Antwerp, located in Belgium, was a center for art in Netherlands and northern Europe for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE** [edit]

- Describe the characteristics of Antwerp Mannerism.

**KEY POINTS** [edit]

- The Antwerp School for painting flourished during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Antwerp School was comprised of many generations of artists and is known for portraiture, animal paintings, still lifes, and prints.

- Antwerp Mannerism bore no relation to Renaissance Mannerism, but the name suggests a reaction to the "classic" style of the earlier Flemish painters. Although attempts have been made to identify the individual artists, most of the paintings remain attributed to anonymous masters.

- Antwerp was an internationally significant publishing centre, and had a huge production of old master prints and book illustrations. Furthermore, Antwerp animaliers or animal painters, such as Frans Snyders, Jan Fyt and Paul de Vos, dominated animal-painting in Europe.

**TERMS** [edit]

- **Antwerp School**
  The Antwerp School is a term for the artists active in Antwerp, first during the 16th century when the city was the economic center of the Low Countries, and then during the 17th century when it became the artistic stronghold of the Flemish Baroque under Peter Paul Rubens.

- **Antwerp**
  A province of Flanders, Belgium.

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seventeenth centuries. The so-called **Antwerp School For Painting** flourished during the sixteenth century when the city was the economic center of the Low Countries, and again during the seventeenth century when it became the artistic stronghold of the Flemish **Baroque**. The Antwerp School was comprised of many generations of artists and is known for portraiture, animal paintings, still lifes, and prints.

Antwerp took over from Bruges as the main trading and commercial center of the Low Countries around 1500, and the boost in the economy attracted many artists to the cities to join craft **guilds**. For instance, many sixteenth-century painters, artists, and craftsmen joined the Guild of Saint Luke, which educated apprentices and guaranteed quality. The first school of artists that emerged in the city were the Antwerp **Mannerists**, a group of anonymous late **Gothic** painters active in the city from about 1500 to 1520.

Antwerp **Mannerism** bore no direct relation to **Renaissance** or Italian Mannerism, but the name suggests a peculiarity that was a reaction to the "classic" **style** of the earlier Flemish painters. Although attempts have been made to identify the individual artists, most of the paintings remain attributed to anonymous masters. Characteristic of Antwerp Mannerism are paintings that combine Early Netherlandish and **Northern Renaissance** styles, and incorporate both Flemish and Italian traditions into the same **compositions**. Practitioners of the style frequently painted subjects such as the Adoration of the Magi and the Nativity, both of which are generally represented as night scenes, crowded with figures and dramatically illuminated. The Adoration scenes were especially popular with the Antwerp Mannerists, who delighted in the patterns of the elaborate clothes worn by the Magi and the ornamentation of
The architectural ruins in which the scene was set.

*The Adoration of the Kings* by Jan Gossaert

This painting captures the Antwerp Mannerist tradition of using religious themes, particularly the *Adoration of the Magi*, for inspiration.
The iconoclastic riots (‘Beeldenstorm’ in Dutch) of 1566 that preceded the Dutch Revolt resulted in the destruction of many works of religious art, after which time the churches and monasteries had to be refurnished and redecorated. Artists such as Otto van Veen and members of the Francken family, working in a late mannerist style, provided new religious decoration. It also marked a beginning of economic decline in the city, as the Scheldt river was blockaded by the Dutch Republic in 1585 and trade diminished.

The city experienced an artistic renewal in the seventeenth century. The large workshops of Peter Paul Rubens and Jacob Jordaens, and the influence of Anthony van Dyck, made Antwerp the center of the Flemish Baroque. The city was an internationally significant publishing centre, and had a huge production of old master prints and book illustrations. Furthermore, Antwerp animaliers or animal painters, such as Frans Snyders, Jan Fyt and Paul de Vos, dominated animal-painting in Europe for at least the first half of the century. But as the economy continued to decline, and the Habsburg nobility and the Church reduced their patronage, many artists trained in Antwerp left for the Netherlands, England, France or elsewhere, and by the end of the seventeenth century, Antwerp was no longer a major artistic center.
Hunting Trophies

Jan Fyt, a member of the Antwerp School, was well-known for the use of animal motifs in his paintings.