

Impressionism essay



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Impressionism was the beginning of modern art.

It was a movement that arose in the 19th century and was initially mocked by the public. Artists that were once insulted by this title are now recognised for their great work as we now see “different” and “unique” as a good quality. Artists from this movement are Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley and Camille Pissaro. All of these artists had a different style to the basic way of painting. They worked in the outdoors with their subjects in front of them and their strokes were applied thick while other artists normally worked in a gallery with very precise strokes.

Impressionists' paintings were very different from accepted art of the time. Accepted art was smoothly painted, detailed and dull. While impressionist's works were quickly painted, it lacked detail and was very bright. The Impressionism subject matter was contemporary and was not historical or biblical. They concentrated on capturing the effects of light.

My first artist that I will be discussing is Renoir. He was determined to be an artist and went to Gleyres studio; here he focused on the impressionist movement. He didn't paint nature or landscape but preferred to paint people. When it hit the 1880s he took a change of direction and rediscovered classicism, ten years later he was back doing impressionism and concentrated on colour and light of the human form.

My second impressionist is Edgar Degas. At the age of twenty Degas changed his career path from legal studies to being an artist. He travelled through Italy entering galleries and copying the drawings. Like Renoir, Degas

is also a painter of people but unlike other impressionists he worked in a studio as he thought a painting was formed in the mind of an artist.

While other artists work from this movement are choppy and thick, his work is calm there is nothing rushed or bold, yet it is still very interesting. "The Umbrellas" is an impressionist painting done by Pierre Auguste Renoir. It is an oil painting done on a canvas. The shadings in the painting are very bright. It is a picture of people in a crowded city rushing and trying to get past each other.

In the fore ground we have a woman holding a basket wearing a charcoal dress. Her clothes are very dark and depressing looking yet her face seems to brighten up the whole picture and her fiery red hair draws attention to her pale complexion. In the middle ground there is an older woman with two children perhaps a mother with her young children. The smallest child is dressed very beautifully with different shades of blue and wearing a light blue hat the cleanness that the sharp colours of blue suggests these people are richer than the woman wearing the charcoal dress.

Also in the middle ground there is just one man, he is very eye catching as he doesn't quite blend in with the picture and his bright brown clothes clashes with all the colours of the umbrellas. Another reason for why he is so eye catching is that he is the only mans face you can actually see in detail.

In the background we have a cluster of umbrellas all charcoal grey, makes the picture look depressing and rainy. The umbrellas are that big that it looks as if there is hardly any space in the picture and behind all the umbrellas there is just a few trees showing a nice finish to the painting. The lines in this

picture and the shape of the figures in this painting are very delicate. There is also a noticeable pattern in colour in the picture going from black and charcoal to light and navy blue.

These colours make the picture dark wet and gloomy which captures the scene, but in contrast with these colours there is a light brown and a tint of yellow and dark red. The brightest thing in the picture is the woman at the front as her white skin creates a contrast on the dark colours. The brush strokes look very defined yet rushed and done very quickly the paint is also applied thick so it sticks out from the canvas the painting looks realistic because of this. The texture of the clothing looks so real its as if you could almost reach out and feel the material of the clothing. This technique has been mainly done on the woman In the foreground as she seems to stand out compared to the other people in the painting.

The style Renoir has used is tight and detailed as everyone in the painting looks cramped in the one space and the umbrellas make the painting look even more detailed. It has a very dull gloom atmosphere mainly because of the colours and because of the woman in the foregrounds face. She looks sad and unhappy which makes the person looking at the picture depressed and maybe cold as there is a lot of umbrellas suggesting rain. Overall this painting is very moving and makes you feel whatever the woman in the picture is feeling. Out of all the details in this painting the face of the woman alone stands out the most and I think it tells a lot about the picture.

I especially liked the way Renoir made a contrast with her hair to her complexion that brightened the painting more. I enjoyed looking at this

painting as there was a lot of detail and different shades in it; it really brought it to life. The next piece of work I will be describing is “ballet school” by Edgar Degas. It is an oil painting on canvas and is a picture of girls practising ballet in front of a mirror. It is a very bright and colourful picture as there is lots of yellows, oranges and whites in it. In the foreground there is a woman sitting on a bench putting on ballet shoes, she stands out from all the other girls as her red coat draws attention to her.

The bench she is sitting on is also very dark so this contrasts with all the light delicate colours. Also in the foreground is another woman but she is not as distracting as the woman with the red coat. In the middle ground we have girls doing pirouettes and tying their ballet shoes, these girls blend in with the picture as their white skirts suit the bright yellow colour of the floor. There is also a mirror across from these girls which is where your eyes eventually go to as you look through the picture. In the background there is a cluster of girls practising their dance skills against a very large mirror. They also create a contrast in the painting as their white skirts clash with the dark wall.

The colours he has used blends in very nicely with each other and only the dark furniture and walls clash with it but I think this is why it stands out so much. The dark spiral staircase runs the height of the picture and unites a lot of the scene. As the colours are so bright it gives the painting a realistic tone to it. The sandy orange floor against the white skirts gives the picture a sense of elegance.

There is also a very good use of shading in the picture this is another factor that brings the painting to life. I think the texture of the painting really stands out as once again just like Renoir; Degas has made his strokes for the skirts almost jaggy bringing the texture of the clothing to life. You don't seem to see any of the dancers faces its just their skin tone and it looks almost blurry. Degas has made a very good attempt with his texture as it makes the painting so realistic.

The atmosphere of the ballet room is free and spacious even though the room has a number of girls in it they are still able to move and dance around in the room. When you first look at the picture its as if your actually in the room and the brightness of the room masked you feel energetic. It's a very beautiful painting to look at. Overall Degas has done a wonderful job with the painting. I especially liked the cleanness of the white skirts giving these girls elegance and beauty resembling swans. I loved looking through the picture it was also very nicely detailed.

In this essay I have spoke about Impressionism, Two very different artists; Degas and Renoir, I have spoke a bit about their lives and the pieces of work they have produced describing both in detail. It was very interesting looking at their work and seeing how two artists from the same movement can create two completely different paintings and even now these impressionists have stayed famous for their magnificent pieces of work.