

PORTRAITS THROUGH THE AGES

There have been various art movements since the beginning of art impressionism, cubism, and surrealism to name just a few.

The first artist is the world famous Picasso. He was born in 1881 in Malaga in the south of Spain and died in 1973. He moved to Paris in April 1904 as this was the art capital of the world at this time. He is probably one of the most innovative and creative artists of the 20th century and is remembered especially for beginning the art movement of cubism.

His self portrait of "1906" is the one I chose to start with. It is oil on canvas and was painted early on in his career. It is a head to waist composition. The background looks like a textured plain blue which I feel emphasizes the actual drawing of Picasso. He is wearing his work clothes and is carrying a paint palette to show that he is an artist.



I like the colour of this painting, it is quite realistic but he also uses a lot of blue colours as he did in his painting around this time as this was painted during the Spanish civil war and many of his family or relatives were living in Spain at the time. I love the way Picasso shows how he is feeling through the colour of his paintings. During the war there was a lot of depression and his friend committed suicide this is shown through the blue colours in his work, this is known as his

blue period. However later when Picasso began to fall in love the blue colours changed into rose tones.

This painting has little tone but enough to make it look real and not flat. The directional light is coming from the front but slightly to the left. The light is not very strong and is probably only the light getting in through a window facing him. I prefer these sort of paintings with less detail, I feel paintings with lots of detail distract you from the message the painting is trying to get across to you.

Picasso has used thick visible brush strokes that are loose and have been dragged across the canvas. I like this painting as it is not just plain and organised like others from this period. I usually like paintings with smooth brush strokes but the cool colours and simple lines attracted me to this painting.

The overall painting has little texture, however the background is slightly textured but the face and skin is much smoother. Most surfaces are painted with different texture to show the different materials. The hair doesn't look realistic it looks awful flat. The skin looks quite realistic but slightly yellow around the eyes, cheeks, and mouth. The clothes however don't look real.

The underlying drawing looks childlike, and simple but somehow sophisticated. This was painted near the end of his blue period and the beginning of his rose period. It was also the beginning of cubism.

Cubism was the most important movement in the 20th century. It showed people new ways of composing pictures, representing nature, and gave people a new attitude towards paintings and artists. It was the most liberating of all the movements. This movement was created by Picasso and his painter friend Braque between 1907 and 1914. It emphasizes the flat and two-dimensional surfaces of a picture. This movement ignored chiaroscuro. Cubist painters fragmented objects and show several sides simultaneously. The two areas of cubism are synthetic and analytical. Colour assumes a strong role in synthetic cubism. The shapes of synthetic cubism remain fragmented and flat, newspaper is often used. Analytical cubism combines representational motifs and letters etcetera in the same painting.



The next painting by Picasso I done is "Weeping Woman" "1937". The composition is a close-up showing only the head and shoulders and the hands which the head is resting on. The background is covered in wooden vertical stripe panelling. The sitter who is allegedly Picasso's girlfriend the journalist Dora Maar is wearing a red hat with blue flower which is typical of Dora who is said to epitomise Parisian chique. She is shown crying as she is supposed to stand for all the Spanish women who have lost loved ones in the Spanish Civil War.

The colours are bright and unrealistic there is lots of green used. There is also allot of white, yellow, and red, black is also a prominent colour. I much prefer the colours of Picasso's "Self Portrait" "1906" I earlier wrote about.

There is not much tone is it mostly block colour, this painting looks awfully flat I dislike the later style of cubist painting. I prefer smooth lines and delicate realistic colours. The light source appears to be coming from the left, shining in the left side of the face mainly on the mouth area which has been painted white.

Thick paint has been used and the brush strokes are visible and appear to go in all different directions, they are dragged across the page. I don't like this it's too wild but I admire the smooth painting of Picasso's earlier work before he turned to cubism for example one painting I particularly like is "Madame Canals" "1905".

All surfaces are painted in the same way except from the black outlines which are very smooth. The hair look so unrealistic as does the face, I prefer paintings with realistic features, and colours.

The underlying drawing although looks simple I'm sure is very difficult and complicated and I admire Picasso for being able to draw and paint in this way even though I don't like this particular painting. I don't predominantly like later the cubist style earlier cubist portraits like Ambroise Vollard I prefer because, of the restrained colour and more sophisticated drawing.

The next artist whose paintings I looked at was Mary Stevenson Cassatt. She was born in Allegheny City near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1844 and died in 1926 at the Chateau

Beaufresne near Beauvais. The first painting I chose by Mary Cassatt is "Child In A Straw Hat" "1886"



It is a half figure composition. The child is wearing a plain grey dress and she looks disappointed about something. The plain background draws attention to the girl and her sad expression.

The colours in this portrait are grey and muted except from the girls face, arms, and her hat. The face is colourful and the cheeks are rosy. I could live with this painting as the girl's expression is very cute. It's very delicate compared to Picasso's "Weeping Woman".

It has lots of tone and looks incredibly 3D I like this type of painting. The light source is coming from the front and is shining mainly on the arms but still not drawing attention away from the face.

The paint in this portrait is applied quite thickly and roughly with visible brush strokes which I usually don't like but in this painting I like the visible brush strokes. The strokes are dragged then slightly blended but are still quite precise. I like the way this is painted and admire the way in which Mary Cassatt paints.

The paint has lots of texture and most surfaces are painted in the same way however the dress and hat look like material and not flat. The hair and skin look real.

The underlying drawing is realistic but looks simple it is an impressionist painting.

My second portrait by Mary Cassatt is "Head of A Little Girl" the date for this sketch in oils is unknown. This painting shows only the head, and the background is a plain greyish white colour. You can't see what the sitter is wearing, but she has short shoulder length hair which looks messy like any normal child's would.



I like the colour and how Mary Cassatt has showed how a child really looks without overworking to make the child look perfect because no child is. However the way in which Mary Cassatt has

painted this portrait the girl look very sweet and innocent. I really like how free Mary Cassatt was with this painting and just painted what she saw.

This painting has a little tone but not much probably because the painting does not look like it is completed. The directional light is coming from the front on this painting but it is not a strong light. I like this painting and admire it very much.

There are thick visible brush strokes that are loose and free. I love how this painting looks like it has been rushed and painted quickly but it's exciting and wild brush strokes just capture the moment. This painting for me shows how the impressionist art movement sought to depict whatever they could see at a given moment in time. Most impressionist painters

would paint outside to get the most out of what they were painting. The impressionist movement began around 1867.

There is lots of texture in this painting and most surfaces are painted in the same way.

The hair and skin are made up of dashed lines of different colours which build up the overall look of the painting. The eyes don't look real they look slightly like glass as they are painted all as one colour.

The free, scumbled textured surface of Cassatt's study totally sums up impressionism for me.

Of the two artists I studied, my preference isn't the world famous Picasso but for Cassatt's more domestic studies of family and friends, her wonderful handling of paint in particular or may be I'm impressed by her being a woman, or I simply prefer impressionism to cubism.

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