

## Post-impressionism: implicit salute towards its predecessors

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**Abstract.** Post-impressionism, as one of the world's most popular schools of art, was focused mostly on its influence on its descendants. However, this paper examines the undiscovered aspect of post-impressionism by giving a perspective on its relations with its predecessors rather than its influence on its successors. It studies the forms and flows of post-impressionist paintings. Comparisons, investigations, and observations were made during the period. It is also reviewed in the thesis about the previous articles on comparisons between post-impressionism and its contemporaries as ukiyo-e paintings. Between post-impressionism and its ensuing schools, such as the art nouveau, these comparisons are made to illustrate the influence. The investigation pointed out that there have always been relationships and similarities between post-impressionism and its predecessors, either implicit or explicit ones. The work could endorse further studies on post-impressionism and break the common sense on post-impressionism that it only had an impact on its posts and was not influenced much by its predecessors.

**Keywords:** Cubists, Post-impressionism, Movement in Art.

### 1. Introduction

In the world of art today, post-impressionism is largely regarded as a cornerstone of modern art. It is well known for challenging the previous art styles and establishing a new path for the impressionists. Post-impressionists are indeed founders of modern art styles [1]. They are considered fighters who fight for the liberty of art by breaking down the orthodox cognition of what paintings should be like. Unlike many other schools, post-impressionism is still alive and active today. The ensuing post-impressionism-influenced schools were the Pre-Raphaelite movement, e.g., the art nouveau (impact of the post-impressionism), the cubist (Cubists and Post-impressionism). Those artists, unlike others, who saw no authority but genuineness in subjects, who saw no frontier in ways of expression, are the protruding patron saints of the truth and the sublime [2]. The new philosophy, philosophy of primitive-ology and intuition creation, coincides with the later movement in art [2]. Great 20th century artists like Matisse, and Picasso, are deeply influenced by the abstractness and intuitive expressionistic painting style invoked by the post-impressionists. In the neoclassicism period artists like Jacques Louis David blend political propaganda with art. Art, not only representing status, hierarchy, and personal taste, had its new function as a disseminating weapon. What is so revolutionary about the post-impressionists? The techniques they use are common: impasto is from Baroque, their treatment of light is also invoked from Baroque, their will to add personal feelings to art resembled Romanticism and Neoclassicism, also the ambiguity that derived from Romanticism. The post-impressionism bodies were identical in many ways. They lack the beautiful curves of the muscles. Instead, they focus more on the approximate curve line of people, which depicted the outline of a person. Just like Ingres, a well-known artist in the neoclassicism style, who advocated drawing a body that suits the painting other than an ideal body, the post-impressionists tended to draw figures that matched the painting. Post-impressionism was indeed revolutionary, but it was revolutionary not because of creating new physical techniques, it was entitled revolutionary due to following its philosophy on art. Unlike the impressionists, the post-impressionists tended to create more than just a landscape or a genre, they were willing to render something sublime. Similar to history paintings, post-impressionism paintings were made to tell the world something through opuses. But the post-

impressionists did not completely change art, not even with their majestic philosophy, they are still 'conservative' to some extent.

The conservativeness of post-impressionism is not often observed in art history [3]. It is the revolutionary aspect of it that is only seen. Post-impressionism, with no doubt, had a massive influence on its subsequent schools, but post-impressionism itself should also be influenced by something before it. From the appearance of post-impressionism, its affinity with impressionism and ukiyo-e paintings is already studied by many. Ukiyo-e, the strong oriental form of art, had a tremendous and direct impact on the impressionists and post-impressionists [4]. It affected European art in appearances, forms, and subjects [5]. Besides ukiyo-e and Impressionism, not many voices suggest or suggested signs of similarity or influence is present between post-impressionism and its previous schools. But it could not be assumed that post-impressionism paintings rendered no solute, either implicit or explicit ones, towards their predecessors, only because no counter statements are made.

Currently, post-impressionism's appearance in the world is mainly a revolutionary school of art. To some extent, by using media and techniques of its precursors, post-impressionism was a style seeking a definition for art. Many styles of art were seeking true art, especially after post-impressionism thrived. Before post-impressionism, when art creation mainly depended on patrons, true art was seldom a topic. The true definition of art might come from antiquity when anatomies were seriously treated by artists. Comparing antiquity with post-impressionism, both of them found the orders of curves and colors in making art.

## **2. the impressionism and the post-impressionism**

### **2.1 comparisons between the schools**

Post-impressionism was more likely to be a refined combination of former techniques and a philosophy that pursues true art. Some comparisons would be made to prove the above suggestion. Almost all techniques and subjects of post-impressionism were not new. The technique Impasto was a concept that thrived in the Baroque, and post-impressionism levitated it to a higher level up to the philosophy of art. Impasto was common in Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cezanne's paintings, it was a mark of post-impressionism [6]. The outlining manifestation of art was inspired by the ukiyo-e paintings from Japan. The strong contrasting colors in post-impressionism paintings were also often used by its predecessors, romanticism, and realism. Post-impressionism's subject choices were mostly genre painting. During the neo-classicism phase, contemporary paintings dominated subject choices instead of historical paintings which were much more honored at that time. The emphasis on contemporaries since the neoclassicism implicitly influenced its ensuing schools to also choose contemporary subjects, or genres, because neo-classicism, as a socially recognized and exclusive school, levitated contemporary subjects to a level much higher than before.

Post-impressionism is considered revolutionary mostly because of its philosophy, as mentioned before. Patrons, who were mostly bourgeois, were essential to European art development. This group of people did not exist as an influential factor when post-impressionism appeared. Van Gogh and his brother Theo form a relationship close to patron and painter, but Theo did not influence Van Gogh's painting subject and style a lot, all he did was support Van Gogh. Many other post-impressionists, such as Paul Gauguin and Paul Cézanne, did not have an assured income source when they are painters. Art to them was more of faith and belief or a way to express their opinions, rather than just an artifact to amuse the rich; their art was not made for the rich, but kindred spirits.

Is there another period in art history that which patronage did not influence art expression too much? If patronage did not influence art too much, then artists should be painting their faith and beliefs. The period before and also including antiquity was a period when art was not influenced too much by patronage. During antiquity, the statue was the most popular form of art expression. Beautiful curves of humans, postures called contrapposto, and sublime and heroic topics of mortality were commonly found in antique arts. This was to emphasize the might and power of gods and

goddesses. The artworks were given to gods, and the artists who created the works, Phidias for example, were the man who served god. The pieces were created not to amuse the rich but to revere the gods. Consequently, the works were though commissioned by monarchs, and patronage did not influence the works a lot [5]. Artists, who have a better taste in the beauty of the human body than patrons, were more likely not to be interrupted when creating because no one could create a better-looking god than those specialists. The antiques indicated the people's belief in gods and the post-impressionism expressed the artists' philosophy of pursuing true art. Both schools have their aims, either for an ideal body that stood for the sublime or for the revival of true art.

## 2.2 comparisons between artists

Gauguin's interest in religion in the Tahiti series of paintings and the narrative clues in this painting lead his paintings to philosophical questions about the meaning of life, which is in line with the medieval times, especially in renaissance art [6]. In this painting, the mysterious idol at the back of the picture has a strong religious connotation. The artist himself said that this is "a rhythmic and mysterious idol with open arms, pointing out the maze of life in the future." Except for this painting in addition, in Gauguin's series of Tahitian works, the gods and goddesses in primitive religions imagined by mysterious icons with strong Buddhist meaning appeared many times. In the body posture and style of these icons, it is obvious that Buddhist art had an important inspiration and influence on Gauguin's creation like "Day of the gods" and "Delectable Waters". The icons in these two works are painted in the background by the artist as in "where do we come from? what are we? where are we going? " They all stand in the background, watching the characters, arms raised in strange postures, feet standing out, and their skins are brown and blue, full of weirdness and mystery. These icons were developed from Gauguin's own early engraving, the Statue with Shells, thus creating a fictional image of the patron saint of Tahiti [7]. The gesture of opening the arms is derived from the posture of the open hands of Lord Shiva in Indian Buddhism. With the Asian physique and the mysterious smile of an Apsara dancer, she is the " goddess of the water," the demigod of Buddhist mythology, who once appeared in a bas-relief at Borobudur. In the sculpture "Statue with Shells", the influence of Indian Buddhism can also be seen from the meditation posture, gestures, and lotus throne of the statue. As symbols of Tahitian religious culture, these icons are closely related to the mystery exuded in Gauguin's paintings.

Gauguin's integration of Buddhist elements into the icons of Tahiti is closely related to the "East Asian fever" in Europe in the 19th century against Western civilization and his pursuit of pure and primitive ideas [8]. As a civilized man who grew up in European society, Gauguin chose to absorb the artistic images of Buddhist statues into the fictional icons he created in the Christian cultural environment, rather than the familiar Christian icons has a complex answer. In addition to assimilating the Tahitian natives in terms of the political system and social life, the French colonialist forces also spread Christian culture in religious beliefs. What Gauguin found Tahiti was an increasingly French nation. When he disembarked, he encountered an ugly shantytown crowded with Europeans - the very place he was trying to escape. In religion, social customs, and even dress, the locals have been "civilized" by the French. Many of these myths, and many ancient religious beliefs are no longer practiced or even remembered. The introduction of Christianity helped to eradicate indigenous beliefs to the point that indigenous religions were no longer recognized in the shallowest sense. It can be seen that Tahiti is not exactly the "primitive paradise" that Gauguin aspires to, but has become a society gradually corrupted by French culture, which is different from the primitive and wild civilization that Gauguin pursued. It can be seen from this that Christianity, as an important part of Western European society, represents a civilized society that is contradictory to the primitive pure society. Gauguin was writing to the Swedish playwright Stirling Civilization makes me miserable, barbarism makes me youthful. " He hopes to cultivate the most primitive and brutal side of his art, the indifference, and hypocrisy of European civilization made Gauguin disgusted. In Gauguin's heart, Tahiti is a paradise away from the hustle and bustle of the world and civilized society, and it is also his spiritual refuge. And his fictional Tahiti icon is the patron saint of Tahiti, and

naturally, it should be an ancient religious icon that is opposed to European civilization. Therefore, Gauguin would not choose to use the shape of Christian icons representing the Western Ming Dynasty to create icons. Compared with Christianity, Buddhism is more unfamiliar to Gauguin, and the posture and shape of Buddhist statues are easier to express mysterious and primitive feelings. The importance of mystery, primitiveness, and wildness to Gauguin is self-evident. The Buddhist statue elements in the icons create a primitive and wild mysterious atmosphere for Gauguin's paintings. Therefore, the shapes, postures, and images in the sculptures of Eastern Buddhist art have become the elements used by Gauguin to create a mysterious and primitive religious atmosphere in the pictures, suggesting the exploration and understanding of the essence of life and the pursuit of a state of simplicity and innocence.

### 3. The painting of Gauguin

Gauguin's painting also reveals the narrative and openness of the painting through its horizontal composition, a standard Renaissance fresco architecture [9]. Through the background, the picture spreads to both sides in a radioactive manner, one passing through the world before birth and the other leading to the world after death. Each group of characters in this painting appears to be immersed in its world and scattered throughout the painting. It is worth noting that the two indigenous girls on the right side of the picture are watching the outside of the picture, and they seem to have some connection with the outside world. Through this method of painting and if read in the order of viewing indicated by the painter, it can be seen that the painter seems to want to establish some kind of connection with the audience, and to introduce the audience into the world of the painting, continue to think about the question posed in the title "where do we come from? what are we? where are we going?"

Like Gauguin's painting, Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper uses a horizontal composition and presents a narrative open space. There are Jesus and his twelve disciples, all arranged horizontally along with the dining table. Like Gauguin, the painter also grouped such figures in a potential grouping of scenes to convey the theme. The picture depicts Jesus and his disciples in a total of 13 People, Jesus is in the center of the picture, there are six people on the left and right sides of Jesus, the picture divides the twelve disciples into four groups, each group of three people. The characters in each group have different moods, rich in change. Left of the screen is a group of characters 3 people, Bartholomeus, Jacobus, Andreis. Andreis raised his hands in front of his chest and waved his palms forward. head and eyes toward Jesus, It seems to say "absolutely impossible". Bartholomew and James both looked at Jesus, Bartholomew spread his hands on the dining table, head forward. The second group of characters is Judas, Simon Peter, and John. Judas leaned forward with his right arm bent on the dining table and his right hand on the dining table. On the table, in a panic, he accidentally knocked over the salt shaker, and in his left hand, he held the money for selling Jesus Bag, nervous expression, flustered. John bowed his head down Jesus asked about the situation on the shoulders of Simon Peter. On the right side of the screen is the third group of characters Thomas, Jacobus Zebedaei and Philippus. Thomas pointed to God and swore to God. Jacobus Zebedaei, the hands were spread out to show that there was no chance of betrayal, and Philip pointed his finger at himself to show his innocence. The group on the far right is Matthew), Simon of Zealots, Simon Cananeus and Tatius, From their posture and gestures, it can be seen that the three are arguing fiercely. In Gauguin's painting, the figure is divided into three parts, which correspond to the three sentences in the title one by one, corresponding to the three stages of life, childhood, adulthood and old age [9]. Jesus and the family of saints are at the forefront of the picture. The house structure and landscape behind them, the dark door openings on both sides, and the pattern on the ceiling create a vertical sense of the depth of field. Furthermore, at the end of the house, three open windows break up the originally enclosed space. Make the audience feel that the room extends naturally with the picture. In addition, Leonardo da Vinci painted the upper part of the canteen wall, so that the horizontal line is exactly in line with the composition of the figures and tables in the painting. As a result, the audience who entered the

cafeteria had a visual and psychological illusion, as if they had also participated in the evening meal held by Jesus and the disciples.

Leonardo da Vinci's work also shows the mystery of religion and the exploration of the spiritual level of human nature. In this painting, Jesus and his disciples are not only messengers of God but have various human characteristics and emotions, such as anger, sadness and panic. Among them are scenes of exposing traitors, which also symbolize the establishment of the Eucharist. Narratively, it signifies Judas' betrayal of Christ, and symbolically, it signifies that Christ instituted the Eucharist. The moment when Jesus speaks of the traitor's betrayal, it manifests itself at the same time as Christ's crucifixion and the ordinance of sacrifice. Christ stretched out his hands to the bread and wine, showing that it was about the Lord's Supper, that he knew the sacrifice was coming, and that he was willing to accept God's will with love and obedience. While highlighting religious themes, the paintings also show the conflict between good and evil, light and darkness in human nature. Leonardo da Vinci used Christian stories to show the humanity of everyone. To interpret this sacred religious ceremony as a human tragedy. At the same time, it also has historical reality, religious mystery, emotional tragic color, and philosophical symbolism. In this regard, Gauguin is very similar [10].

Different from the openness and narrative nature of Gauguin and Picasso's paintings, Matisse deliberately showed the closeness of this painting. In this painting, five figures join hands to form a closed loop of energy. None of the five characters had direct eye contact with the audience, even the bodies were facing the audience at numbers two and three. The painter deliberately made their bodies stand out and blurred the expressions or emotions of the characters, which made it seem that they were only focusing on their dance, and did not want to connect with the world outside the painting. At the same time, the five figures form a circle, their arms transmit energy like curved waves, directing the flow of vision, through the interlocking arms, this flow circulates among the five people, and the energy flows between them spread. Through this method of painting, the viewer seems to be isolated from the painting. Unlike Gauguin who invites the viewer to contemplate the meaning of life, Matisse does not invite the viewer to dance with the characters in the painting.

#### 4. Conclusions

Post-impressionism, as a style consisting of unique interpretations of art, had influenced the ensuing art styles massively. Beyond most people's thoughts, post-impressionism resembled many of the previous styles, either in techniques or in philosophies and interpretations of art. This article presented a different perspective on post-impressionism by making comparisons with the pre-post-impressionisms. It was pointed out that post-impressionism had quite similarities between itself and its predecessors, in techniques, rendering formats, arts philosophies, etc. By showing a completely different perspective of interpreting post-impressionism paintings, this article broadens the range of the considered factors that affected post-impressionism. Furthermore, the study on post-impressionism should lead people to think about the relations between modern art and classical art forms, e.g., the art during antiquity. Abstracts seem hard to understand, but if there happens to be a bond between the modern art, which focused on abstractness, and the classical art, which was representational (art), the understanding of the abstractness of modern art could be more feasible and thus make modern art more accessible for the masses.

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