

Art analysis: la revue blanche by pierre bonnard

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ID Information

Name of Artist: Pierre Bonnard

Artwork Title: La revue Blanche

Object type: Poster / Print

Original Location: France 1867-1947

Date: 1894

Materials : Lithograph on off-white wove paper

Dimensions: 80. 0(h) x62. 0(w) cm

Elements of Art

Color:

- In this poster, he used his inspiration from Japanese woodblocks and created a flat space with a small build-up of hues on the faces of the figures to create a slight feeling of depth.
- Bonnard relies less on shading to depict the people and their clothing. The detail on the bodies of the figures are lost with shapes being simplified/abstracted: Unmodulated color.
- The black and white hues create the highest contrast possible in the poster, though the white has now become dull and brownish, it still creates an intense contrast between.

Space:

- A small street urchin is standing in front of a fashionable looking woman (who is the famous Misia Natanson) wearing a large hat with

flowers on it and some kind of drapery, behind her is rearview of a top-hatted man reading the posters on the wall behind them.

- The hue shifts in the faces of the urchin, the woman, and the back of the dark top-hatted figure help give the feeling of depth. This helps to distinguish between the background, foreground and middle ground of the poster. The shifts of color show us that the urchin is directly in front (foreground) of everyone and is receiving the most light. The darkest figure is in the background and is the darkest due to the lack of light reaching him. The woman has a mix of the darkest and lightest tones put together, presenting her in the middle of the composition.
- The design on the urchin's scarf is very flat. Bonnard's influence from Japanese woodcut prints can be seen here. The pattern denies the illusion of space because the pattern does not overlap or go back into space.

Value:

- This work has different degrees of light and dark. The reason this was done was to create contrast. For example, the faces of the figures, that we can see, pop off the page because they are both surrounded by black, while the man in the background is surrounded by white so that he does not get lost in the poster. By having this large range of values in the poster helps catch the eyes of viewers.
- The face of the urchin is lighter (white) than the woman who has a middle grey face, while the man is black and is the darkest.

Line:

- The woman figure is holding a copy of the magazine La Revue Blanche in her hand, the small urchin boy in front of her is pointing at it with his thumb signaling the viewer to look at it. Both of the figures are looking to the right, creating an invisible diagonal line or an implied line that the viewer's eyes follow.
- The poster's lettering is shaky and continues the theme of Bonnard's loose line style throughout the poster. This type of line can be seen in the urchin's face.

Form:

- The organic forms in the poster are the people. Bonnard made the faces of the figures not symmetrical in the faces and made their bodies curvy. Not only does this type of form happen in the figures but also the flowers on the woman's hat.
- The geometric forms are nonexistent in the poster because nothing is made to be put in perspective, which wouldn't work for the style Bonnard was going for. The figures are flat and the square posters are made to be flat as well.

Principles of Art

Emphasis:

- Bonnard emphasizes the importance or dominance of the woman in this piece by making her the largest and most detailed figure in the poster. She is also shown as an important figure because she is the only one holding the La Revue Blanche magazine.

- Bonnard also makes the woman the spotlight by making the urchin boy plain and untidy looking. If you compare those to figures together you can see the attention and time he took to make the woman look good, while the boy's face looks quickly drawn with a messy appearance.
(stressing the differences between those two figures)

Gradation:

- Bonnard combines elements by using a series of gradual changes in those elements. (large shapes to small shapes, dark hue to light hue, etc)
- The urchin boy in the foreground is the figure with the most information given, due to the fact he is the only one showing his legs. By giving this information it implies that he is the closest to the viewer
(large shape)
- Once again I will mention the gradual change in the faces of the figures creates depth. For example, the light hue to the urchin boy's face shows he is in front of all the other figures and is receiving the most light, while the woman behind him is receiving half as much light as him, creating a mid-tone between the lightest and darkest shade being the man in the background.

Movement:

- The stylish woman is clutching a copy of La Revue Blanche in her hand, the urchin boy in front of her is motioning towards it with his thumb. Both of the figures are looking to the right, creating an invisible diagonal line or an implied line that the viewer's eyes follow.

- The implied line created in the poster creates a guide that leads the viewer's eye throughout the work.
- The first thing people viewing the poster would look at is the words because our eyes are automatically drawn to it. By starting with the words the viewer will begin to look at the urchin boy, due to the fact he is directly in the words or just behind the words. The gesture of his hand leads the eye to the woman. The woman's eyes are slightly looking to the right which causes us to look at the man in the top hat.
- Movement is also made by the urchin boy's legs. We can only see one of his legs in the poster, while the other is off the page implying he is in mid-movement or walking.

Balance:

- This poster uses asymmetrical balance to create tension by using contrast. This makes it more visually appealing to the viewer. For example, This poster catches the viewer's eye because it's abstract since there are no perfect mirror images. Instead of making the poster symmetrical, Bonnard is using different visual weights, such as line weights, in a way that balances the poster out.
- Both the woman and the black top-hatted figure are made to be the heavier components on the poster causing them to leap out at the viewer, more than the untidy and less detailed urchin figure who appears lighter than all the other figures. This makes the urchin boy is an afterthought in the poster.

Proportion:

- The poster's lettering helps separate the figures. For instance, the letter b helps to identify the side of her dress, while the l creates an illusion of separation between the women and the urchin boy.
- The figures are stacked on top of each other. The figures are all connected by their black clothes, but you can distinguish who furthest away by the slight hue changes in the figure faces.
- The fashionable lady is the predominant figure in this composition. Bonnard loved to include this woman in his work and put her in the spotlight of this poster to highlight her importance. She also is the only figure in the poster he has the cleanest and detailed face, which moreover makes her the dominant figure .

Subject matter

Bonnard made this poster originally as an advertisement for the Parisian Magazine called La Revue Blanche . This lithograph poster features a stylish woman wearing a big hat, carrying a copy of the Parisian Magazine with a petite urchin boy in front of her. Behind them, in the background, a black silhouette of a man in a top hat is seen reading the posters on the wall.

The posters read: “ The White Magazine Appears Each Month In 100-page Deliveries For Sale Everywhere,” and has the magazine's address above the heads of the figures. The poster's main lettering spells out the magazine's name coming from the woman and some of the letters are playfully around her hand (people often say it looks like she's holding an umbrella) and thigh.

The trend in History

Bonnard entered a Post-Impressionist group full of artists known as the Nabis, who was massively inspired by Japanese woodblock prints. Lots of

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artists during this time including Bonnard became heavily influenced by these woodblock prints. After discovering this type of art Bonnard's art became full of bold colors, drawn forms, no use of perspective, and interesting figures wearing some form of loose clothing, which can be seen in a majority of Japanese woodblock prints. This influence can be seen in his lithographs in the Parisian literary magazine La Revue Blanche .

Content or meaning of the artwork

- Bonnard created this poster as an advertisement for the Parisian Magazine called La Revue Blanche .
- Bonnard set a standard for future magazine covers and marked the start of commissioning artists to create covers and advertisements that caught the eyes of viewers.
- He was heavily influenced by Japanese woodblock prints and applied there style of drawing and creating figures within this poster.
- This distinct type of art was not seen in France at the time, making it appealing to people causing this cover of the magazine to become super popular in later covers for the magazine.

References

- <https://nga.gov.au/bonnard/detail.cfm?IRN=157446&MnuID=1>
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- <https://www.wellesley.edu/davismuseum/artwork/node/49841>
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