

Explore the Influence of Impressionism on Post-Impressionism: Taking Van Gogh's Works as an Example

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Abstract. Impressionism is a pivotal movement in the history of Western art. It revolutionizes the traditional approach to Western painting. This artistic movement emphasized the spontaneous, direct, and visual representation of natural light and its effect on colors, shapes, and textures. Impressionism is a special kind of non-traditional art without a doubt. Vincent van Gogh is one of the most famous impressionist artists. He has many special characteristics: swirl-like brushstrokes, painting themes that are full of compassion and suffering consciousness, and bold and exaggerated colors. Van Gogh's works often express different emotions through strong contrast and bright colors. His works are very distinctive and full of beauty. He is also one of the most representative impressionist artists. This article will use the survey method and document retrieval method to discover the specialties of impressionism works through Van Gogh's paintings. After the discovery, this article has found three main specialties of impressionism: colors, unrealistic descriptions, and nature elements. In conclusion, this article has discovered why impressionist artworks are so special and so 'impressive' through the research.

Keywords: Western Art, painting, impressionism, Van Gogh.

1. Introduction

This study focuses on an important phenomenon in art history: impressionism. This study is of great significance to study Western art style in the 19th century. This study mainly focuses on the specialties of impressionism through Van Gogh's works [1]. The literature analysis method was used to search and read relevant materials and literature. The advantage of this method is that it can analyze the existing research on Impressionism, and find the special details of Van Gogh's paintings, which is conducive to the progress of research. The ultimate research objective of this study is to find the characteristics of Impressionism. and to achieve this goal, the study used a survey method and document retrieval method to support the theory part and used an observation method to find the details of Van Gogh's works.

2. Impressionism

Impressionism is a kind of phenomenon that existed in the late 20th century. It is a very new thought that is entirely different from the kinds of art in the past. The artworks of impressionism are innovative, colorful, and emotional. Some of the works even disrupt people's traditional impression of painting during that time. The center of Western art in the 19th century was in France, and the dominant official academy still dominated the French art scene. In the second half of the 19th century, young painters in the French painting industry opposed the conventional approach of official academic art. Due to their innovative works not being exhibited in official salons, they strongly opposed the official censorship system and demanded artistic innovation and creative freedom. They often gathered at the Galois café in Paris to freely exchange their views on art and seek the path of artistic innovation together. After that, the artists held the "Lost Salon Exhibition" in 1863 together, which was fiercely attacked by academic classicism. The young painters did not lose their passion for innovation, and they worked hard jointly for 10 years. On March 25, 1874, the group of artists held a shocking exhibition which was called "The Society of Unknown Artists, Oil Painters, Sculptors, and Printmakers" in the bustling area of Paris. A group of young French painters including Claude Monet,

Pierre Auguste Renoir, Camille Picasso, Alfred Sisley, and Edgar Degas participated in this exhibition. In the art exhibition, a landscape painting done by Monet is exhibited, titled "*Impression: Sunrise*". A writer named Leroy published a short essay commenting on this exhibition, titled "*An Impressionist Exhibition*". Impressionism is named after this. In 1876, the second exhibition was held with the participation of 20 painters. This exhibition simply took the name "Impressionism" and was called the "Impressionism Exhibition" From then on, Impressionism entered the French, then expanded to Europe and influenced the world. The members later held 7 art exhibitions one after another, with the last one held in 1886. During this period, they continued to develop their styles. Many of the members of the group are now very famous. They are famous now not because they are in the same group of art creating, but because of their specific styles that are expressed in the pictures. Some shared specialties of impressionism works will be introduced.

2.1. Colors

The works of impressionism always give people a strong visual impact. The most important reason is because of their special colors. The colors are full of emotional expressiveness and life-like waves [1]. The colors of a picture give the whole scene a keynote and make the other elements full of special meanings and feelings. Impressionist artists are obsessed with pursuing light and shadow effects. They focus on capturing the changes and effects of what light sources make in nature. They express the instantaneous changes and the flow of light through their clever use of color and the contrast between light and dark [2].

They also have very innovative applications of colors. Impressionist painters abandoned the traditional contrast and the stereotypical uses of color and tended to use bright, pure, and bright colors to depict natural scenery and objects, creating new color impressions [3].

Subtle changes are very common in their color too. Impressionist painters observed and depicted subtle changes in natural colors, conveying changes in light and magical beauty through color contrast. Impressionist painters intuitively convey emotions and atmosphere to viewers through the selections and applications of colors, making the picture full of vitality and dynamism [4]. Impressionist painters believed that all colors originate from light, and they replaced the early use of contrast between light and dark colors (black and brown) with the differences between a large variety of colors, making the picture brighter, lively, and pure. The use of relative color ratio is another characteristic that often appears in impressionism works. Impressionist painters use the complementary relationship between colorful light and pigments in color sketching to create rich color effects [5]. The last but the most important specialty is that they broke away from traditional art forms. Impressionist painters have detached themselves from their dependence on history and religion, shifting their focus to purely visual forms of perception, and the content and themes of their works have become less important. This is not only a change in their painting object, but also a change in their painting purpose.

2.2. Unrealistic Descriptions

One of the other specialties that influenced impressionist paintings is the peculiar describing styles. Impressionism is remembered by people because it breaks the intrinsic painting style at that time. Art before the 20th century was very accurate, and the artists were respectful of the appearance of the object itself even though they had some personal opinions and purposes. But artists of impressionism are very obsessed with their vision angle and they depict the objects they see with strong personal expressions. This makes the pictures not seem like objects in real life. Post-Impressionism is even more subjective in the paintings.

2.3. Nature

Impressionism painters like describing things in nature, because nature is beautiful and changeable. Another reason is that there is an important and big light source—the sun. At different times of the day, an artist can see many different views of one thing, and these are all given by nature. Many natural objects such as seas, grasses, and sky, are easy to depict. They have easy outlines, so

Impressionism artists can mix their emotions and the appearance of the real things they see much more easily. Natural things can also make people associate many things, and this is also important for impressionist artists to depict their special feelings and emotions in their paintings [6]. People are always emotional and respectful of nature.

3. Vincent Willem Van Gogh: A Genius Post-Impressionism Artist

Vincent Willem van Gogh, a Dutch post-impressionist painter, is one of the most important Post-Impressionism artists. His works are very typical for this kind of art and are easy for people to remember. He also has special brush strokes, and this makes his characteristics very clear and full of identification [7]. He was born on March 30, 1853, into a poor family in the southern Netherlands. Van Gogh's early life was full of challenges. He had tried many types of work in different fields. For instance, he had worked as a clerk, and a business agent, and even briefly served as a missionary in a mining area. Although his family and relatives did not support his passion for art, he still started painting in 1870s, and he started his art career by copying Jean-Francois Millet's works in 1880, he went to Paris where he met some Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist painters. After that, he was exposed to works of Japanese ukiyo-e, which greatly influenced his art style. He was very interested in Asian cultures, he even built a part of his garden with Japanese style. Some Asian elements are mentioned in some of his paintings. In 1886, Van Gogh moved to the small town of Arles in southern France and lived with another painter Paul Gauguin. However, due to conflicts of personality and ideas, their collaboration quickly failed. Van Gogh's mental health has always troubled him. He once shot himself due to a mental disorder at the age of only 37. Van Gogh's life is short, and tragical, but never uninteresting. He had painted over one thousand and six hundred pictures in his short sixteen-year art career. This number is shocking, and many of them are very vivid and described carefully. His works are known for their unique brushstrokes and colors, and his paintings are full of emotions, reflecting his inner joys and sorrows. His representative works include "Starry Nights", "Sunflower Grass", and "Crow Grass on the Wheat Field". Although Van Gogh hardly sold any works during his lifetime, his works gained widespread recognition and collection after his death, becoming one of the most important cornerstones of Western modern art [8].

4. One of His Masterpieces: The Bedroom

This bedroom painting is a very important piece of Van Gogh's works. The picture depicts some things in Van Gogh's inner world. He has mentioned this work several times and sketched its outline in his letters, and when Saint Remy was ill and was in a hospital, he also drew two similar paintings, one intended for Theo and the other for his mother. The prominent tranquility in this bedroom painting is linked to Van Gogh's unstable and tired mental state. In his letter to Will, the phrase "empty bedroom" indicates his loneliness and desire for companionship. The whole painting looks warm and peaceful, and the colors give people a soft feeling. His special brushstrokes make the picture very dreamy. This painting is depicted in a special vision angle, and this also gives the painting an "impressionism style". Van Gogh used a diagonal composition that connected the bed, the chairs, and the windows in a line, making the picture look stable and full of dynamic feelings. There is a natural landscape painting hanging on the wall at the head of the bed, and two rows of paintings are hung on the other wall connected to it: the lower row is a blurry and indistinguishable portrait and a landscape painting, and the upper row is two portraits. In the other two slightly altered portraits painted by Saint Remi, these two portraits also change: one depicts a self-portrait and a portrait of Lieutenant Miller of the Juav army—a pair of sexually charged characters, while the other depicts a more traditional pair of portraits - a self-portrait and a portrait of an unidentifiable young woman. However, her black bun reminds people of the woman who was focused on reading novels in a bookstore. When these two are combined, it can be said that they are a pair of modern characters in a decorated and peaceful space.

5. Van Gogh's Painting Style

Van Gogh's painting style is renowned for its unique use of colors. He is good at using bright colors and strong contrasts, making the picture a special type of style [9]. For example, in the famous painting "*Sunflowers*", Van Gogh used bright yellow and orange to make the picture full of energy, as if the sunflowers are blooming enthusiastically. His painting style is also remarkable for its unique form of expression. He broke the traditional rules and techniques of painting, expressing his emotions through free brushstrokes and vivid forms of expression. This form of expression gives his works a strong personality and unique beauty. In addition, Van Gogh's painting style is also known for its profound connotations. His works are not only depictions of nature and life, but also profound reflections on human nature, emotions, and philosophy. For example, in the work "*Starry Sky*", Van Gogh depicted the stars in the night sky with unique "circling" brushstrokes and dreamy colors, creating a picturesque and poetic atmosphere, while also expressing his reverence for the universe and life. Van Gogh's painting style had a profound impact. His works not only inspired countless artists and designers but also influenced people's understanding of art and life. Van Gogh's painting style tells that art is not only a manifestation of beauty but also a profound reflection of life and the world.

6. Influence of Impressionism on Van Gogh

Van Gogh's experimenting with forms and processes was another facet of his impressionist style. Impressionism places a strong emphasis on the moment captured by the artist, which greatly influenced Van Gogh's mode of expression. His use of thick oil pastels and distinctive brushstrokes creates vibrant brushstrokes and robust textures in his works. Experiments with this approach, as opposed to impressionist methods of depicting light and shadow through dots and splotches, gave Van Gogh's paintings a distinct surface texture and depth in the viewer's eyes.

Furthermore, Van Gogh's compositions clearly showed the impressionist influence. Impressionism places a strong emphasis on capturing a scene quickly so that viewers may experience time and how things change in life. In some of his paintings, such as the perspective effect of the bed in "*The Bedroom*" and the exaggerated form of the furniture, Van Gogh employed a distinctive perspective and composition. This experimental nature of composition is in line with impressionism's pursuit of novel and personalized expression, which makes Van Gogh's works present distinct characteristics in form from traditional paintings.

7. Conclusion

The research findings of this study are that the specialties of impressionism artworks are colors, unrealistic descriptions, and nature elements. This further leads to the conclusion that impressionism of the reason why impressionism is a special phenomenon in 19th century. This study provides valuable reference significance for future research in this direction, mainly affecting the degree of importance people attach to impressionism in Western art. Future research should focus more on the direction of searching deeper into impressionism works and search for in-depth explorations.

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