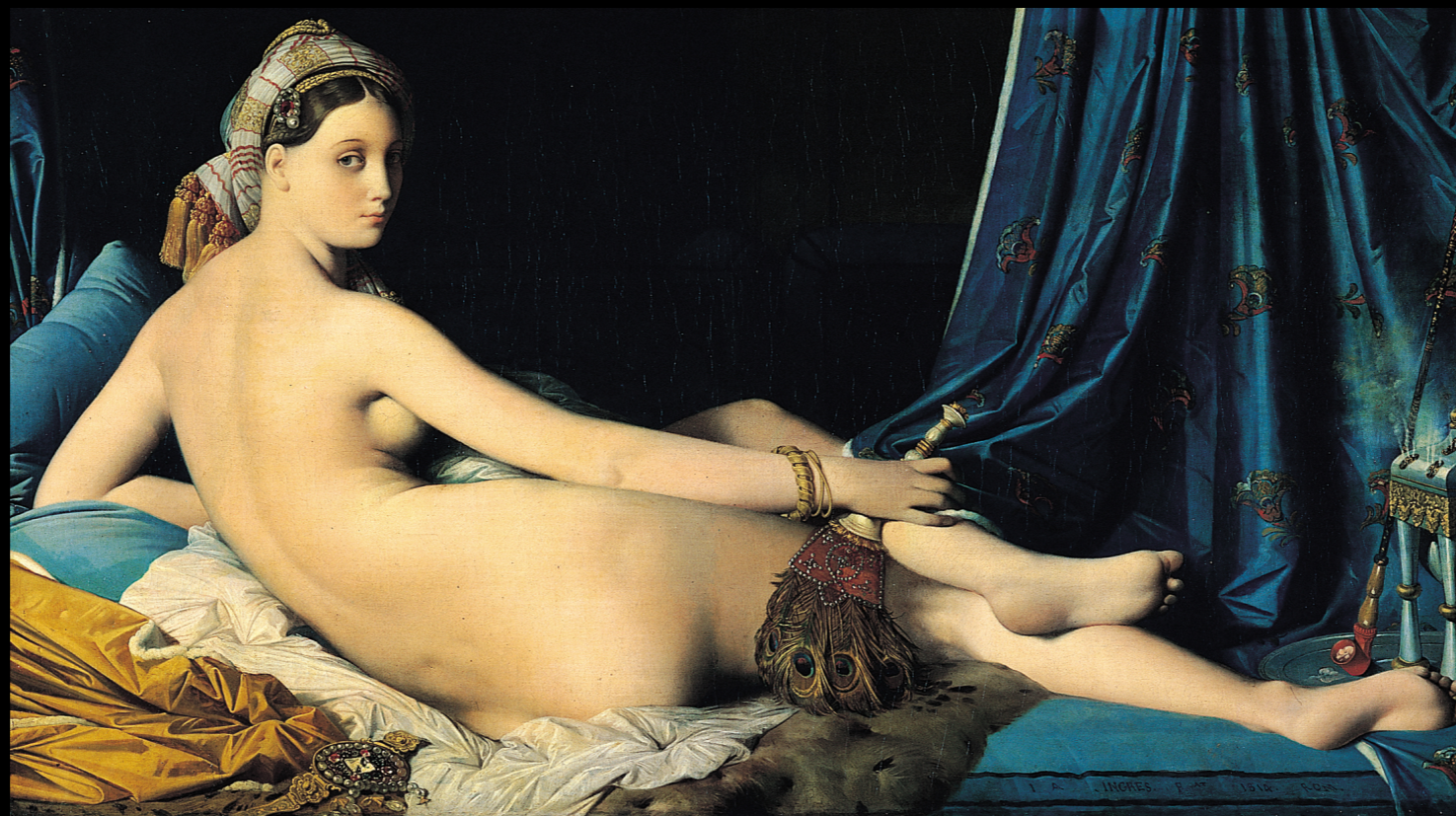


Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Grand Odalisque*, 1814 (Louvre Museum)



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Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, c. 1532 (Uffizi Gallery)



ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY



Photographer unknown
Untitled (Woman posed in 'harem' by window), 1890s
The Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist Photography Collection,
The Getty Research Institute Special Collections.



Bonfils Family,
Young Woman from Lebanon in Party Dress
undated, albumen print

THE POLITICS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION



- ▶ The invention of photography in 1839 did little to contribute to a greater authenticity of the Orient
- ▶ Instead, photographs were embellished and staged to appeal to the European imagination
- ▶ Taken in studios, with posed models, props and backdrops

Orientalist Study, 1858. The two men are white Europeans, posing in a London studio. Source: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/02/05/513252650/long-before-there-was-fake-news-there-were-fake-photos>

“What makes much of the Bonfils family's work particularly Orientalist was their explicit effort to capture what they imagined was a **timeless, unchanging Orient**... By selectively and deliberately choosing only particular elements from the surrounding environment... they strove to meet their, and other European's expectations and interests” -Michelle L. Woodward



Portrait of Two Women in Middle Eastern Dress by Felix Bonfils



Félix Bonfils
Femme turque en toilette de ville
1870s

ORIENTAL IMAGERY DURING THE IMPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT

Japonisme: French term coined in the late nineteenth century to describe the craze for Japanese art and design in the West

- ▶ Impressionist artists inspired by the flatness, brilliant colour, and high degree of stylisation and realist subject matter of Japanese woodcut prints.



Claude Monet
Camille Monet In Japanese Costume
1876
(MFA Boston)

VAN GOGH AND JAPONISME

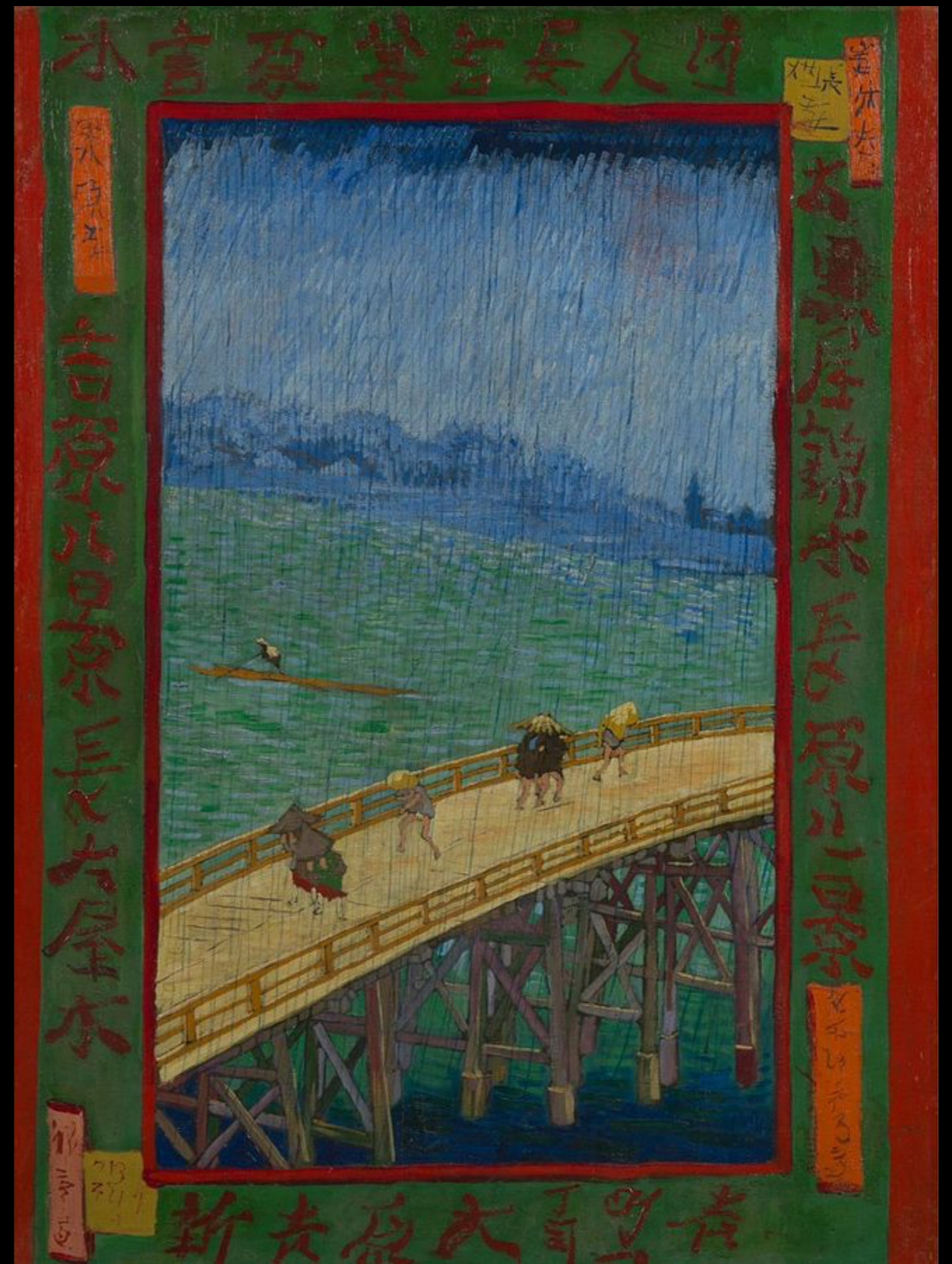


(left) Van Gogh, Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear (1889)
(right) Geishas in a Landscape, Anonymous (1870-1880)





Hiroshige
Evening Shower at Atake and the Great Bridge, 1857



Van Gogh
Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige), 1887



IMAGES OF RACE IN AMERICAN ART

TIMELINE OF THE WESTWARD EXPANSION

-
- 1803 **Louisiana Purchase**– President Jefferson bought the Louisiana Territory from France. United States doubled in size.
- 1830 **Indian Removal Act** passes in Congress. Thousands of Native Americans are moved from eastern US to reserves in present day Nebraska and Kansas.
- 1845 The term '**Manifest Destiny**' is used for the first time to describe the westward expansion.
- 1848 **Gold** is discovered in California, opening the flood gates for massive migration there.
- 1862 **Homestead Act** passes in Congress, giving free land to settlers who farm and make improvements, sparking a new wave of westward migration.
- 1869 Transcontinental Railroad is completed, linking eastern US with California and the West.

Manifest destiny

- ▶ A term coined in 1845- the idea that the United States is defined by God to expand its dominion and spread democracy and capitalism across the North American continent.
- ▶ The philosophy drove 19th century territorial expansion and was used to justify the forced relocation and genocide of Native Americans and other groups from their homes.
- ▶ In the art historical context- need to think about how artworks were used to spread this message, not just depict it



Allegory: when the subject of the artwork, or the various elements that form the composition, is used to symbolize a deeper moral or spiritual meaning such as life, death, love, virtue, justice etc.



John Gast
American Progress
c. 1873

The Hudson River School

A 19th century group of landscape painters based in New York City, known for their aesthetic renderings of the American landscapes

- ▶ Thomas Cole- teacher of many in the group, regarded as the Father or Founder
- ▶ Most attended the National Academy and worked together (first shared artist space in NYC)
- ▶ Eventually moved to the Hudson River (where the name comes from)



Frederic Edwin Church, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859

Themes and Characteristics of the Hudson River School

While at first glance these images might only depict beautiful naturalistic scenes of the landscape, when analysed further for its symbolism, you can understand the historical and social context that they are hinting at.

- ▶ Three main themes: discovery, exploration and settlement
- ▶ American landscape as both pastoral and rural: humans and nature could co-exist
- ▶ Agricultural land in contrast to wilderness (land that needs to be explored and tamed)
- ▶ Nationalistic tones: proud celebration of the American landscape
- ▶ Style: realistic, dramatic, idealised depiction of nature



Thomas Cole

View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow

1836

Representations of Native Americans

- ▶ The noble savage
- ▶ The barbarian or brutal warrior/aggressor
- ▶ The doomed or vanishing race

1. THE NOBLE SAVAGE

“It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the **benevolent policy** of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a **happy consummation.**”

“[Indian Removal] will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; **enable them to pursue happiness in their own way** and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers.”

“Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is **not only liberal**, but **generous**. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.”

- **President Andrew Jackson's message to Congress 'On Indian Removal' (1830)**



Charles Bird King

Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees

1821

oil on canvas (Smithsonian American Art Museum)

2. THE BARBARIAN

“Indian removal was a singularly brutal and dramatic moment in the history of the United States, yet no hint of it ever appeared on canvas. Instead artists turned to conflict scenes in which Indians were cast as villains who prevented a peaceful appropriation of western lands.

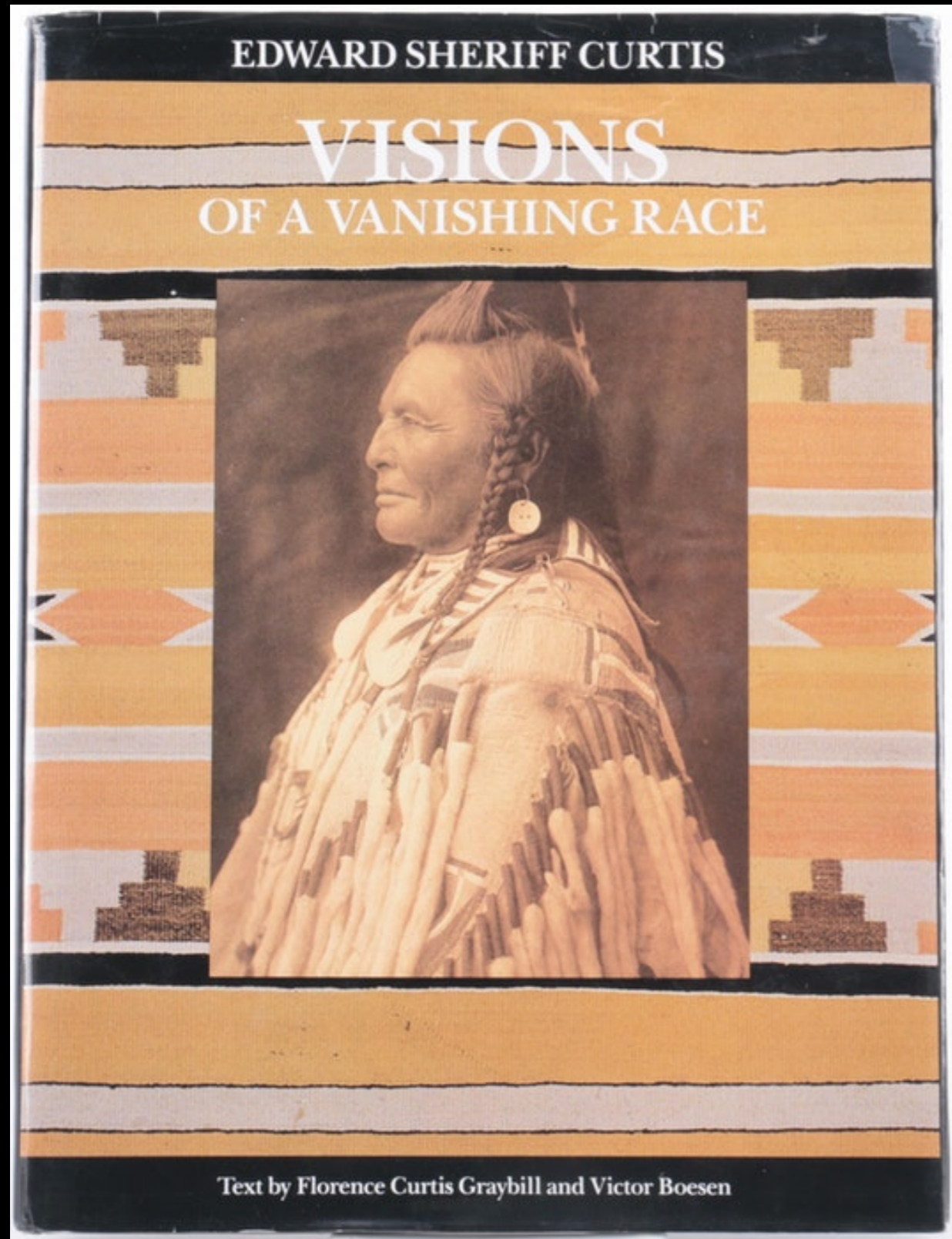
Conflict iconography (in both painting and literature) was a manufactured response to Indian hating.”

-Julie Schimmel, “Inventing the ‘Indian’”



John Mix Stanley
Osage Scalp Dance
1845

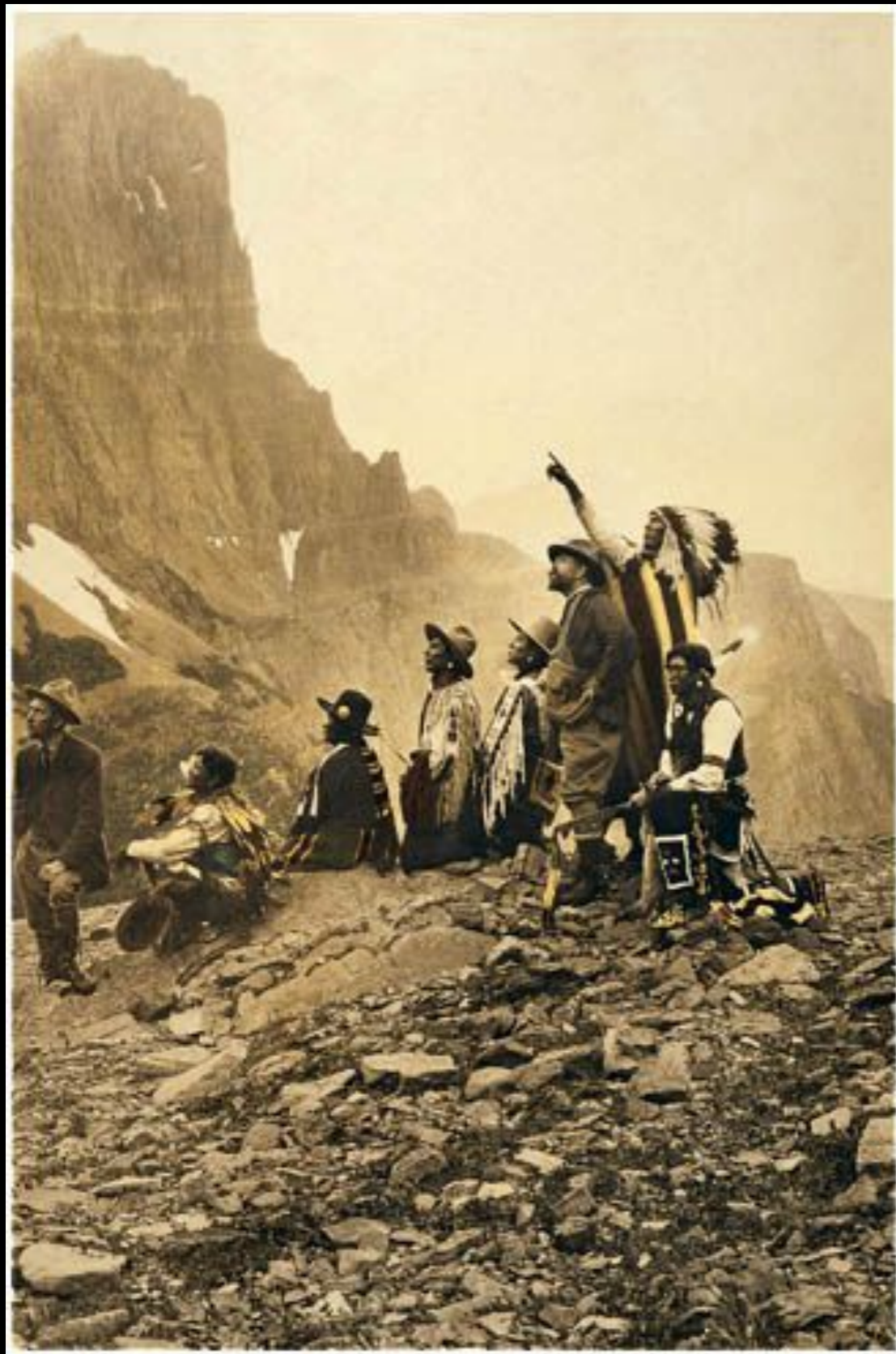
3. THE VANISHING RACE



"... the Indians as a race, already shorn in their tribal strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the darkness of an unknown future."

-Edward Curtis

EDWARD CURTIS



Edward Curtis on the field



Curtis' camp on the Spokane Reservation, Washington, 1909

Orotone print: a gold toned photographic print that can be created using a negative
Sepia toned gives a sense timelessness, absence of history



Edward Sheriff Curtis

Storm - Apache, 1906

plate 9 from the portfolio *The North American Indian*, volume 1



From Copyright Photograph 1910 by E. J. Curtis

Photography by John Andrew Van

IN A PIEGAN LODGE

Edward Curtis
In a Pegan Lodge
1910

Fact or fiction?



The original image of *In a Pegan Lodge* with the modern clock in the centre of the image that was digitally removed

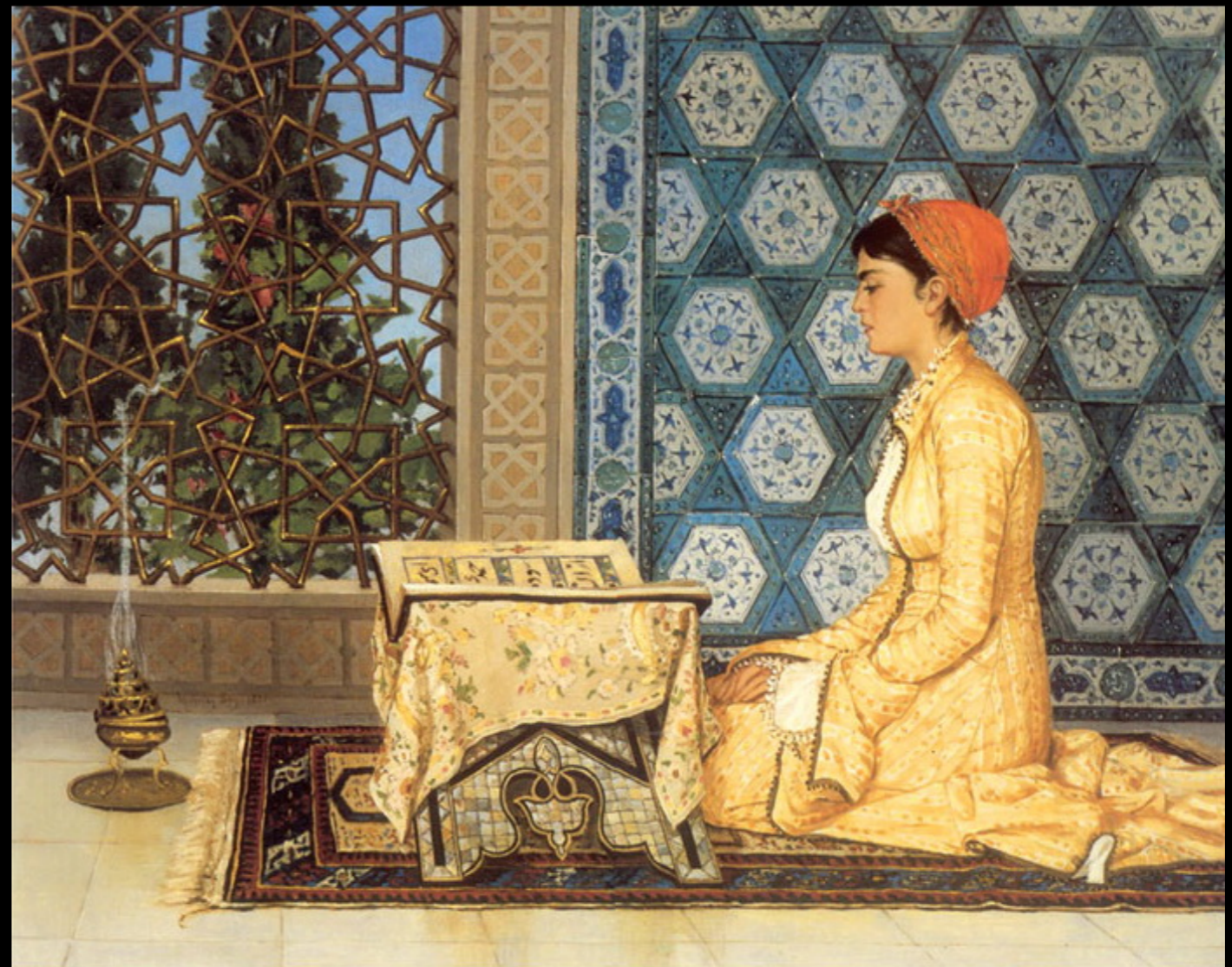
Fact or fiction?

Literature, painting, and photography fit the real Orient into the imaginary or mental mold existing in the Westerner's mind. ... These attitudes are mirrored in many of the photographs taken during this time... they became living visual documents to prove an imaginary reality”.

-Nissan N. Perez



Osman Hamdi Bey
Man reading Quran
1910



Osman Hamdi Bey
Girl reciting Quran
1880



Edward Curtis
In a Pegan Lodge
1910



Marcus Amerman
A Moment in Time
2002

GLOSSARY

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