

Art Appreciation

Unit: 4 - Appreciating Modern Art and After

Lecture No.: 6

Modernism

Let's look into the modernism, evolution of modernism and modernist artist. Roughly extending from the 1860s to the 1970s, and denotes the style and philosophy of the art produced during that era. Traditions of the past have been thrown aside in a spirit of experimentation. New ways of seeing and with fresh ideas about the future about the nature of materials and functions of art. A tendency toward abstraction is characteristic of much modern art.

Important artist of modernist era. Henri de Toulouse, Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso, Paul Cezanne, David Munch, and Vincent Vangogh.

Let's look into the characteristic of modern art. The artist believed that art is what mattered. New types of art came in with the new and innovative use of materials into the art and exploration of various colours were involved in the formation of art.

Movements of Modern Art – 1

Important movements of modern art: Impressionism (1870s-1880s), Fauvism (1905-07), Cubism (1908-1914), Futurism (1909-14), Expressionism (from 1905 onwards), Constructivism (1915- late 1930s), Dadaism (1916-24), Surrealism (from 1924), Abstract expressionism (1948-60s), Pop art (late 1959, 60s) and Op art or Optical art.

Now let's look into the detailed evolution and the various artist involved in the various art movements we just saw.

Impressionism. Exemplified by the landscape paintings of Claude Monet (1840-1926). Impressionism focused on the almost impossible task of capturing fleeting moments of light and colour. They used non-naturalistic colours and the brush strokes were bold and quite different and they were often textured in unusual angles and they were of less detailing. The main contribution of the impressionism to the modern art was to legitimize the use of non-naturalistic colours. So when looking into the impressionist painting we could see the use of non-realistic colours in all the paintings and the difference in the use of brush strokes and the layer it formed. The important artist of impressionist period were Claude Monet, Sisley, Pissarro and Morisot. They may be considered as “purest impressionist” artist. Impression by Claude Monet. In this picture we could see the focus of the calm feeling of a misty marine scene. The painting is majorly drawn by using cool colours. The blue, the shades of blue and the grey blue and the use of warm colours of the deep orange, shades of light orange and yellow that draws the attention of the viewer. We could see the two row boats just below the center line of the image and ships and factories behind where the emissions from the factories mix with the early sunrise and is depicted in smoky colours so beautifully.

Fauvism. This movement was short lived, dramatic, and highly influential led by Henri Matisse (1869-1954). This was the fashionable style during the mid 1900s in Paris. This became instantly famous for its vivid, garish, non-naturalistic colours. The main contribution of Fauvism to modern art was to demonstrate the independent power of colour. This highly subjective approach to art was in contrast to the classical content-oriented outlook of the academics. Henri Matisse, Albert Marquet and Georges Rouault were some of the noticeable artist of Fauvism. As fauvism is considered, the importance is given to the use of colours were

each colour could play an individual depicting the importance of it. *La Dance* by Henry Matisse. Looking at the image at the first sight we could see the use of vibrant colours blue, green and the red. The vibrant red used for the dancers, the blue for the sky and the green for the flat earth. The colours are so non-naturalistic and the dancers are positioned in a way such that they are hardly contained and bare in the canvas. And the form of the dancers are distorted and simplified for their expressive purpose. These positions portrayed by the dancers are so unusual so that they are more expressive and the vibrancy of the colours can be portrayed by the movements of the dancers itself. This is the portrait of Henry Matisse.

Cubism. A challenging style of painting, introduced a compositional system of flat splintered planes. This was developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. There were two variants in cubism. The analytical cubism and later came the synthetic cubism. It influenced abstract art for the next 50 years. This offered a whole new alternative to conventional perspective, based on the inescapable fact of the flat picture plane. Picasso, Braque, Juan Gris, Fernand Leger, Sonia Delaunay are some of the cubist artist. This is *Mandora* by Braque. Looking at the image we could see that not much importance is given to the vibrant colours. The importance is given to the composition and representation of a musical instrument the Mandora. The colours represent neutrality in the painting which even depict it was one of his earlier experimentation with cubist art where he tried to fit in the different views of the same item in the picture plane. Here his affinity for studio based still lives in this picture. *The mandolin player* by Pablo Picasso. This picture primarily relies on vertical dynamism and looking at the picture, the angles at the triangle are coming to the centre rather than dissipating or exploding. Taking a

closer look at the painting we could see the angles of the triangle coming together in the centre rather than dissipating or exploding.

Futurism. Founded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Futurist art glorified speed, technology, the automobile, the airplane and the scientific achievement. It borrowed heavily from neo Impressionism and Italian divisionism as well as cubism especially its fragmented forms and multiple viewpoints. Introduced movement into the canvas, linked beauty with scientific advancement. Love of speed, noise, pollution, and technology with violence. Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, Natalia Goncharova are some of the notable futurist artists. The futurist art mainly depicted the speed, technology, the automobile, and the advancement in technology along with pollution, noise, violence, etc. The city rises by Umberto Boccioni is a very good example of the futurist art. In this picture the chaos and the movement resemble a war scene as indeed war was presented in the futurist manifesto as the only means towards cultural progress. We could see the horses and the people here with the buildings behind. The large horse rears into the foreground and we could see the people struggling to gain control over it. And the images of the people and the horses are blurred such way that they show the movement in the picture. In this picture we could see the speed, the movement, the dynamism and the building showing the technological advancement along with the violence which are the basic characteristics of the futurist art. Dynamism of a dog on a leash by Giacomo Balla. Chrono-photography, a vintage technique whereby movement is demonstrated across several frames. This encouraged Giacomo Balla to find new ways of representing movement in painting. In the image, the dynamism of the dog on a leash we could see the small black dog and the women walking and the movement is so beautifully captured by the vintage photographic technique and the

movement in dynamism are represented by layering the opaque transparent and semitransparent layers of shape.

Expressionism. Distortion and exaggeration to create emotional effect. Popularized the idea of subjectivity in painting and sculpture. The intention is not to reproduce a subject accurately but instead to portray it in such a way as to express the inner state of the artist. In expressionism the intention of the expressionist artist is not to depict the object the same way as it is but rather depicting the inner state of the artist by using the bold colours, distorted form painted in a careless manner. The expressionist paintings are without perspective. Paul Gauguin, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Wassily Kandinsky, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Edward Munch, Oscar Kokoschka are some of the expressionist artist. This scream by Edward Munch, a very famous example of expressionist art. The word as said by the artist by creating this painting was the sky turned as red as blood, I stopped and leaned against the fence, shivering with fear. Then I heard the enormous, infinite scream of nature. This painting is probably said to have painted during the volcanic eruption of the Caracua where there was an unusual sunset throughout Europe. The scream evokes the jolting emotion of the encounter and exhibits a general anxiety towards the tangible world. As said by the artist we could see the deep blood red colour for the sky and it is said to have happened when he was walking along the bridge with two of his friends. Then his friends moved on. He just stood there and the rest happened. We could see the two person represented was probably that could have been his friends and it is also said that the artist had inspired from the scene of amamy which he had seen years back and that is how he had arrived in this particular picture.

Abstract expressionism. Abstract expressionism is a type of art in which the artist expresses himself purely through the use of form and colour. Non-representational or non-objective art which means that there are no actual objects represented. Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, William de Cooning, Barnett Newman are some of the Abstract expressionist artists. The Lavender Mist by Jackson Pollock. Here the artist had created the art work by either pouring or applying the paint over the canvas or sheet with extreme physicality. We could see the layers formed in the painting by use of the different colours, the blues, the black, the white and the shades of grey. The colours are so expressive and the space created through the alternative layers and drips of opaque paint, creating a textured canvas surface. The canvas surface creates such a texture by use of the various layers of the paint. And the painting while seeing is nearly dizzying for the viewer.

Constructivism. Constructivists proposed to replace art's traditional concern with composition with a focus on construction. Objects were to be created to carry out a fundamental analysis of the materials and forms of art. This entailed an ethic of "truth of materials". Constructivists are often aimed to demonstrate the use of materials like steel, glass and metal. And they were more into depicting the truth of material. The seed of Constructivism was a desire to express the experience of modern life – its dynamism, its new and disorienting qualities of space and time. Constructivists were to be constructors of a new society. Cultural workers on par with scientists in their search for solutions to modern problems. The Tatlin's tower designed by Waldimir Tatlin is one of the great examples of the Constructivism and as far to the formation of Constructivists movement this tower was neither fully realized nor built. This was actually designed to function as conference space and the propaganda centre and it was supposed to be the tallest structure of that

period. For Tatlin, steel and glass were the essential materials of modern construction. They symbolized the industry, technology and the machine age. This tower was never built and it was continued to be an emblem of failed utopian construction for many generation of artist.

Dadaism. The first anti-art movement. Dada was a revolt against the system which had allowed the carnage of the First World War (1914-1918). The main contribution of dada was to shake up the art's world and to widen the concept of modern art. By embracing totally new types of creativity as well as new materials and themes. Its rebellious sense of humor endured in the surrealist movement. Hans Arp, Hugo hall, Max Ernst were some of the artist. The squares arranged according to the laws of chance by Hans Arp. This was a series of art done by the artist Hans Arp. What the artist used to do is he used to stand on top of a larger piece of sheet and he used to drop a coloured cup of papers as squares and vivid shapes onto the sheet by law of chance. He glued them to wherever it fell on the sheet and he believed that this kind of art could provoke a sign of intuition in him like the Eigan's fortune telling coins and Hans Arp was more interested in intuition and fortune telling.

Surrealism. Fashionable art movements of the inter war years, although the style is seen today. Composed of abstract and figurative wings. Unlike dada it was neither anti-art nor political. Surrealist painters used various methods including dreams, hallucination, and random image generation, to circumvent rational thought process in creating art. The main contribution of surrealism to modern art was to generate a refreshingly new set of images. Salvador Dali, Max Earnst, Hans Bellmer. The accommodation of desire by Salvador Dali. In this image we could see the lumpish white pebbles depicting the insecurities about the artist future with gala, circling around the concepts of terror and

decay where this could probably be the artist and with gala while the accommodations of desire this painting is an expose of artist's deepest fear. In this image we could see the lion heads are glued on to the canvas and are supposed to be cut from a children's book. And this could have been the early experimentation of the artist with collage technique.

Movements of Modern Art – 2

Pop art. A form of art that shows images, objects and scenes from everyday life. They are manipulated and changed using techniques of commercial art and popular illustration. Its roots are found to be in dada. One of the aspects of pop art is its apparent coolness, its absence of commitment to the subject matter it depicts. In the early stages, the pop artist found something positive in these gestures of opposition, something which could be built upon. Pop art is said to be a learned and highly self-conscious movement. Richard Hamilton, just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing? 1956 collage this collage presents the viewers an updated version of Adam and eve and the home setting is done in such a way that all the necessary and essential conveniences of the home are represent. We could see the vacuum cleaner, canned ham and the television. Constructed using a variety of cutouts from magazines and advertisements. Hamilton created a domestic interior scene. This is another great example by Andy Warhol – the Campbell soup cans of 1962. In this piece of art, these soup cans mounted on the canvas are not meant for their compositional arrangement or the style rather it depicts as a mass production with the fine art context. They might look similar but they depict different variation of the soup. We could see the tomato soup, the vegetable soup, the green peas, chicken, pepper pot, etc. there are 32 different canvases where the artwork brought in the entire shelf of Campbell soup cans

right from the super market onto our walls. This is an example of consumerist art like how consumerism was into effect. And it is even said that the artist had one Campbell soup for everyday for nearly 20 years for his lunch.

Op art. Artists have been intrigued by the nature of perception and by optical effects and illusions for many centuries. They have often been a central concern of art, just as much as themes drawn from history or literature. But in the 1950s these preoccupations allied to new interest in technology and psychology blossomed into a movement. Op art or optical art typically employs abstract patterns composed with a stark contrast of foreground and background. Bridget Riley, Victor Vasarely, Francois Morellete, Jesus Rafele Soto. The Duo 2 by Victor Vasarely. In this painting we often forget that it is a painting and we perceive it as a 3Dimensional art. The artist has so beautifully and technically used the cool and warm colours in the painting to depict it as a 3Dimensional form of art. We could see the cool colours or warm colours presented such that it provides great depth and colours are used for the effect they had on the eye.

Conceptual art. Conceptual art is a movement that prizes ideas over the formal or visual components of art works. A fusion of various tendencies rather than a tightly cohesive movement. Conceptualism took myriad forms such as performances, happenings and ephemera. From the mid1960s to the mid1970s conceptual artists produced works and writings that completely rejected standard ideas of art. For conceptual artists art need not look like a traditional work of art, or even take any physical form at all. Conceptual art is self-conscious or self-referential. Joseph Kosuth, Walter de Maria, Yoko Ono. 1 and 3 chairs by Joseph Kosuth. In this image, this is a physical chair and this is an exact

photograph of the physical chair and this is the definition of a chair. On looking into this image, People question that what makes it a chair. Either the physical chair or the photograph or the idea i.e. the definition lettering of the chair which constitute the chair or all the three combined together.

Performance art. Performance art is art which is presented live usually by the artist or with the collaboration with the performers. It has had a role in avant-garde art throughout the 20th century, playing an important part. The foremost purpose of performance art has almost always been to challenge the conventions of traditional forms of visual art such as painting and sculpture. Performance art borrows styles and ideas from other forms of art or sometimes from other forms of activity not associated with art like ritual, or work like tasks. Yves Klein, Christ Burden, Marina Abramovic are some of the performance artist. The shoot by Christ burden. In this performance art burden puts himself into a difficult position where he is made to be shot in front of a very small group of audience and viewers. This is a very notorious and violent performance. It touches the idea of suffering and the notion of the artist may play a role in society as a kind of victim. This art speaks issue of gun holding and the context of the period of Vietnam War.

Photorealism. The name Photorealism was coined in reference to those artist whose work depended heavily on photographs which they often projected onto canvas allowing images to be replicated with precision and accuracy. The exactness was often aided further by the use of an airbrush which was originally designed to retouch photographs. In Photorealism, the artist majorly used the photograph taken from the particular scene and they worked further on it placing them on the canvas. McDonalds Pickup could be an example of photorealism. In this

picture the artist had depicted the American flag, McDonalds and the truck and he has omitted the debris and the people which could have been a distraction to this image. As said, we could see the highways, the jeep, the McDonalds, and the American flag portrayed here which has said to be the icons of American highway with a great attention to detail aided in large part by using photographs.

Earth art also referred to as land art or earth works is done by majorly using natural materials available like stone, sand, water, etc. and left to the effects of nature. This was largely an American movement. The movement was an outgrowth of conceptualism and minimalism. The favored materials for earthworks were those that could be extracted directly from nature such as stones, water, gravel and soil. Influenced by prehistoric art work such as Stonehenge, earth artists left their work undisturbed to the nature exposing it to the elements. A line made by walking. Richard Long emphasizes the experimental factor of nature through the act of walking and the temporal factor involved in artistic practice. In this picture we could see how the art has been formed in the nature by walking and how it has left an impact on the ground. The subject matter is the interaction of the journey, making the ground, and making a simple adjustment to the landscape. Like in we could see how the land has been marked by a simple walking and a basic adjustment is made to the landscape. This is Spiral Jetty by Robert Smithson. Smithson constructed 1500ft long and 15ft wide spiral by using stones, algae and other natural materials. The ace gallery of Vancouver and Dwan financed an earth moving company to create the spiral out of basalt rock and earth from the surrounding area.

Post Modernism. Post Modernism is best understood by defining the modernist ethos it replaced that of the avant-garde who were active from

1860s to the 1950s. the various artists in the modern period were driven by the radical and forward thinking approach, ideas of technological positivity and grand narratives of western domination and progress. The most important being the notion that all progress – especially technological – is positive. The idea of breaking down distinctions between high and low art, particularly with the incorporation of elements of popular culture, was also a key element of postmodernism. Marilyn Diptych by Andy Warhol. This scene of silkscreen prints of Marilyn Monroe was taken from her film, Niagara where the colour prints are represented on one side, and the black and white on the other. The colour contrasted against the monochrome that fades out to the right. We could see how it fades out as we move on. Colour images of Marilyn are depicted here and it just fades off as it goes on. This change in variation in colour depict the suggestive of the life and death while the repetitive images of the Marilyn Monroe present here depicts the presence in the media.