

Art Essay – Georges Braque

Georges Braque was one of the most influential and major figures in 20th century art. He is known to many as one of Europe's leading figures of avant-garde art (groups of artist regarded as paramount in the creation and application of new ideas, styles and techniques. Avant-garde French for vanguard), his influence on Fauvism (the use of pure, brilliant colour in an aggressive, direct manner to create a sense of explosion), Post – Impressionism and Cubism is supreme. Working in collaboration with Pablo Picasso (another great artist) together they developed Cubism and the Cubist style.

Georges Braque was born on the 13th May 1882 in Argenteuil-sur-Seine in France. In 1890 his family moved to the port city of Le Havre in Normandy where he spent his childhood. Braque developed his painting skills whilst working alongside his father, a house decorator. In the evenings Braque studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from 1897 – 1899. After he left school, Braque was still an apprentice to a house painter. In 1900 he moved to Paris where he studied under a master decorator and later the next year he received his craftsman certificate. Following his compulsory military service Braque attended Académie Humbert (an art college in Paris) between 1902 – 1904 where he met Marie Laurencin and Francis Picabia. In 1904 he set up his own studio and later the next year exhibited his first paintings at the Salon des Independents. Also at this exhibition were works by many Fauvist painters such as Matisse, Derain and Dufy. This style of painting attracted Braque and between 1906 – 1907 Braque's paintings were no longer Impressionist but Fauve in style. His first solo show was at the Daniel - Henri Kahnweiler's Gallery in 1908 exhibiting some of his early Cubist paintings. From 1909 he and Picasso worked closely together and developing Cubism. A new style of painting which presented a new reality in paintings, emphasising the structure of an object by combining lines, planes and geometrical shapes to represent several viewpoints of an object simultaneously. By 1911 their work was somewhat comparable. In 1912 they started to include collage elements into their paintings and experimented with the papier collé (pasted paper) method. Their close artistic relationship lasted until the start of the First World War when Braque was called up to serve in the French army, however he was severely wounded in the head in 1915 and following a long period of recovery was discharged as permanently unfit in 1916. He returned to Paris and resumed painting. After the First World War his work became freer and less uniform. It was in the early 20's that Georges Braque started to be recognised as a result of an exhibition of his work at the Salon d'Automne in Paris. He also designed the décor for two Sergei Diaghilev ballets and by the end of the 20's Braque had returned to a more realistic interpretation of nature although it was evident that aspects of Cubism remained present in his work. In 1931 he made his first engraved plasters and began to portray mythological subjects. In 1937 he won first prize at the Carnegie International Pittsburgh. During the Second World War he remained in Paris and his paintings at this time were mainly still lifes and interiors but were more dismal. Braque did not just paint he also made lithographs (a method of printing, where an image is transferred to a plate photographically. Invented in the late eighteenth century), engravings and sculptures. In the late 40's he treated various recurring themes such as birds, ateliers, landscapes and seascapes and in 1954 he designed stained glass window for the church of Varengeville. During the last few years of his life his health

deteriorated preventing him from undertaking large-scale commissions, however he continued to paint, make lithographs and design jewellery. Braque died in Paris on 31st August 1963.