

Photography was a major shaper and creator of modernism, Discuss.

Art is an activity characteristic of humanity since the dawn of civilisation. In any epoch the Artist, by virtue of special gifts, expresses that which is finest in humanity...the visual artist archives this through modes of understanding and expression which are 'purely visual' – radically distinct from, for example, verbalisation. This special characteristic of art necessarily makes it an autonomous sphere of activity, completely separate from the everyday world of social and political life. The autonomous nature of visual art means that questions asked of it may only be properly put, and answered, in its own terms – all other forms of interrogation are irrelevant. In the modern world the function of art is to preserve and enhance its own special sphere of civilising human values in an increasingly dehumanising technological environment.

If these beliefs sound familiar – perhaps even self-evident – it is because they long-ago became part of the received common-sense we in the West learn at our mother's knee. (Burgin 1986)

The 20th Century had a good start due to the inventions and innovations of the 19th Century era. The culture was becoming more and more refined with the standardisation set out by the previous generations finally becoming long term standards and the fruition of ideas and ideals set out in the 19th Century. The inventions and innovations were still moving forwards at a fast pace getting quicker as the technology to test and evaluate designs and ideas got better. Work on development of ideas was now starting to be spear headed by business rather than the rich individuals of the 19th Century this was making the development process quicker and more productive for several reasons, groups of educated and intellectual people were working together on a common goal, the structure of business allowed the development not to be just a hobby but a full time paying job and this provided motivation in the way of getting paid while developing.

People were starting to understand themselves more by the beginning of the Modern understanding of Psychology, with Sigmund Freud being a driving force. He looked at how people could be motivated towards certain ideas and ideals with the use of new mediums that were starting out such as Radio, Television, and the Printed press. This caused a new understanding of the Self this made people look at their lifestyle in a different way, to understand how they could improve their work and personal lifestyle and happiness. This made the people of the time open to alternate ways of thinking and new ideas.

War made a big change in the 20th Century as the rules of engagement started to change. Now war was not just fought over a few battles, but was fought over a long period with the use of modern inventions to change the way battles were fought. There were still confrontation on the battle fields but these were covering a larger area and were fought using such things as germ warfare, people started to use trenches to protect themselves from the bullets and explosives, gone was the use of regimental attacks, and the gentlemanly treatment of officers often due to respect. In the second world war the rules changed even more with the use of aeroplanes to bomb targets, and later in

the way the use of V2 rockets etc to bomb places from far distances so taking out the face to face conflicts that used to be the mainstay of warfare.

Because of WWI and WWII boundaries between the classes were breaking down which allowed people to be able to be more open and less informal about general matters. Because the stigma that used to surround the lower classes was lifting this in turn allowed low income people to be able to start a business and improve their own lifestyle this made the West a very productive group of countries through their free time due to improved standards they also developed new ways of socialising and relaxing.

New mediums were starting out, for example the Print industry with the use of new ways to print photographs/ images started to appear in the papers of the era, in turn magazines were born to supply information on different subjects the reason why magazines became popular was the fact that it was cheaper and easier to print the final magazine. Radio (wireless) gave the public news and information that was up-to-date, this medium could reach a wide area. This meant that information could be transmitted to another country so speeding up the way news and information was transmitted over long distances. The introduction of Television was a cultural revolution, with visual references to new ideas and ways of thinking, this widened the learning for the masses. Telephones also added to the increase in communication, it took time but over the years most places within the developed countries could be linked by telephone this meant that artists/public could converse to each other over long distances in a much more efficient way that allowed for a two way conversation/discussion to take place. The new developments put an emphasis on time and speed this made the announcement of new inventions, ideas, and inspiration much more speedily available.

Now in the 20th Century people expected things to cost less and be made quicker and easier to use. This helped bring photography to the masses because of the mechanisation of the process of the mass building of cameras and also in the manufacture of Photographic paper and negative film. This could be argued as detracting from the artistic expression of the photographer but it also allowed other artistic movements to experiment with the use of photography.

Artistic movements had to be on the move with the understanding that the photograph was replacing people's requirement to represent people and items in a realistic way also the ability to produce such work much more speedily and cheaper and also the availability to DIY your own photographs at home or by taking it to a professional developer of photographs such as Kodak. So artistic movements such as Dada, Impressionism, NADAR, Angry Young Artists, Avant Garde and Modernism started to look at other ways to show the human and object form in a rebellion against the photograph, showing what the photograph can not represent. Modernism was spearheaded by the painters but was adopted by the other mediums like sculpture and even was adopted by photographs later on as it slowly became a recognised form of art because of modernist artists starting to explore the use of the new medium but even then there were sceptics that felt it was not 'Art'. There were movements in Europe at the same time as different movements in the USA, they were working on different things for example the Americans

were striving towards opening up their art work to the general public through the use of galleries and public exhibitions, the Europeans were doing the same but the Americans used this medium for display more regularly. But both America and the Europeans were doing that same work which was changing our preconceptions of art, it was moving forwards and onwards from the original template taking with it a knowledge of composition but disregarding classical symbolism that artist felt was restricting them selves from expressing their own beliefs and ideals in a new and original way. One of the other groups was the f/64 group which was founded in 1932 the reason for the name in to emphasise the sharpness of image they are promoting photography, Photographers included in this group are Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham and Ansel Adams.

Artist were aided in their exploration of new ideas and ideals with the use of new technology which allowed for paints to be readily accessible, for example the paint tube which contain premixed colours that were fresh and vibrant, also as they were sealed in tubes they were also designed with faster drying times which meant artists could paint their work much quicker. These new technological exploits also gave way to artist exploring more than the local environment but because of the ease that materials could be transported allowed for artists to go places where they normally could not. This changed the variety of work that was produced. As science was breaking new ground so was art and Einstein once said "As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality." This quote refers to not just mathematics but can also be applied to photography and art as there is no known boundary for the mediums and are limited by the sometimes limited thinking of the human being.

The interest in other places and cultures that photography started was carried into the world of paint as artist tried to broaden their own horizons. Transport with the motorcar allowed for fast effective travel to be done on land and then with the application of aeroplanes for public travel later in the 20th Century meant that many locations around the world that normally would of taken weeks or even months to travel to only took a matter of days. This allowed artists to move around the world expanding their horizons and also giving access to locations that would inspire their skills as artists.

Some artists sought to change the way we think of Galleries for example some of the work done by Surrealism and Dada movements for instance, Marcel Duchamp placed a urinal in the gallery claiming that the location in a art gallery made it 'Art', in this way they were challenging our social understanding of art while also confronting the press and generating interest by doing something diverse and 'outrageous', thus bringing the subject of 'What is Art' to the forefront of discussion. Many of the artistic groups philosophised about the 'Art' subject, some also released manifestoes which could be seen as pretentious.

To summarise, photography was a major influence in the Modernist movement, because of the influence a new medium such as photography could have on the older mediums such as Painting, sculpture etc. But also aided in the development of modernism.

Photography is now being push further beyond the boundarie s due to the introduction of digital imagery capabilities. These in turn have brought the artists drawing skills back into the forefront of development.

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