

Extended Essay

Visual Art

*“To What Extent Did the Artists from Impressionism Period to
Cubism Period Create an Evolution in Visual Art?”*

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Abstract

Traditionally, Visual Art was considered as limited and less creative. Artists from the 19th century created their artworks with common perspectives, for example, one-point perspective in Renaissance period. However, from the late 19th century, many artists, especially Monet, stood up to fight and find their new paths in Art. The ideas and beauty standard of Visual Art have been changing vastly. My question for the investigation is: **How has art changed from the Impressionism period to Cubism period?**

To answer the question, I will be researching about the four art movements: Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism. I will also study about how did the artists differ their artwork from the previous generation (before 19th century) by creating and using different techniques. Also, I am going to analyze some of the particular paintings of famous artists of the time. The information that I am going to use is from books and website.

The Impressionism period is considered as the turning point that led to breakthroughs in visual art. In Impressionism period, artist did not focus much on the accuracy of the subjects they saw. In stead, they focus on the natural movements of nature and the liberty in drawing in order to create harmonious paintings with tight composition. After Impressionism period are Post-Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism. In those periods, colors became the main element of a painting. Artist also created many methods combine with the colors to make the artworks look more vivid.

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Introduction

Through ages, apart from scientific inventions and literature products, Art has been considered as a factor that shows all the development in human society. From very early in the past, Art has developed strongly. Art was used as a common vehicle through which the artists communicated and expressed their messages as well as life events. The question is: **To what extent did the artists create an evolution in visual art through four typical art movements: Impressionism, Post-impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism.**

The Renaissance represents a time when art reflected the sights of our real world. Artists at the time were seen as "cameras" because they tended to depict subjects with realistic styles and right proportions. Art before 19th century focused on religions and grandeurs. Artists usually sat in studios and drew. As painters well used the law of distance or one-point perspective found by Leonardo Da Vinci, the paintings during those periods really have the depth and atmosphere. Subject depicted in paintings were usually gods and super heroes of the time. The painting below, a masterpiece known as "the last supper" created by Leonardo Da Vinci, is the greatest example for the one-point perspective



"The last supper", Leonardo Da Vinci, oil on gesso, Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan

The painting is a meal of Jesus and his disciples. The disciples are divided into groups of three, creating a horizontal line. Also, the three windows behind, while Jesus is shaped in triangular pose, marked his head and his two arms wide opened. Leonardo da Vinci really created the depth for the painting. This painting became one of the greatest examples of High Renaissance period. · (*Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci: Meaning, Interpretation, no date*)

Later on, artists were exposed to the nature and felt impressed about the universe. The door to art gradually opened by time and more artists became recognizable and famous. One of the famous artists that helped to change the points of views toward art was a chief artist from impressionism

movement, Monet (1840-1926). Following Monet's road, many artists also stood up to create new art movements such as post-impressionism, fauvism, cubism and surrealism. To me, this research is significant because it demonstrates a huge turning point of the ways people have perceived art. This is also a chance for me to take some further look or deep understanding at the "ideal of beauty" because I have always been thinking that a beautiful artwork is an artwork that depicts realistic subjects. This research may expand my knowledge of what is called "beauty" and help me to improve my critical thinking.

Art from the Impressionism period brought with it something called creativity and "rebellion". Artists wanted to break the rules that have been followed for centuries. The techniques and styles would change gradually through the ages and the following movements would bring some senses of the previous ones. The composition would change from complex to simplification. Composition of the paintings may have less complicated shapes and artists tended to use basic shapes like circles or rectangles... The colours were the tools to express the moods of the artists and tended to be harsher.

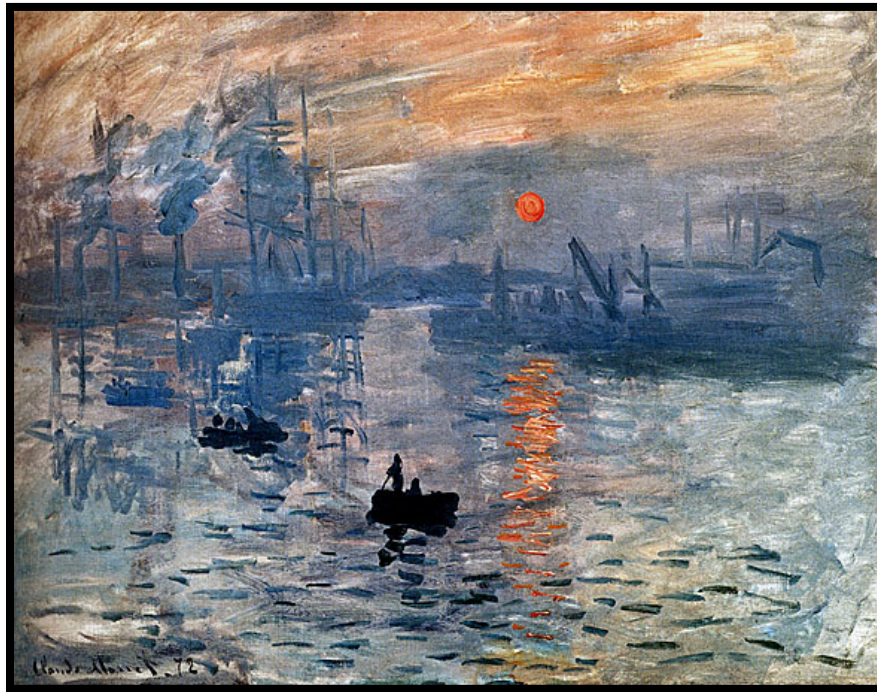
Impressionism

From the 17th century, the French government sponsored an art exhibition, usually known as Salon, that displayed famous artworks from members of "Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture." The Paris Salon was considered the world's most prestigious annual or biannual art event. The Paris Salon was said to be very strict and conservative as it set a particular standard for art with certain styles. During the late 1860s, numbers of artists began to discover a new style in art. In 1874, those

groups of artists organized an exhibition and later called themselves Impressionists. Impressionistic paintings usually depicted landscapes. During this period, artists exposed themselves to nature (outdoor) more and tended to produce paintings that were comparatively small in scale and informal in composition. The topic that was usually used by artists was modern landscapes such as towns, suburbs or nature. Artists from impressionism drew and painted quickly to capture the overviews of the main objects. The impressionists used art with new theories regarding colors. Artists found out that the shadow of an object is formed by adding more values such as black or white into the original colors of those objects. The artists also enriched the colors by adding some complementary colors. For example, when drawing the shadow of an apple, artist would add a little bit of blue in order to make it vivid. Also, artists usually painted with short and thick strokes of colors with a variety of directions. They did not really focus on details of objects and ignored the rules used by the previous artists such as light or dark value theories. The conservative people from the Paris Salon did not agree with the impressionists. However, other people started gradually liking the intense energy produced by the new styles of the Impressionist artists. The styles also became one of the most common art movements in history.

Monet was one of the most influential artists in art history. Born on 14th November 1840, Monet was a French painter and he advocated a new style of art. Monet was famous for his paintings, which depicted immediate objects. He drew what he saw. A very famous painting produced by Monet that changed people's point of view towards art was the "Impression, Sunrise" in 1872. Many people firstly confused the "Impression, Sunrise". Some people said that it was not a piece of art. However,

as time passed through, this painting became one of the best paintings of the time. People would tend to think about it as a standard of the impressionist movement.



"Impression, sunrise", Claude Monet, 1872, Oil and canvas, 48cm x 63cm,
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris

This painting illustrates an immediate landscape, which is the moment the artist saw randomly. The objects depicted by Monet are sky, river, boats and sunset. In this painting, Monet used aerial perspective, a technique or method of creating depth or illusion by modulating the tones and colors to stimulate the changes in lights and darkness - to illustrate the depth of the painting. When looking

at the painting, we can clearly see a very typical composition. The foreground is the area of the river where we can see many brush strokes. The mid-ground is the two halves of the river's area and the background is the area in which the sky and the river meet. Monet created the depth for the painting by using different tones for the three boats; the lighter boats appear to be further away from us than the darkest ones. The flecks of sunlight are getting lighter as they move closer to the sun. The boats are arranged to be on a straight line. The line intersects the vertical line created by the sunlight's reflection. Monet did this so that the painting could attract and pull viewers' attention into the painting. This creates a sense of depth to the artwork.

Personally, I think that this painting represents an evolution in art. It really changed my mind and expands my knowledge in perceiving art: A good artwork does not necessarily need to be realistic or completely perfect in texture and colors. I think a beautiful painting is the one that could express the emotion or creativity of the artist. I can see that the changes in colors are very sophisticated as the artists were so acuminous in capturing the movements of nature. In addition, the painting looks very amorous.

Post-Impressionism

In 1910, the English art critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) first used the term Post-Impressionism. "Manet and the Post-Impressionism" was introduced as title of an exhibition. Post-Impressionism is a term that is used to differentiate the art produced by the younger artists following the impressionists such as Monet, Sisley or Pissarro. Impressionism is an art movement that shook off a lot of old or archaic conception in European art in the early centuries. Following Monet and his companions, many

artists stood up and independently found their own paths in their art careers. Some famous artists that represented post-impressionism were Paul Cezanne, Vincent Van Gogh or Paul Gauguin. Even though those artists did not have similar painting styles, they were called Post-Impressionists. Post-impressionism takes the good aspects from Impressionism and abates the things that seemed to be excessive. Artists in Post-Impressionism kept the bright-color palettes of the previous movement but they rejected the emphasis of light and reflections of objects. As the artists cut off all of the fleeting lights, the paintings can be seen at multiple angles. Additionally, Post-Impressionists tended to create greater formal order and structures. Since each artist has different themes as well as objects, there is no certain topic for Post-Impressionism. However, this art movement has specific characteristics. The things we can see first are the thick and bold brushstrokes. Artists tended to use bright palette colors to attract viewers' eyes. Artists during this time put a lot of emotions, moods, and spirits into their artworks. Neo-impressionist painters all shared the common idea in how to thicken the colors in order to make the paintings more vivid. The technique usually used by the artists was "impasto." "Impasto" is a technique that is used to create pronounced surface textures of colors by adding many short brushstrokes with tones from dark to light. Artists would usually use dark colors first then add lighter ones so that the paintings can create dimensions or depths to viewers. The layers are usually thick enough to make the brushstrokes visible. Another technique that was also used widely in Neo-impressionism was "pointillism." Georges-Pierre Seurat was the first artist to develop the pointillism technique. In his paintings, he used many dots with a variety of tones to carefully fuse the colors of objects. This technique was used with a rule of impressionism, which is to enrich the color values by adding complementary colors.

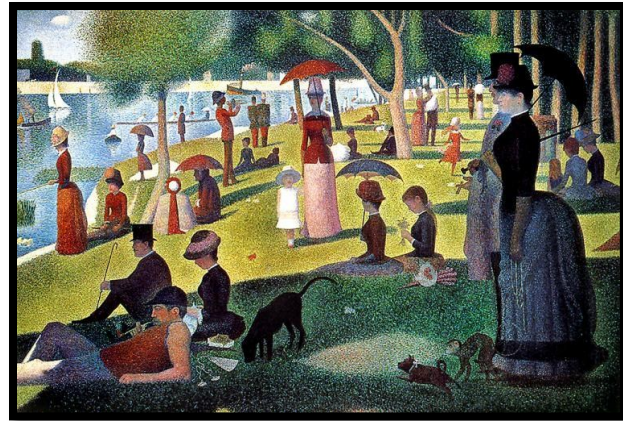


Impasto technique

"**Roses**", Vincent Van Gogh, 1890, Oil and canvas, 71cm x 90cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C

Pointillism technique

"**A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte**", Georges-Pierre Seurat, 1884-1886, Oil on canvas, 207.6cm x 308cm, Art Institute of Chicago



A very famous advocate for this Neo-impressionism was Van Gogh. Vincent Van Gogh was a Dutch painter born on 30th March 1853. Van Gogh is well known for his amazing paintings. Van Gogh was said to be a representative of Neo-impressionism because he had a very common style of movement. Van Gogh also learnt to apply a lot of techniques from other artists such as the pointillism technique by Seurat. Van Gogh actually painted based on his moods. One of the famous and impressive paintings that represent Van Gogh's style is the "The Starry Night".



"The starry night", Vincent Van Gogh, 1889, Oil on canvas, 73.7cm x 92.1 cm,
Museum of Modern Art, New York City

The sky in "The Starry Night" is very impressive and sublime. The painting's sky is brimming with whirling clouds, sparkling stars and a big, shining crescent. In his painting, Van Gogh really conveyed his emotions and moods. Van Gogh used many curvy lines in his painting. As you can see, the main big curve looks very strong and vigorous. The curves represent the turbulence in overcoming the illness of Van Gogh. The objects on the sky were painted by using the pointillism technique, inspired by Seurat. However, because of his mental illness, Van Gogh seemed to express the technique with out patience and analytical approach as Seurat did. So, the pointillism technique expressed by Van Gogh seems to be like many lines of brushstrokes rather than dots (as you can look at the sky of the painting). On the dark theme of the painting, the sparkles from the stars and little windows represent hope and comfort of a sick patient. The strong and intense waves of clouds seem to lure the eyes of the viewers. So a cypress tree and a little steeple are drawn to break that repeated rhythm.

Furthermore, that little steeple is settled a bit further away so we can see the depth of the painting.

The steeple also represents the unity of the village.

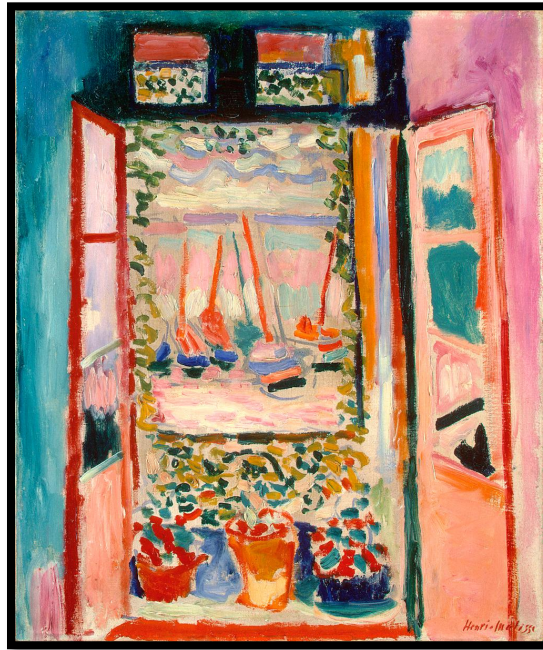
As a viewer, I can feel the refreshment in Van Gogh's paintings. The technique used for the sky (in "The Starry Night") makes me feel very comfortable. The sky has many textures with many layers of colors (black, blue, green, yellow, and white). I really like this painting because I can see a vast difference compared to the previous Impressionism movement. Artist used strong colors and brought lots of personal emotions into the production. This piece seems to me like a decoration rather than a complicated artwork with tight accuracy on the subject. Art changed. If you look back to the "Impression- sunrise" of Monet, you will see that Van Gogh described less in his painting. Instead, he tried to thicken his texture by using impasto technique.

Fauvism

In autumn of 1905, the French critic Louise Vauxcelles visited the Salon Paris d'Automne. Vauxcelles was stunned by the paintings there, which had very garish marks of colors. And from that moment, the term Fauvism was first coined and became a trendy art movement during a short period of time. Fauvism or Fauves means "wild beast." Introduced in the early 20th century, the Fauvism art movement only existed for around 6 to 7 years. Although the period of Fauvism was considered to be very slight, it grew strongly to the zenith in years 1905 and 1906. The artists during the time did not really know each other but their artworks were randomly hung in a gallery and from that point, people started to call them the Fauvist artists. Some chief painters of this art movement were Henri Matisse, Andre Derain, Albert Marquet and Georges Rouault. Fauvism is an art movement that was

said to against Impressionism. However, it is not an exaggeration if we say Impressionism was a strong bastion for Fauvism to develop. Since the last thirty years of the 19th century, colors were an independent unit in art. Colors were the main subjects of a painting instead of humans or flowers or landscapes and the Salon Paris d'Automne was, exaggeratingly, the exhibition exclusive for colors. An artist at that time would tend to use many complementary colors in a painting. For example, if the artist painted a painting that has the sky in red, he/she would then color the buildings in blue, river in orange, yellow and the reflection on light on the water surface could be many simple lime green brushstrokes. There is a fact that the artists of Fauvism did not depict the objects with their realistic colors. In contrast to the impressionist painters, painter from fauvism tended to abate the details of objects. Artists liked to paint landscapes or everyday life activities. Moreover, Fauvists usually used original colors or hues (blue, green, red or yellow...) to paint the objects. Also, the objects of a painting were always given bold borders in order to increase the flamboyance of the colors. Artists liked to draw landscapes because they had a wealth of colors.

Henri Matisse was considered one of the best well-known artists in the Fauvism movement. Henri Matisse was born, on 31st December 1869, to a French family. He had father who was a corn Merchant and mother who was a painter. Matisse's Fauvism paintings were influenced by the Impressionists so whenever you look at his paintings, you can see really bright and gaudy tones. One of the famous paintings produced by Matisse was "The Open Window" in 1905, the peak of the fauvism.



"The open window", Henri Matisse, 1905, Oil on canvas, 55.3cm x 46cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C

When looking at this painting, there are not many elements of composition because this painting focuses on areas of colors. Being influenced by Impressionism, Matisse brought the bright color palettes to his painting. The colors he chose really attract the eyes of viewers. I see that the room is brimming with morning light and breezes from the oceans. In his paintings, Matisse expressed liberation in the color's conception. He did not paint based on the things he saw. In other words, Matisse only took the concept and the landscape he saw. Then he painted freely. There is logic for Matisse's use of colors, which suggests the pairs of contrasting colors. The complementary colors would function best and create intensity when they are put next to each other. Matisse used dark turquoise and opal purple for the wall, and then he repeated the same colors but with lighter tones for the landscape that is further away from the viewers. The colors were placed alternatively as artist

painted pink for the waves with blue boats on top and the sky is a mixture of pastel pink and turquoise blue. He also put the deep red blossom on the dark green leaves and this is repeated when Matisse painted the masts of the boats with red and green. The repetition of colors somehow creates a depth for the painting.

I like the way the artists broke the rules in art as well as in nature, which is shown by the use of colors. I can feel the intensity of the paintings. Artists focus on using primary colors such as blue, red or green. In the painting, Matisse used bold borders to enhance and emphasize the value or intensity of the contrasting areas of colors. Normally, when I border an object with black lines that object may look very stiff but in the Fauvism paintings, the artists made it so ingeniously. I can see that the artists "shook off" all the neat lines or realistic objects. Instead, the artist emphasized the artwork by using contrasting colors with different values and use repetition of pairs of colors. I think the artwork is very creative since it was created originally by Matisse with his own impression of the things he saw and his own unique emotion.

Cubism

Cubism is an art movement created principally by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris from 1907 to 1914. The Cubist art tended to emphasize the flat and two-dimensional surface of a picture. Artists also seemed to ignore the compositions of the paintings and tended to make the paintings look like decorations. Cubist painters also rejected the traditional art styles and time-consuming techniques that were used by the artists of the previous movements such as "Impasto" and "pointillism." Cubist artists did not bring the objects from nature to their paintings. Also, cubist paintings were likely to have a lot of segments such as broken images. The typical objects drawn in

Cubist paintings are letters, instruments, and human figures. The Cubist paintings are considered to provoke and stimulate the curiosity in every person. There are two types of the Cubism movement. They are Analytic Cubism and Synthetic Cubism. The period from 1910 to 1912 was considered to be the Analytical Cubism. Paintings seemed to have simplified forms. Artists used right angles and straight lines commonly. The colors used were also very simple. In addition, artists used monochromatic color scheme (hues of tan, brown, grey or blue...), which makes the paintings look like sketches with pencil.



"Girl with a mandolin" (Analytical Cubism), Pablo Picasso, 1910, Oil on canvas, 100.3cm x 73.6cm, Gallery of Modern Art, New York City, USA

In the Synthetic Cubism movement, the composition of a painting consists of many objects overlapping on each other. Paintings in synthetic period have a lot of colors and they look very garish. In contrast to the analytical period, the objects in synthetic period are broken into many pieces and the pieces of an object don't necessarily need to be near each other. Pieces of a thing can be settled next to pieces of other things leading to a variety of forms and shapes in the painting and each viewer may have different perspectives toward the artwork. Therefore, the collage method is introduced to the public. Georges Braque invented the collage method; it is actually a way that artists

used to make the surface of their paintings richer and more interesting by adding actual textures. The materials used were usually newspapers, pieces of wallpaper or plastic.

When talking about Cubism movement, people will immediately think of Picasso and his glaring paintings. Born in October 1881 as a Spanish painter, Pablo Picasso was one of the most influential and essential artists in modern art. Picasso became a representative for Cubism because of his applying the methods and techniques learnt from the other artists. In 1907, Picasso was in difficulty in finding materials for creating artwork. Picasso learnt and was inspired a lot from the Japanese wood paintings, impressionism (with Monet), post-impressionism (with Van Gogh) and even the African art. Picasso really helped to open a new era for modern art and we may assume that if we hadn't had Picasso, we may not have our modern art.



"Mandolin and guitar", Pablo Picasso , 1924, Oil and Canvas,
140.7cm x 200.3cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

This painting of Picasso is considered to be in the synthetic period (later Cubism). This painting generally looks very colorful and abstract. Genuinely, there is nothing to do with traditional styles or

law of distance or even the emotions because paintings of Picasso were considered to be intellectual rather than descriptive and emotional. After looking at the title and the painting, I can say that this is a still life painting with a mandolin and a guitar above a table. But as we try to connect the background to the main objects, we can see there is a big face – eyes, nose and mouth. Picasso created the eyes by settling the mandolin in the left and the guitar in the right. The rest of the face has various different shapes colliding together to form the nose, the mouth and the ears. This painting was produced by successfully applying the collage method and I can see that there are a lot of textures and mediums in this painting but Picasso was so ingenious in blurring the connection between the objects. In addition, the colors used by Picasso were also very sophisticated. Being influenced by the Fauvism period, Picasso tended to use bright and complementary colors. However, the colors in Picasso's painting do not look harsh or intense but very harmonious and comfortable.

The cubism period was the one that breaks the rules most. Artists could break the objects into many pieces and place them at different places. Many small objects would together form a unique thing as we can see the artwork "Mandolin and guitar" by Picasso. Paintings look more chaotic and it provokes the curiosity in viewers. I think Art changed largely and it changed my mind. Contemplating a cubist painting is now a game. Everyone would have a different opinion about what he or she sees and no one has the same answers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, researching about my question: **"to what extent did the artists create an evolution in visual art through four typical art movements: Impressionism, Post-impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism?"** I now know that the change in art wasn't like any random changes about interests in everyone mind. Instead, the change in art was a real battle of perspectives and thoughts. From the late 19th century, Monet started to expose himself to nature rather than staying studio to study and draw an object. The changes were clearly shown through the paintings. The "Impression, sunrise" by Monet was the most clear example to show those changes. Monet used wider and more various color palette rather than using bold colors than did the artists in Renaissance period. In the Post-Impressionism, artists softened the objects they drew. Many techniques were used to thicken the texture of the paintings and "Starry night" by Van Gogh was a great example whereas the artist used impasto technique to create various layers of colors. Also, in post-impressionism, colors became as on of the main elements. Artists started to use complementary colors to emphasize the objects. From the Fauvism, objects depicted by artists are simpler and a bit squiggly. However, the fauvist paintings really draw the attention of the viewers because they have pairs of contrasting colors such as pink and turquoise, red and green. In addition, accuracy of colors and characteristics of objects wasn't a matter anymore. Artist can use any colors to apply on an object and that's why fauvist paintings are so impressive. In cubism, paintings become simpler in art side but become more complicated in psychology side as they trick the way everyone contemplates them. I think that an evolution in art occurred.

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