

Impressionism vs. post-impressionism essay

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Impressionism was a movement or style of painting that originated and developed in France in 1870s and distinguished by its focus on the immediate impression produced by a landscape or scene and use of the primary colors to replicate actual reflected light. The style was characterized mainly by the use of intense colors, open composition, light and movement and brush strokes. The roots of impressionism include the early 19th century plein-air painting methods by the Barbizon school and naturalism of Camille Corot. Impressionists specialized mainly in genre scenes and landscapes. They were mainly concerned with producing visual reality in their paintings in terms of fleeting effects of color and light (Gunderson 35).

The pioneers of impressionism included Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Alfred Sisley, Manet and Degas. Monet was one of the most celebrated impressionists of his time. He was best known for his landscape painting. He particularly concentrated on painting the instant changes in nature. For instance, if nature changed color after a short while, Monet would blindly follow the change in his paintings to depict the true color of nature. Another painter who was revered was Manet. At the age of 29 years, he was reputed as the leading realistic painter (Halliwell 45). He was noted mainly for his reinterpretation of neoclassical themes and his approach to oil painting. The main characteristics of impressionism was a sense of immediacy, emphasis on light and its changes in quality, appearance of movement, unusual visual angles, overall effect rather than detail and visual brush strokes. Impressionists sought to capture and display nature at instants. They wanted to depict the changes in nature through paintings. They also aimed at showing the movements of the various phenomena in nature

through art. The stylistic developments of impressionism included the use of short and broken brushstrokes that hardly convey forms, use of pure unmixed colors, and emphasis on the effect of light.

Post-impressionism, on the other hand, was a style or movement of painting that sought to break away from the naturalism of impressionism and used color in expressive ways like expression of emotions rather than just optical impressions. Post-impressionists rejected the random spontaneity exercised by impressionists in favor of measured painting techniques based in science and study of optics (Nochlin 136). They believed that separate touches of interlaced color produced a higher vibrancy of color than what was being practiced by the impressionists. The main proponents of post-impressionism include Georges Seurat, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin and Gogh Vincent van. The most influential person in post-impressionism is Georges Seurat. He is considered the father of post-impressionism. His styles of painting signaled a new trend that shifted from the traditional impressionism. He introduced a new style of painting known as pointillism or divisionism that sought to employ a scientific approach in the use of color. This led to a shift from impressionism, which concentrated in using unmixed primary colors. His main technique was that of using weaving and layering brushstrokes. This enabled him to achieve tapestry-like paint surfaces that depicted complementary and contrasting hues. This made his works to be admired by even other great post-impressionists like Vincent van Gogh making him to be of a great influence to later artists. Seurat's influence on post-impressionism artists traversed many decades. This is seen in the works of later artists like Charles Angrand whose work

greatly resembled that of Seurat. Another great post-impressionist was Paul Cezanne. Paul Cezanne was a French artist. He was one of the main founders of post-impressionism and his works laid the foundation of the shift from impressionism to post-impressionism (Halliwell 86). His main style of painting was the use short and loaded brushstrokes, a style borrowed from impressionism. Vincent van Gogh, on the other hand, was a Dutch post-impressionist. His work was notable for its bold color, emotional honesty and rough beauty. Vincent was one of the most influential post-impressionism artists as his work had great influence on art in the 20th century. His love for art began when he was a small child and this would influence his decision to become an artist in his later years. During his lifetime, Vincent produced over 2100 artworks.

Paul Gauguin was a French post-impressionism artist. He was one of the artists whose work highly influenced the shift from impressionism to post-impressionism, though he was recognized and appreciated until he died. He was renowned for his experimental use of color and introduction of the synthetist style of art which has had a big influence on the modern art. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was a French painter. He is best known for depicting the colorful and theatrical life in Paris in art. This led to production of provocative, elegant and exciting images of life in those days. Together with the likes van Gogh, Gauguin and Cezanne, he was among the post-impressionists that greatly influenced the shift from impressionism (Halliwell 92).

Post-impressionism was characterized by many styles due to contribution of each artist. These artists could not agree on a common style of painting.

However, their main aim was to shift from impressionism. Some of the styles that characterized the early impressionism art included the detailed painting of a particular landscape, which was mainly employed by Cezanne. This was in a bid to move away from the overall effect style of impressionists.

Cezanne sought to depict greater pictorial structure of nature. Another style that was prevalent among post-impressionists was the use of symbolic and expressive content. Artists like Gauguin created paintings from imagination or memory (Stein et al 58). They expressed in their works a great connection with subject that inspired the works. Post-impressionists also placed emphasis on harmony in terms of surface design.

The main differences between impressionism and post-impressionism are that impressionists sought to capture nature in its original and primitive state while post-impressionists sought to involve their imagination and memory in their works. Impressionists detached themselves from their works while post-impressionist sought to involve their emotions and expressions in their works. Another difference between impressionism and post-impressionism was that impressionism was mainly characterized with simple and overall depiction of nature while post-impressionism sought to depict details of the works of art and nature. They sought to show the still nature of life while impressionists wanted to show nature in motion (Nochlin 87).

Post-impressionism as a form of art was mainly concerned with abstract depiction of works art through imagination while impression sought a realistic depiction of nature. The two works of art that bring out the differences between impressionism and post-impressionism is the Birth of Venus by Adolphe-William Bouguereau and the Harvester by Jules Adolphe.

The two paintings depict the kind of ideals held in the two schools of thought. For instance, in the painting the Birth of Venus, there is evidence of activity. The portray shows immediacy of the scene where the momentary activities of the people are captured. There is also evidence of movement with everyone involved in some activity. There is also the basic use of color where one color is used to paint one scene. On the contrary, the Harvester is a timeless portrait that is detailed (Stein et al 78). There is a combination of reality and imagination in the painting of the portrait. For instance, though the artist the harvester as a commoner, he gives her the beauty not common with commoners. There is also a combination of colors in the portrait.

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