

Post-impressionism and artists

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Impressionism was a movement that came about in the late 19th century, most specifically its roots can be traced back the 1874 when a group called the Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors, Printmakers, etc. organized an exhibition in Paris. (Samu, 2004). The group led several exhibitions through the 1880's which brought them into the spot light despite criticism from the conventional art community in France. The movement received its name from one of the movements most now most recognized artists Claude Monet and his piece Impression, Sunrise.

It is said that a critic accused the painting of being a sketch or “impression”. (Samu, 2004) Paintings of this period tended to be outdoor scenes and panoramas. My Grandfather, Lawrence Bird, who was an artist and set designer for Disney modeled his style of art after this period. He was inspired by the artists of this period and their focus on developing their own technique that was more centered around light and its effect on the image.

The painting technique included short choppy and broken strokes with vibrant and light colors adding new dimensions to their paintings.

Impressionism did an amazing thing it realized the phenomenon of transitoriness. The artist that carries his canvas out into the great outdoors and strives to record every small detail of what his eye can perceive is in very different state of mind than the artist that creates his art in a studio reconstructed from sketches or studies. (Collins, 2012) The social, economic and political climate of this time saw many changes.

You had the industrial revolution, which replaced small farms and factories with large industrial complexes. This eventually led people into more urban

areas out of the country side. There is the release of the communist manifesto by Marx and Engles and of course Darwin's release of " Orgin of the species. " (Werner, 1998) Both changing the way people thought and viewed the world they lived in. Due to the above mentioned industrial revolution there are many new and useful items now readily available to artists, authors, sculptors and so forth.

One of these items includes synthetic chemical pigments that often have greater luminosity than previous organic pigments, thus allowing the artists to explore more vibrant styles. The most notable and recognized painters of this time embraced this new medium in which to work with. These artists included: Alfred Sisley, Armand Guillaumin, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet and Pierre Renoir. As a former sailor in the United States Navy I have an affinity for lighthouses and depictions of the sea. One of my favorite pieces of this time is Claude Monet's – Mouth of the Seine, done in 1865.

This masterpiece, with its lighthouse in the distance depicts the coming and going of the many merchant, fishing and leisure vessels as they navigate the waters of the Seine river as it empties into the English Channel. The image to me, represents a simpler time where sailing was an art that was performed by skill rather than instruments and automation. Impressionism was not brought about by a necessity or tragic change in the socialenvironment, more so out of the fact of new ideas and the availability of these new mediums.

This allowed the artists to break free of the “statu quo” and express their view on the world around them in a fresh, new and vibrant way.

Impressionism opened up the art world’s eyes and led to the influence of many new and creative artists that expounded on not only using the optical impressions but also using the new found artistic style to also express emotion and themes of greater symbolism. (Voorhies, 2000) These artists “rebelled” against the so-called limitations of impressionism.

These artists felt that impressionism was missing many key elements including emotional, structural, symbolic and spiritual representation. (Misialowski, 2006) Artists of this time frame worked, in most cases, independently and today are most often referred to as Post-Impressionists. The style was defined by vibrant colors, thick paint application, real life subject matter, geometric shapes, and distortion of objects figures for expressive emotional effect. Some of the key artists of this time included: Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, Georges Seurat, Aristide Maillol and Edouard Vuillard.

One of my favorite pieces of this time comes of course from van Gogh. The piece is titled *Stra? enarbeiter* which means Road Workers. The imagery of this piece is rough and coarse with distorted views and sharp lines. The shapes of the trees almost draw you away from the what the piece is actually titled after, the road workers who are shown off in the distance and then again on the left edge of the painting. The colors give the image a dark look like it is depicting a late fall day with the workers frantically trying to complete the task before the onset of winter.

Again, like the impressionism movement, there was not really a prime reason for this movement other than the artists want to more freely express themselves through their work. The social climate of the times were changing allowing for these artists to do what they were doing, however; the majority of these post-impressionism artists were “starving artists” and didn’t gain huge notoriety until after death. The two paintings are similar but completely different. Each of the pieces captures the artists view of the world as they perceive it, the use of color to exact a response from the viewer.

Each artist depicted a scene in which people were working against the elements with those that were there for leisure. Where they differ is in the way the artist wants the picture to be viewed. While Monet wanted to show the beauty of the landscape, ships and buildings, van Gogh showed a different view of it being distorted colorless and hopeless. As impressionism gave way to post impressionism, post impressionism paved the way for modern art. Showing many artists that it was okay to express and play with imagery.

That art was not locked down to someone else’s definition of what it should be. It was what your perception of it was. It could be the anger of a thousand paint splatters. It could be the combination of print, paint, chalk and pastels. What you thought was art was art. As my Grandfather told me, art is not limited or bound by rules nor is it created in a lab. Art comes from within, from your emotions, from your perceptions. Impressionism unlocked chains

of a thousand years of oppression to give us the inspiration for what we have now.