

Contribution of Impressionism in World Art

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Abstract

This research paper explores the art movement Expressionism and the contribution of the Impressionist art movement is explained in detail. The study discusses how Impressionism changed the way artists saw the world and represented it in their paintings. It also explains the influence this movement had on Western art, especially in the use of light colour and everyday subjects. This movement gave rise to new ideas in modern art and inspired many future artists to experiment with their own styles. The paper provides an overview of the historical and cultural context in which this movement emerged and highlights the key characteristics, techniques, and subject matters. They often paint outdoors, using quick brushstrokes and bright colour to create a sense of movement and freshness.

In this study, we have also taken a closer look at the work of leading Impressionist artists such as Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, and Camille Pissarro. Each artist made a unique contribution. However, this movement was not also free from controversy. The Paris Salon rejected the work of Impressionism style. But over time, Impressionism gained recognition and became one of the most influential movements in Western art history. It inspired later movements like post-impressionism and modernism, shaping the future of modern art.

Introduction

During the late 19th century, Impressionism emerged as a significant art movement. Originating in France during the 1860s, Impressionism sought to challenge the traditional academic painting of the time which prioritized realistic portrayals of historical and mythological themes. In this movement that drew inspiration from the simplicity of everyday life. The name ‘Impressionism’ was given by an art critic at the first exhibition of this art group in 1874. The term came from the Claude Monet’s painting *Impression, Sunrise*, which was displayed at the exhibition. Leroy used the word “Impression” in a mocking way in his review, suggesting that the paintings were just unfinished “Impressions” rather than complete works of art. However, the artist accepted the term and proudly adopted it as the name of their movement. Over the time, the word “Impressionism” came to represent a revolutionary style that focused on capturing the momentary effects of light, colour, and atmosphere instead of detailed, realistic representation. The movement aimed to capture the feeling effects of light and colour in everyday scenes, often painted en plein air to capture the ever-changing ambiance and atmosphere. Characterized by vivid, vibrant hues, fluid brushstrokes, and an emphasis on the sensory experience of the movement, Impressionism was a radical departure from the art of the past.

How the Impressionism art movement was emerged

Impressionism began during a time of big change in history and culture. It developed in France when the Industrial Revolution was taking place, bringing new machines, factories, and a way of life. Society was changing quickly, and cities were growing fast. In the middle of all this change Impressionist artists wanted to show the simple and short-lived beauty of the world around them. They tried to paint how things looked in a single movement-like the light colour and atmosphere- rather than focusing on fine details.

1. Reaction against traditional art: The artists wanted to move away from the strict rules of the traditional painting, which preferred historical, religious, or mythological subjects painted with smooth finishes. They wanted more freedom to paint real-life scenes with visible brushstrokes and bright colour.

2. Technical Innovation: The creation of portable paint tubes and lightweight easels made it easier for artists to paint outdoors. This allowed them to capture natural light and movement directly from life, rather than relying on memory or sketches made indoors.

3. Rise of new modern life: During the late 19th century, France-especially Paris-was changing quickly. New streets, cafes, railways, and parks gave artists fresh subjects to paint. Everyday life became an important theme

4. Independent exhibition: When rejected by the official salon, the artist formed their own group’ the Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors, Printmakers, etc.

5. Realism led to Impressionism: Realism primarily focuses on depicting the lower classes while Impressionism portrayed the middle classes. Impressionism utilized the same realistic technique of portraying ordinary scenes of daily life. Impressionism is an evolution of realism.

Characteristic of impressionism

Key characteristics of Impressionism include the use of bright, vibrant, colour, loose brushstrokes, and a focus on the sensory experiences of the moment. Other defining traits are a focus on fleeting moments, painting outdoors and capturing ordinary subjects in open compositions that often appear spontaneous.

Brushwork and texture: Impressionists used short, quick, and visible brushstrokes to create a sense of movement and light. These strokes often have a loose, unblended quality. Leaving a “unfinished” work. Impressionists frequently used impasto techniques, layering paint in rich and textured strokes. Canvas, wooden panels and even paper were not only regarded as the backdrops for pictorial scenes but as essential elements contributing to the overall sensory effect of the artwork. *For example* Claude Monet’s painting “Water Lilies” series.

Use of colour and light: The combination of oriental art and Impressionist techniques has changed the traditional method of using colour and light, leading the Western art into a new situation. The Impressionists were strongly inspired by oriental colour theory, which was significantly different from European academic art practice. A central focus was the accurate depiction of natural light and its changing qualities over time. Artists often painted the same subject multiple times to capture different effects of light, weather, and time of day.

Artists of Impressionism Here are some important impressionist artist are Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, Berthe Morisot, who reject academic life to paint modern life or capturing the effects of light and colour change during the day.



About Artist

1. Claude Monet

(Born November 14, 1840, Paris, France, and died December 5, 1926 Giverny)
He was a key figure in the Impressionist movement that transformed French art in the

second half of the nineteenth century. In his long career, Monet consistently depicted the landscape and daily activity of Paris. The Impressionist movement actually takes its name from one of Monet's paintings - "Impression, **Sunrise**" (1872). Critics initially used the term mockingly, but it stuck. Monet's revolutionary approach focused on capturing fleeting moments, changing light conditions, and the artist's immediate visual impression rather than precise detail.

Style and technique: He paint out door painting to capture natural light. Using loose, visible brushstrokes with unmixed colours. Creating a series of the same subject under different lighting and weather conditions. Focusing on the effects of light and atmosphere rather than fine detail

Famous Art work

- Water Lilies - over 250 paintings of his garden pond at Giverny
- Haystacks
- Rouen Cathedral
- Poplars and the Japanese Bridge

2. Pierre-Auguste Renoir

He was born on February 25th, 1841, and died in 1919. He was a French Impressionist artist, popular in the latter half of the 19th century. He was a founding member of the Impressionist movement.



Style & Themes: Renoir is famous for his warm, sensuous paintings filled with light and colour. He loved painting people enjoying life—intimate gatherings, dance halls, cafes, and outdoor leisure scenes. His work radiates joy and beauty, with a particular focus on the female form, children, and the play of light on skin and fabric.

Technique: He used soft, feathery brushstrokes and rich, warm colors. Unlike some Impressionists who focused on landscapes, Renoir was primarily interested in the human figure. His style evolved over his career—from the broken brushwork of pure Impressionism to a more classical, smooth approach in his later years.

Famous Works

- Luncheon of the Boating Party (1881)
- Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette (1876)
- Two Sisters (On the Terrace) (1881)
- The Umbrellas (1881-1886)

3. Edgar Degas

(1834-1917) was a French Impressionist artist famous for his depictions of ballet dancers, horse races, and Parisian life. Degas worked primarily indoors, meticulously observing movement and light in artificial settings. His ballet dancers remain his most iconic subjects—he painted over 1,500 works featuring dancers rehearsing, performing, and resting. Degas was a masterful draftsman who experimented with various mediums including oil painting, pastels, sculpture, and printmaking.



Features of his artwork: Unusual angles, capturing movement - fleeting gestures, bodies in motion, unposed moments; indoor scenes- theaters, cafés, private spaces with artificial light; exceptional drawing- masterful line work and anatomy; realism- honest depictions showing labour and fatigue, not idealized beauty; modern urban life - horse races, laundresses, café scenes, bathers.

Famous Paintings by Edgar Degas

- The Dance Class (1874)
- Blue Dancers (1897)
- Woman in a Tub (1886)
- Dancer with Bouquet (1878)
- The Race Course (1877)

5. Berthe Morisot

(1841-1895) was a French painter and one of the first women Impressionists. She was born into a wealthy family in France. Unlike most women at that time, she got proper art training as a young girl. She learned from well-known painters.

Part of Impressionism She was one of the founders of Impressionism, a new style of painting in the 1870s. She showed her art in almost all the important Impressionist exhibitions. She was the only woman in the first Impressionist show in 1874.

Artistic Style : Loose, fluid brushwork with visible strokes, Luminous colours and attention to light effects, Intimate domestic scenes, often featuring women and children, and Gardens, interiors, and moments of leisure.

Notable Works Some of her most famous paintings include “The Cradle” (1872), “Summer’s Day” (1879), and “Woman at Her Toilette” (1875-1880).

Her Work Morisot painted scenes from everyday life:

- Women and children at home
- Gardens and outdoor scenes

- People relaxing or doing daily activities
- She used quick, loose brushstrokes
- Her paintings are light and bright

Changes after Impressionism in Western art

Impressionism revolutionized Western art in the late 19th century by breaking away from rigid academic conventions. Artists like Monet, Renoir, and Degas embraced spontaneity, capturing fleeting moments and the effects of light with loose brushstrokes and vibrant colours. This movement prioritized personal perception over precise realism, encouraging artists to paint outdoors and explore subjective emotional responses. By rejecting traditional studio practices and formal exhibitions, Impressionism opened the door to artistic freedom and experimentation.

After Impressionism, there were many changes in Western art. Due to Impressionism, the foundation of modern art and contemporary art had begun. New art movements were started in Western art e.g., Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Expressionism etc. The artists changed their perspective and shifted from capturing the fleeting effects of light and colour to emphasizing structure, emotion and symbolism. Here are the main changes:

Start making personal thoughts: Before Impressionism, artists made paintings for the patrons, like realistic scenes and portraits. After Impressionism, artists started to express their own emotions, imagination and experiences.

Experimentation with techniques and materials: After Impressionism, artists began experimenting with bold new brushwork, vivid colours, and unusual perspectives. Post-Impressionists like Van Gogh used thick, expressive strokes. Cezanne explored geometric forms and multiple viewpoints, etc. These innovations challenged traditional representation, emphasizing personal expression over realistic depiction. After Impressionism, while plein air painting continued, artists explored new territories through collage, mixed media, and abstraction. For Example: Picasso and Braque pioneered Cubist collages.

Shift from Realism to Modernism: After Impressionism, realism shifted into modernism through progressive experimentation. Art transformed when artists stopped merely replicating reality and began expressing their unique perspectives. This fundamental shift marked the birth of modern art, where personal vision superseded technical accuracy. Artists like Picasso and Kandinsky broke free from traditional constraints, prioritizing emotion, abstraction, and innovative concepts over photographic precision. The canvas became a space for exploration rather than imitation—a place where colour, form, and imagination could convey deeper truths than realistic representation ever could. This revolution elevated creativity as art's defining essence, proving that how we interpret the

world matters far more than simply documenting what exists before our eyes. Retry Claude can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.

Emerging of new art movement: Impressionism revolutionized art by breaking from academic tradition and focusing on light, colour, and spontaneous brushwork over precise detail. This radical approach liberated artists to explore subjective perception, paving the way for Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, and Abstract art. It fundamentally shifted art from representation toward experimentation and personal expression.

Impressionism influenced Indian art

India influenced, when India under British rule. Many changes happened in India under British rule, these changes also affected Indian art. Indian artists started working in the British style, artist start using perspective, light and shade in their art and started using watercolour, softer brushstrokes and bright colour. Artists started making common people instead of court or god paintings. They started working on flora or fauna and showing daily life. Artists like Raja Ravi Varm was the early artist, work on Indo-western style, later artists like Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and members of the Bengal School of Art developed a unique Indian style that blended Western techniques with Indian themes.

The Bengal School of Art, led by Abanindranath Tagore and his circle, selectively absorbed Impressionist principles while rejecting wholesale Westernization. They appreciated the movement's break from rigid academic traditions and its focus on emotional expression through colour. However, they adapted these elements to suit Indian themes, spirituality, and indigenous materials like tempera and watercolours.

Artists like Amrita Sher-Gil, though more influenced by Post-Impressionism, demonstrated how Western colour theories and brushwork could depict Indian subjects with authenticity. Her bold palette and attention to light transformed everyday Indian life into powerful visual narratives.

The Bombay Progressive Artists' Group in the 1940s further internalized Impressionist freedom, using loose brushwork and vibrant colours to explore contemporary Indian identity. Artists like S.H. Raza and M.F. Husain employed techniques reminiscent of Impressionism—expressive colour, dynamic compositions, and emphasis on visual sensation—while rooted in Indian philosophy and imagery.

Conclusion

Impressionism was a distinctive style of art in which artists used bright colour and depicted their subjects as if a person had caught a glimpse of them. Impressionism freed artists from academic conventions, legitimizing loose brushwork, visible brushstrokes, and painting en plain air (outdoors). The movement's emphasis on capturing light and atmosphere through broken colour and optical mixing revolutionized how artists approached

their craft. This technical freedom became foundational for all subsequent modern art movements. By elevating everyday scenes—parks, cafes, railways, leisure activities—to worthy artistic subjects, Impressionism democratized art's content.

Impressionism served as the crucial bridge between traditional academic art and twentieth-century modernism. It spawned direct successors like Post-Impressionism (Van Gogh, Cézanne, Gauguin), which further abstracted form and colour. From there, the path led to Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, and Abstract art—none of which would have been possible without Impressionism's initial break from tradition. The movement established that art could be about the artist's subjective perception rather than objective representation. This philosophical shift—prioritizing impression over reality—fundamentally changed how we understand art's purpose, making personal vision and emotional response legitimate artistic goals. It influenced modern artists and paved the way for several important movements in art history.

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