

Identify and discuss two art movements and evaluate through their differences and similarities the worldviews and principles they propose.

In this essay I will be exploring the similarities and differences between two art movements, that being impressionism and dadaism, in order to identify and differentiate the worldviews and principals each proposes.

Each movement mocked the constructs and social expectations of art and were rejected or questioned by critics along with the public. Impressionism and dadaism can be considered two very similar art movements, both came about as protests towards traditional worldviews and social constructs and yet in a literal sense they are completely different. They rejected 'traditional' methods as a way of introducing new forms of art - "Oil paintings are still being painted today. Yet the basis of its traditional way of seeing was undermined by Impressionism" (Berger, 2008).

Impressionism was the consequence of the industrial revolution in France during the 19th century and was a crucial turning point in the history of art: it became popular across Europe and heavily influenced modern oil painting. During the mechanical age of reproduction and capitalism this art movement was ridiculed.

The protest against the immediacy of this consumerist society was confronting the usual methods of oil painting, along with the subject matter and completely rejecting tradition. It's realised in John Berger's book *Ways of Seeing* that "Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced everything to the equality of objects." "all reality was mechanically measured by its materiality" (Berger, 2008) - Impressionism avoided creating reproducible sellable work and in turn focused on landscape since "nature as a whole defied possession" - "The sky cannot be turned into a thing or given a quantity" (Berger, 2008) and therefore was the ideal subject matter, Claude Monet in particular utilised this within his work.

This allowed impressionist painters to create work which could be understood and appreciated by all without the underlying suggestion of possession and the need for material objects.

Since the first camera was invented in 1816, around “100,000 Parisians were having their pictures taken every year” (Kiamartgallery, 2018), this meant less commissioned paintings were being requested and painters were required to expand and adapt.

Many artists utilised this new art form as it was a way of experimenting with movement: by altering the exposure time photographers were able to experiment with motion blur, introducing new ways to experiment with oil paint as a medium -

The process of impressionism was about slowing down, capturing feelings and painting in the moment: the paintings were created ‘en plein air’ and often captured a change in time period, using light and shadows rendered using saturated colour palettes to suggest the atmosphere: something which was influenced by interior design at the time, with the use of bright colours becoming more popular.

The art movement, notably led by a group of Paris based artists including Claude Monet first appeared in a group exhibition during 1874 and was immediately rejected by critics who claimed impressionists were merely creating unfinished, sloppy sketches which used “vulgar” colours.

The paintings are recognisable by small fluid brushstrokes, soft palettes and a focus on the ever changing nature of light, they also have a strong sense of emotion and freedom. They offer a suggestion of form and movement rather than hyperrealism, recognisable by the bright unsaturated colours with shadows and highlights rendered with colour.

The initial rejection of impressionism is similar to how society responded to the emerging of dada art.

The art movement began during WWI in 1916 inside the avant-garde nightclub 'The Cabaret Voltaire' in Zurich as a response to the ongoing destruction of art as a result of war and shortly ended 6 years later, the group ironically ending due to being too diverse .

The name Dada, translating to 'yes, yes' in a few languages is a clear suggestion to what the movement was proposing: nonsense, it was a "war against war" responding to the chaos of conflict with its own and in turn creating a mockery of those in power. Dada art was merely "Echoing the tumultuousness of society" (Lesso, 2023b).

Within the book: Regarding the pain of others, Susan Sontag questions, 'What does it mean to protest suffering, as distinct from acknowledging it?' (Sontag, 2003) - I believe this is relevant to what dada artists were attempting to achieve, blatantly questioning the choices made by those in power.

It was a humorous protest against capitalism and the bourgeois, often quite satirical and rather visually unpleasant to view. Rather than creating photorealistic paintings or recreations of life, Dadaism is considered as 'anti art' - using collections of crude found objects and presenting them as high quality sculptures to form the 'ready made', a style which Marcel Duchamp introduced in order to explore the immediate value we place on artwork, the movement used collage to mock significant political figures along with performance pieces which, altogether, forced society to question and challenge arts convention in the modern world. Duchamp also worked under pseudonyms as a method to confront the romanticisation of the artist as a figure, destroying the expectations of great art as a result of a great artist, instead proposing that anybody has the potential.

When comparing Impressionism and dada art we can first acknowledge how similar they are in terms of response from the public. It's undeniable that in retrospect dadaism as a whole was displeasing and unsurprisingly short lived, yet to consider that both were deemed

outrageously controversial demonstrates how overtime, our understanding of art has been influenced by past movements. If for example impressionism was introduced during the 19th century, would it have quite the same impact as it did in the 19th century?

Another quality these art movements share is the visual simplicity, by removing the high quality and value, the artwork was no longer created for the upper classes and became more accessible. They broke down the need for social construct when viewing art, inviting everybody to understand.

Both movements were a response to war, a bourgeois consumerist society and industrialisation and yet had many opposing features.

Reference list

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