Styles in Art and Architecture:

Classicism

The imitation or use primarily of the style and aesthetic principles of ancient Greek and Roman classical art and literature; in modern times, it also refers to the adoption of such principles in music. The most important periods during which classicism was the prevailing movement in Western thought and creative art were the Renaissance, the late 17th and early 18th centuries—especially in England and France—and the late 18th and 19th centuries. The term *neoclassicism* is often used in referring to revivals of classicism.

Baroque

The roots of baroque styles are found in the art of Italy, and especially in that of Rome in the late 16th century. Among the general characteristics of baroque art is a sense of movement, energy, and tension. Strong contrasts of light and shadow enhance the dramatic effects of many paintings and sculptures. Baroque buildings, with their undulating walls and decorative surface elements, imply motion. Infinite space is often suggested in baroque paintings or sculptures; throughout the Renaissance and into the baroque period, painters sought a grander sense of space and truer depiction of perspective in their works. Realism is another integral feature of baroque art; the figures in paintings are not types but individuals with their own personalities. The intensity and immediacy of baroque art and its individualism and detail—observed in such things as the convincing rendering of cloth and skin textures—make it one of the most compelling periods of Western art. The baroque school attempted to rid art of its mannered complications by returning to the High Renaissance principles of clarity, monumentality, and balance. This baroque classicism is considered the most characteristic mode of 17th-century art, with its exuberance, emotionalism, theatricality, and unrestrained energy.

Baroque and Rococo Architecture

In early Renaissance architecture, elements were combined in rather static compositions; classic design implies a serene balance among the several components, and spaces locked into the geometry of perspective. Unsatisfied with this, the baroque architects of the 17th century deployed classic elements in more complex ways, so that the identity of these elements was masked, and space became more ambiguous and more activated. Baroque
movement is understood as that of the observer experiencing the work, and of the observer’s eyes scanning an interior space or probing a long vista. Some of the later rococo works contain a richness of ornament, color, and imagery that, combined with a highly sophisticated handling of light, overwhelms the observer.

Baroque thinking powerfully addressed the area of urban design. Michelangelo’s Campidoglio (Capitol, 1538-1564) in Rome had already provided a model for the public square, and villas such as Vignola’s Villa Farnese (begun 1539) in Caprarola showed how these important buildings could extend axial ties into the townscape. Often, whole new towns were built on formal principles. Early in the 18th century Peter the Great brought Italian and French baroque architects to Russia to create Saint Petersburg. In the New World were built such large urban centers as Mexico City; Santiago, Chile; Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala; Philadelphia; Savannah, Georgia; and Washington, D.C.