

Exploring The Impressionist Style: The Language of Manet's Two-Dimensional Planar Paintings as An Example

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Abstract. With the development and progress of the 19th century in culture, science, and technology, the Industrial Revolution, and other aspects, Paris, France, was undoubtedly pushed to the focus of art development. This article takes the 18th and early 19th-century Impressionist paintings from being denied and not accepted to finally establishing their position in the whole world as the research background. Taking the flatness characteristic in Manet's works as the starting point, through the study of Manet's paintings, it is found that he was deeply influenced by photography, Spanish painting style, Japanese ukiyo-e prints, and so on, and gradually discovered and perfected his own personal style. The specific analysis method is used to analyze and feel Manet's two-dimensional planar style of composition and the technique of flat painting in his works. Eventually, it was concluded that he liberated his painting from the traditional constraints of pursuing three-dimensional space since the Renaissance, and took a crucial step towards two-dimensional planar creation, which not only influenced the trend of art in the same period but also led the way forward to modern art.

Keywords: Manet; flatness; painting style; impressionism.

1. Introduction

The term Impressionism was initially used to describe a particular type of painting, drawing, or image manipulation [1]. Under the rapid development of the economic and social structure of capitalism, people's artistic aesthetic orientation also changed considerably. Subjects such as natural people and life paintings gradually entered the art market of the time. Life scenes and portraits of ordinary people as the subject matter and the almost flat paint two-dimensional painting method of the classical dogmatism at that time had a great impact, but also for the subsequent development of diversified art to lay the foundation for a precedent [1].

With the development and progress of the 19th century in culture, science, and technology, the Industrial Revolution, and other aspects, Paris, France, was undoubtedly pushed to the focus of art development [2]. Among the many art schools born here, impressionist painting has different degrees of inspiration and influence on modern art and painting. Its artistic expression, conception, and discovery of colors have made a great contribution to the development of the whole history of art. Impressionist painting is a summary of early traditional concepts and intentions and is closely related to tradition. As the leading figure of Impressionism, Manet undoubtedly played a leading role in this revolution, so it is of practical and theoretical significance to study and analyze the painting language of Manet, the representative figure of Impressionism.

Case study method, this paper analyses the works of Manet, the representative painter of Impressionism, and discusses in detail the specific presentation of the flat two-dimensional painting language in Manet's works, which is as detailed as the analysis of the composition and the characteristics of the brushstrokes. Literature research method, collection, collation, through the library, Google Scholar to collect relevant literature, Manet's related research materials for the integration of collection.

The research content of this paper includes the influence of photography, Japanese printmaking, and Spanish painting on Manet's painting language, the specific display of two-dimensional plane painting language in Manet's works, and Manet's influence on the art of the time and the later period. With the background of history, it elaborates on the reasons for the formation of Manet's painting

style, lists Manet's representative works in turn, and analyses in depth the unique two-dimensional plane painting language shown in his paintings.

2. Formation of Manet's Flat Style

2.1. The Influence of Photography on Painting Style

In the 19th century, with the continuous development and improvement of photography technology and its superiority, some painters changed from opposing photography to accepting it, and it became a favorable helper for painters to a certain extent. Impressionist painting, as a very important school of painting in 19th-century Europe, was also a turning point, to a certain extent, to hedge against mainstream society and fight against dogmatic classicism. Impressionism in the flood of photographic technology to hone the techniques of light and color, but also inspired by the composition and angle, impressionist painters found a lot of momentary accidental interesting angles, thus changing the classical painting favored a complete scene of the composition of the way, they can arbitrarily cut the picture and select any objective scene or fragment as the depiction of the object, and strive for incomplete effect some works look like Some of their works look like a photo taken in a scene of life, which to a certain extent is also influenced and inspired by the photography technology. Edouard Manet, as one of the representative figures of Impressionist painters, besides painting, he also loved photography and was a good amateur photographer and published photography books, he advocated that artists need not give up photography. The shadow of photography can be observed in many of his unique masterpieces. Manet found in photography a strong contrast between reality and reality that was invisible to the naked eye, which was often determined by the exposure, and it is not difficult to find out that the contrast between reality and reality is very strong in his works, the portrait is in the foreground of the picture, while the background is intentionally defocused, and at the same time, the camera also has the effect of flattening the space, and all these characteristics have become the revelation of his transformation to the language of planar painting [3]. In addition to its influence on Manet's compositional and spatial flatness, photography also influenced the light and shadow in some of his works, as he used highly contrasting colors in his treatment of portraits and some of the backgrounds, with the figures in the foreground usually bright and the distant scenes relatively dark. At the same time, he did not even go too far in the excess of bright colors and dark parts of the halo and excessive, this bold approach is also inseparable from the early photographic technology, due to the lack of quality of early camera lenses and development technology, resulting in a lack of rich shadows and levels of photographs in the imaging, the black and white contrast component is larger [4]. Therefore, the early photography technology was not perfect to a certain extent, which influenced a group of painters who used photographs as a reference for their creations.

2.2. Influence of Japanese Printmaking on Painting Style

Japanese prints came to Paris in 1851 when the first World Expo was held in Paris, France [5]. Japanese arts and crafts and "Japanese style" were popular in the whole of Western Europe at that time, which was in a sense a continuation of the "Chinese style" in the 18th century, i.e., the aesthetics of exotic flavor. In a sense, it was a continuation of the "Chinese style" of the 18th century, which linked an exotic aesthetic interest to a reverence for the wisdom and philosophy of the Far East, as well as that of Islam and the Near East. The Japanese style represents an active and historical interest in ancient or distant art forms [1]. Manet learned from his study of Japanese prints to simplify space, omit continuity of perspective, present rhythmic line structures, the technique of plein air painting, and make the picture harmonious and decorative; the backgrounds are not large or even monochromatic, but the layout of the work is able to bring out the momentum of the figures and the oppressive outlines. oppressive silhouette. Manet does not pursue volume like classicism but uses less excess and bright tones to show not flat, his study of Japanese prints is extremely important to 19th-century art as well as the development of modern art, and he influenced many artists of

impressionism, post-impressionism, and modernity, and painted for the European art to carry on the past and the future.

2.3. The Influence of Spanish Painting Style on Painting Style

From Manet's early works can be seen that he likes heavy colors and dark backgrounds, which reminds people of 17th-century Spanish art, this fashion trend originated from Napoleon III's wife, Empress Eugenie a Spanish countess, she is committed to the implementation of Spanish dance, music and fashion. Manet was a great admirer of the Spanish masters of painting, Velázquez, and Goya, who published a series of prints in 1859 that captivated Manet. The strong contrasts of light and dark in Goya's works helped Manet to omit the excesses of his colors, and Manet even made a special effort to copy the 16th and 17th-century works of art in order to master their techniques [1]. The study of Velázquez and Goya enabled Manet to learn how to express himself naturally, reduce the use of intermediate colors, distribute black and white and grey, and vary the space, as well as simplify and condense the picture. At the same time, Paris was changing rapidly, and Manet himself was extremely sensitive to this trend, so he wandered around Paris, trying to explore the city's best-kept secrets, which turned him into a wanderer, observing the world's rapid changes with great concentration, but at heart, he was free from self-complacency, which made the flatness of his paintings develop in depth.

3. The Specific Manifestation of the Characteristics of Flatness

3.1. Two-Dimensional Composition

Since the Renaissance, artists have strictly followed the principle of creating a sense of depth and visual deception in three-dimensional space on a flat canvas, but Impressionist paintings are trying their best to break through this tradition. Formally, Impressionist painting, which had absorbed many Oriental peoples such as Japanese prints, paid particular attention to formal beauty: unusual perspectives, cropping of the figures, fleeting moments, and brightly colored decorations.



Fig. 1 Olympia [5]

Because Manet was influenced by this Oriental style, after *Lunch on the Grass*, Manet released a more controversial painting --*Olympia* (Figure 1), a life-size nude figure exhibited at the Salon in 1865, was borrowed from Titian's masterpiece *Venus de Urbino*. There is a wide gulf between the curtains, the black servant and the cat, and the woman is shown with a modern, collected calm and detachment, moving casually and even slightly vulgarly, with Manet using a lot of light colors and no warm tones [5]. The painting does not seem to have any deep sense of space and hierarchy, but the black and white composition of the picture looks intriguing with a large number of light and dark colors contrasting to form a coherent composition of the picture, and the use of almost flat painting techniques and outlining the contours of the figures, instead, to form a kind of sculpture-like solidity. The vividness and individuality of *Olympia* gave it an extremely realistic and authentic feel, so it caused a sensation, which is an influential work of Manet.

3.2. The Use of Plein Air

Another work, the Balcony (Figure 2), reveals a deeper sense of serenity, a greater sense of existential ritual, and a more precise use of spatial values. The figures in the painting lack communication and are distant from each other, their eyes are dull and do not show any emotion. This painting shows Manet's exploration of the pairing of light and darkness in the glare of the outdoors and the hidden interior of the house under the exterior light painting, the lady on the right side of the picture has a flat face and a blurred nose, while the real human face under the glare of the light is rendered in this way as if it were a real person located in front of the eyes, however, the parapets of the balcony will take the viewer away from the reality of the painting and from the virtual one.



Fig. 2 The Balcony and the virtual [6]

For Manet, it is not the three-dimensionality and completeness of the figure that is important, but rather the structure, and at the same time the decorative stripes, the shutters, and the balcony railings, which separate us from the person in the painting, that are of great importance [6]. As can be seen in Portrait of Zora, the flat colors interspersed with grocery store-like poster decorations are just like what Japanese printmakers do when dealing with the background of a picture.

4. Impact of Flat Characteristics

4.1. Influence on Contemporaneous Art

In the late 1860s, Manet became the most respected artist. At that time, people already regarded Manet as the leader of a new school called the Batignolles School [1]. Impressionism went from being unaccepted to being questioned to being established in the art world around the world, making an impact and being accepted by the public in both Europe and North America [7]. More and more painters accepted Manet, Monet, Degas, and other painters in the 1860s developed the structure and form of the treatment of the method, Manet said he was not Impressionism, in fact, he really was not the true meaning of the Impressionist painters, but with his own works, charisma and influence a number of excellent Impressionist painters such as Degas, Monet, Renoir and so on. As the leader and pioneer of the Impressionists, Manet "rebelled" and was not satisfied with the dogmatic classical painting, he stood at the forefront of public opinion and insisted on his own "painting what I see", which influenced and inspired the Impressionist painters to explore and discover their own painting language [8]. This enabled them to observe the most realistic scenes, lights, and colors in a natural environment. Degas also said of Manet: "He is greater than we thought." [5].

4.2. Influence on Later Art

Whether he is the founder of modern art still has many different evaluations in the academic world, for "founder" he is more like a "pioneer". Not only in terms of new ideas, but also because he himself was in the system of the French Salon, and this influence and encouragement came from the inside out [9]. Manet's artistic insights and paintings themselves have a "rebellious" meaning, from the subject matter to the form of a breakthrough in the traditional rules of painting, from the brushstrokes, and three-dimensional perspective for the service of the subject matter of the paintings gradually over the state of having a sense of self-independence. In addition, Manet's works pay great attention to female individuals, and the women in his paintings are no longer models with pretentious postures, but any female figures that can be found everywhere in life, with reckless postures and transcendent expressions, as if they are no longer paintings but themselves [10]. These characteristics have a tendency to challenge the traditional concepts that are so important in modern art, and which were unmatched by anyone else in that era.

5. Conclusion

Under the influence and study of photography, Japanese printmaking, and Spanish painting, Manet gradually formed and perfected his own signature flat two-dimensional painting language style, and led the development of painting in the direction of two-dimensional vision, pioneering the use of simplified, open-ended compositions and flexible brushwork, and discovering the dependence of color and light, thus establishing an unprecedented range of pure colors, bright colors, and vibrancy, as well as finding new combinations of uses. method, making the three-dimensional space and visual image organically combined. This not only overturned the traditional academy but also changed the stereotypical way of viewing paintings. Since the establishment of Impressionism in the world, more and more people think that Impressionist painting is a subjective expression of the real experience of the surrounding world. Unlike their contemporaries or later generations, they did not like to show paintings of misery and pain but only cared about painting and the pleasure it brought to life, which was very much in line with the temperament and spiritual beliefs of the Impressionists. These works maintain a certain degree of unity between the inner and the outer, which makes these works of art have a long-lasting vitality and infectious force.

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