Johann Joachim Winckelmann was born in Stendal, Germany, in 1717, and studied at the universities of Halle and Jena. He is considered one of the fathers of the discipline of art history because he founded the linear-style periodization of art and architecture which is the standard today. Before Winckelmann, historians from Serlio to Montfaucon, had treated the history of classical art and architecture thematically, dividing the past in terms of genres (temples, civic buildings, etc.) instead of chronologically. Winckelmann developed innovative methods for the detailed and systematic observation of the facture of ancient works as a way to identify their date of production and provenance. His legacy is still palpable in the methodological claims that underpin contemporary historic structures reports, which aim at scientifically establishing a building’s original dates, authors, construction methods, and so on. Winckelmann was also the first to argue that the study of ancient art could reveal empirical evidence not simply about the artworks under scrutiny, but also about the whole of ancient civilization, its cultural values, politics, technical capacity, and so on. Winkelmann applied his powers of observation to distinguish, for example, between ancient Greek sculptures and later Roman copies. His famous *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755) polemically challenged the established perception that ancient Rome was the epitome of human civilization. He ignited a debate over the cultural supremacy of Rome vs. Greece that pitted him against the likes of architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), and earned him the allegiance of philhellenics like the British “Athenian” James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, who meticulously documented the Athenian Acropolis upon which they based paper restorations of the monuments. In their quest for scientific proof, Winklemann, Piranesi, Stuart and Revett raised improved the methods of architectural documentation, and also raised a new standard for restorations: that they should be based on documented empirical evidence verifiable by peers. Having converted to Catholicism, Winckelmann moved to Rome in 1755, where he gained access to papal collections of ancient sculptures and texts, and became commissioner of antiquities to Pope Clement XIII in 1763. He continued to advance the argument that Greek art was the pinnacle of classical achievement in books such as *History of Ancient Art* (1764). He was murdered in 1768 in Trieste, then an Austrian port city, while journeying back to Rome after an audience in Vienna with Empress Maria Theresa.

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