

Arts and Literature

Jazz, arguably the most prominent art form of the 1920s, is known to be the first true American art form. However, the essence of jazz expanded beyond the medium of music as popular art and literature of the time captured similar energy to the upbeat tunes of jazz music. Many artists and authors of the time infused their work with the core of American life.

The content of literature during this time was heavily dependent on the author's perspective on society. Harlem Renaissance writers such as Langston Hughes tended to write passionate works about the joys and the struggles of African American life in America. On the other hand, more critical authors such as Sinclair Lewis attacked American government and popular culture in his works. He was the first American author to receive a Nobel Prize for his literary works. Many writers of the time found themselves disillusioned by American society and decided that Europe was a much more intellectually stimulating place for them to live. The writers who left America to live in Europe for that reason became known as the Lost Generation.

Two large artistic movements occurred in America during the 1920s. Surrealists developed techniques such as automatic drawing, automatic painting, decalcomania, frottage, fumage, grattage, and parsemage that defined their genre of painting. Art Deco was a European architectural movement that took root in America in 1928.

One famous American surrealist, Maxfield Parrish, was born in Philadelphia and began drawing as a young child. His parents encouraged his natural talent and he eventually began concentrating his efforts on painting fantastical landscapes and androgynous figures. His artistic contributions helped define the surrealism genre.

