

Piet Mondrian's work and his insistence on primary colors

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Introduction

Piet Mondrian was born in 1872 in the Netherlands and was an early proponent of the De Stijl movement, which came to found a form of art known as neo-plasticism. Mondrian's family members were involved in the arts and required Mondrian to go through a disciplined Protestant education, after which he entered the Academy for Fine Art in Amsterdam. His art would evolve throughout his lifetime through a number of forms. This essay examines Mondrian's work *Composition*.

Description

(Art Processes) One constant theme throughout Mondrian's work is his insistence on primary colors.

(Subject Matter) This is seen in *Composition* with juxtaposition of black, red, blue, yellow, and white. While *Composition* clearly exhibits a strong amount of originality, (Form and Organization) Mondrian is guided by a set of principles that he and fellow De Stijl founders outlined. One can see how all these tenets are evident in *Composition*. All colors are, "primary colors as this gives the painting a more stripped-down and pure feel" (Art Book, p. 120). The rectangular planes and prisms are evident in the picture as seems to avoid characteristic types of symmetry, instead opting for abstract positioning of figures that still retain a functional appeal to the human senses. The aesthetic balance in the picture is achieved through opposition; nowhere do we see two of the same colors connected.

Interpretation

(Artist Intent) While Mondrian has been derided as an intellectual artist, too

concerned with formalist principals, his actual intentions were much more organic. In *Neo-Plasticism in Pictorial Art* Mondrian wrote, "... this new plastic idea will ignore the particulars of appearance, that is to say, natural form and colour. On the contrary, it should find its expression in the abstraction of form and colour, that is to say, in the straight line and the clearly defined primary colour" (De Stijl).

(Expert) Since Mondrian's style is " non-representational and linked to a spiritual element in his life", it seems the theoretical underpinnings of neo-plasticism and Mondrian's own theosophical beliefs are evident in *Composition* (Deicher, p. ix).

(Personal Reaction) Upon viewing Mondrian's earlier experimental work where colors do, in fact, stand next to each other, it's clear why he later chose to disregard such placements, as they take away from the beauty of the work. The viewer is immediately struck by the sparseness of designs and the purity of forms. It's easy to imagine how Mondrian's pure geometric shapes share much with the idealized Platonic forms, where the pure essential nature of the object exists in direct relation with the soul and the universe. Even the sparseness of the title - *Composition* - speaks to the nature of the work as representing pureness devoid of ' real world' mediation.

Conclusion

This essay has examined Piet Mondrian's *Composition*. In this context of understanding, the essay demonstrates that Mondrian was greatly influenced by the neo-plasticism movement. The work itself explores theoretical questions of form and color. Ultimately, it's clear that

Composition is highly notable for its abstract and unique means of artistic expression.

Bibliography

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