

# History of art cubism

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Historical Account Cubism is a part of the abstraction period of modern art in the beginning of the twentieth century. There was a series 'isms' that influenced each other and came quickly in the modern world of art. These include Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Division and Symbolism. It was believed to be started with Picasso and Braque in 1907. Cubism was a movement of modern artists going against the accepted style of paintings and pushing the boundaries of what was modern art.

The Impressionists and Realists of the late 19th century started to paint more everyday items and in a more spontaneous fashion, in contrast to the classical period which came before. Immediately before cubism were artists like Cezanne and Seurat who were considered to be post impressionists who were converting impressionism into a more classical style. Then Van Gogh wanted to express more emotion in his art than the impressionists had, and his style started to develop including vivid colors and bright landscapes.

Art in the modern world moved from telling stories and depicting important historical occasions, to a more personal approach from the artist. The artist wanted to explore their emotions, the everyday and play with form, perspective and composition. These colors and need to express emotions led to different movements of expressionism, the Fauves (wild beasts) which had artists including Van Gogh and Gauguin, German expressionism was more extreme, Abstraction came after this and cubism was one of the forms that led heavily from it.

During 1908, Braque and Picasso realized they were working towards the same ideas and decided to work together until 1914. Their principal subject became the still life. They experimented with painting and sculpture to express and challenge the way objects are represented. What you see depicted in a cubist work is not a realistic representation of the object, but a flattening of the planes that make up the object from different directions in a strong geometric fashion.

The artist no longer relied on the renaissance principals of geometric perspectives. The painter was free to explore a different visual reality and to challenge the viewer in what they were seeing in a two dimensional form. By 1909 Picasso began to break individual forms into smaller faceted shapes. For example the head had each feature as its own carefully modeled form. " The paintings and drawings of 1909 are works which give rise to the word cubism when Picasso was accused of dividing his pictures into 'little cubes'. In 1910 Picasso made a breakthrough where the figure was seen or represented as transparent planes that locked together which allowed the eye to pass through them to the picture behind so the pictures had a more sculptural element. The movement ended in 1914 as Picasso was a prolific painter and continued to explore other ways of expressing himself. There was a turn towards realism again in 1915 to 1920. Critical Account - The Women of Avignon This painting is a particularly important work in the development of cubism and Picasso artistic Journey.

The picture is grounded in tradition and yet challenges the viewer with new perspectives and treatment of color and form. Picasso starts with the

classical grouping of the three figures on the left. Their placement and gestures and semi nude attire seem to be familiar and are drawn from the images of the late Renaissance of the three graces. Picasso uses this familiarity to lure the viewer in but then starts to play with perspective, proportion ND color to challenge and represent a new way of viewing.

Picasso has distorted the figures, using angular planes and we can see the beginnings of the different perspectives represented in the arms and faces of the figures. He uses flesh colored tones for the figures but in a very flat way rather than the traditional gently coupled tones of classical realism that leads to the representation of the three dimensional figure on the two dimensional canvas. The shading and abstract nature of the shapes used meaner that they are very much in the modern world.

We can see an example of this shifting of the perspective in the two central figures where the eyes are different sizes, the noses are off-set and the shape of the ears is distorted. As we look at the body of the three figures and the draping, we start to see flat geometric shapes and the beginning of the cubist treatment of the human figure. When we look at the small still life of fruit in a bowl at the bottom of the painting, we see the flattening of perspectives emerging. If this were a real representation of fruit in a bowl they would be effected by gravity.

This representation makes the viewer eel anxious, waiting for the fruit to fall. In this way Picasso creates tension and expresses emotion through the distorted perspective. Picasso had a very difficult relationship with women and in the painting he represents women very differently between the group

of three on the left, and the group of two on the right hand side. The three classical figures are more sympathetic and easy on the eye for the viewer, but there is dark shadows on the figures in the far left that hint at darker emotions.

The figures on the right are more fully abstracted and show the influence of African ribald masks and paintings. The colors are not sympathetic, classical nude colors, but instead brighter and harsher reds, blues and greens. These women are confronting and convey a strong emotion for the viewer, but this destruction of form is not accidental but quite methodical. Everything in the picture is broken up into angular wedges and facets. Having said that these shapes are not flat but are shaded in such a way to give some sense of the third dimension. These sharp angles and edges, voids and solids, led to this movement being dubbed as cubism.