In times of displacement, many look to creative ventures to encourage, empower, or enlighten themselves and others. Painting is one of many creative ventures that people take part in, with many different mediums and techniques. I’d like to explore eight styles of painting from across the centuries.

The first painting style is perhaps the most straightforward: realism. Realism is the accurate, truthful depiction of an artist’s surroundings. Like its name suggests, realism mimics the real world. It doesn’t try to enhance its subject, or try to make it more charming, more ugly, more anything! It is a practice in appreciation by offering the artist’s true, honest interpretation of the outside world.

The next style I’d like to talk about is impressionism, which is quite a stark contrast to realism. Impressionism is a unique style of painting which involves around the essence of the painting rather than the accuracy of it. This style involves using a unique set of brushstrokes and an emphasis on color and light to show emotion in the artwork. This style of painting is still widely used and appreciated in the 21st century.

Expressionism is a lot like impressionism in that expressionists do not care about providing a realistic depiction of their subjects. However, while impressionism focuses some on displaying the natural world in a meaningful way, the message of expressionism is simply expression. The focus of an expressionist painting is for the piece to invoke a feeling. It focuses less on the external world and more of the internal impact.

“The Scream” by Edvard Munch is one famous example of expressionism.

A newer style of painting is modernism. Modernism strives to break the norms of more traditional art styles. Created alongside massive revelations in science, war, religion, etc., modernism focuses on finding one’s own way of expression, rather than relying on modes of expression that came before. It is an embodiment of the constant search for new ways of displaying art, showing expression and conveying a message.

The next style of painting I’ll talk about is abstract art.

Abstract art has no place for natural, worldly objects. It has no objective or storyline that goes along with it, and does not try to display anything tangible. Instead, abstract focuses on color, form, and composition within any individual piece.

The next style of art takes inspiration from both the natural world and more abstract modes of design: surrealism.

Surrealism employs uncommon, uncanny imagery to display its message or story. Salvador Dali is a great example of a surrealist artist. In surrealist art, the imagery used in one piece may vary drastically compared to another in order to prove its point.

The final style I will discuss is cubism. Cubism focuses on using sharp, bold lines to form geometric shapes like triangles and squares. Sometimes these shapes may be representational and other times they may be more abstractly composed.

Throughout the centuries, artists have found many different ways to express themselves with art and painting. As we keep living and creating I can’t wait to learn—what will the next style be?