

Eleanor Morgan (1802145)
Creative Computer Games Design
Robert Jones

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Introduction

The world of art is an extraordinarily vast and complex matter with a multitude of layers that one person could spend a lifetime trying to delve into. There is so much to take in and so many different interpretations to be had and it's a world in which no one will ever be able to fully explain the meaning or reasoning of it, but it's because of these things that makes it such an exciting and inspiring world to be a part of.

Art is a way for us to be able to take a glimpse into the past and witness their history and by looking back at it we can see the changes and development they accomplished, but it also gives us insight into the artist's themselves who created these paintings. It is near impossible for an artist not to give a piece of themselves up when creating their works, whether we see it through the choices of colour how they applied the paint, a part of them will always seep in.

"Art is a universal expression of humanity, and simultaneously a meaningful mirror of the time and culture in which it is created."

(Kiefer, 2013, pg.7)

I will be looking briefly at the evolution of art and observing some of the key milestones and how they impacted and revolutionised the way we create art today. I also want to look at how we can see pieces of the artists' journey unfold along the centuries by analyzing certain pieces of work and how this reflects the stages of artistic improvement within an artist of today. My main focus will be within European paintings, mainly focusing on the Renaissance Era.

Keyword One: Perspective

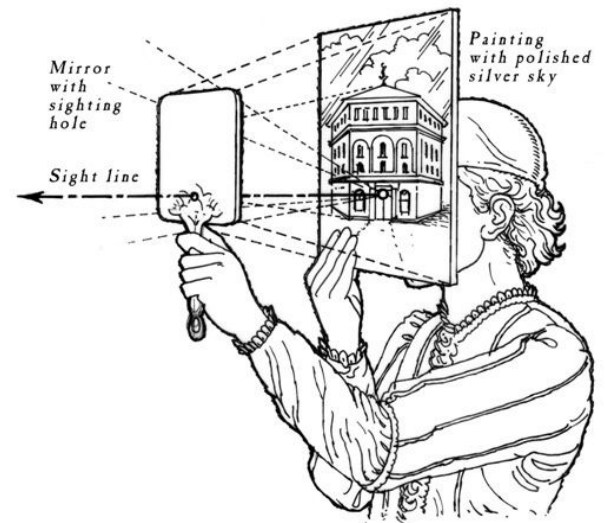
Fundamentals of art, form the core of any piece created, no matter what medium or purpose that piece serves, it is some of the most essential things for an artist to learn in order to progress their work to a higher quality. By understanding these rules of art it allows artists to more comprehensively create more complex forms and imagery and it gives them the tools to explore their ideas more in depth in ways they would not be able to do without the use of these basic principles.

There is no discernable way to determine a specific moment in time where a fundamental technique that would be used as a basis for all art was discovered as

there's plenty of instances where multiple people are known for being the pioneer of certain techniques. The main ways someone is known universally for having coined a technique is because they allowed that information to be passed down on a larger scale instead of it just being something known within certain circles or groups of artists.

One instance like this is with the discovery of linear perspective, being able to use perspective opens up a whole new realm in which the people depicted in these paintings can now live and breathe in a more lively environment and interact more realistically with the scenery around them opening up opportunities for new ways of storytelling and accurately portraying the real world that surrounds the artists.

It can be debated about who truly first discovered linear perspective but the main person you will find who was able to bring this to common knowledge was Filippo Brunelleschi, known as one of the founding fathers of Renaissance architecture in Florence, with his most notable pieces of work being the design of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. He conducted a series of experiments that lead to him being able to create accurate drawings of various buildings such as the Florence Baptistery.

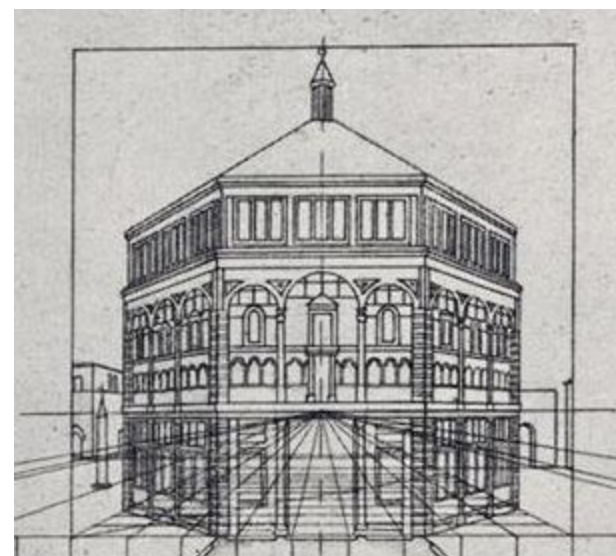


"The construction worked out by Alberti became based on the belief that no picture can resemble nature unless it is seen from a definite distance and location, and the diminution in size as a function of distance."

(Janson (2001-2019) was a useful source of information)

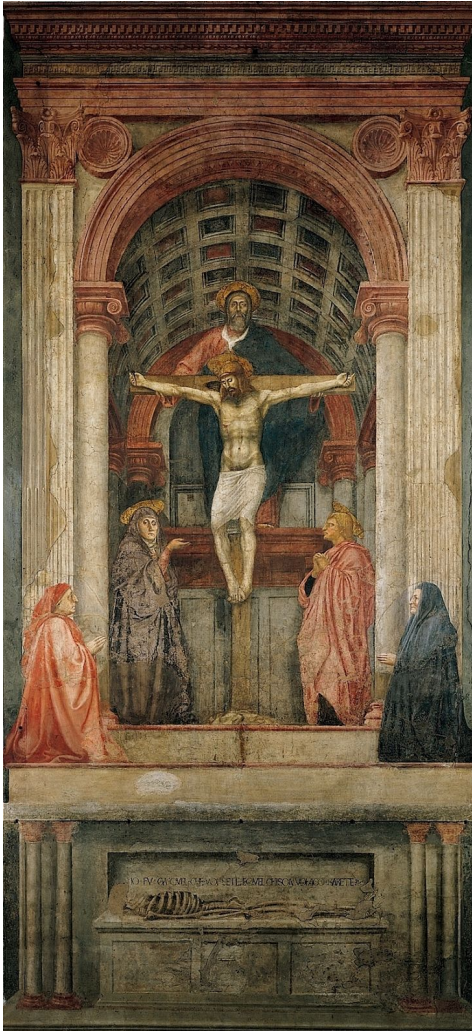
Brunelleschi's studies of linear perspective was then published in a book named *De Pictura* (Alberti, 1435) where it was able to become a guide for painters to learn from, which allowed this knowledge to be more widespread between artists.

"First of all about where I draw. I inscribe a quadrangle of right angles, as large as I wish, which is considered to be an open window through which I see what I want to paint. Here I determine as it pleases me the size of the men in my picture... Then, within this quadrangle, where it seems best to me, I make a point which occupies that place where the central ray strikes. For this it is called the centric point. This point is properly placed when it is no higher from the base line of the quadrangle than the height



of the man that I have to paint there. Thus both the beholder and the painted things he sees will appear to be on the same plane."

(Alberti, 1435, pg.22-43)



One prominent painting that is known for being one of the early cases of linear perspective is the Holy Trinity (Masaccio, 1426-1428). Whereas everything else around in the foreground appears to be rather flat and in a 2D space including the human figures the interior archways in the background look to be receding backwards into a vanishing point set somewhere behind Christ leading the eye to look directly at them. However upon further investigation there is a notion that perspective was being utilised well before 1400's, in fact there is evidence that suggests that the ancient Romans were using elements of perspective within their own work. You can see that there is clear use of it in multiple areas of this mural most noticeably in the centre walls, where the artist created sharp angles to suggest depth in the environment.

It isn't clear as to why perspective and other fundamentals like this became lost during these two time periods but most likely it was due to the fact that art as it will do, evolved and became something mainly used to represent the church especially during the Middle Ages and from that came restrictions in what the artist could freely express as it had to conform to what was required of them.

"In a typical painting of the late 13th century the human figures are flat and unreal-it is difficult to imagine them speaking. Buildings are symbolic objects, not places to

live in; the landscape is decorative but impossible to walk through. Near things and far, big things and small are shown without relation to one another; everything is confused. The artist indicates trees and hills, but he does not open a window on to a particular, believable piece of the world."

(Hale, 1975, pg. 11)

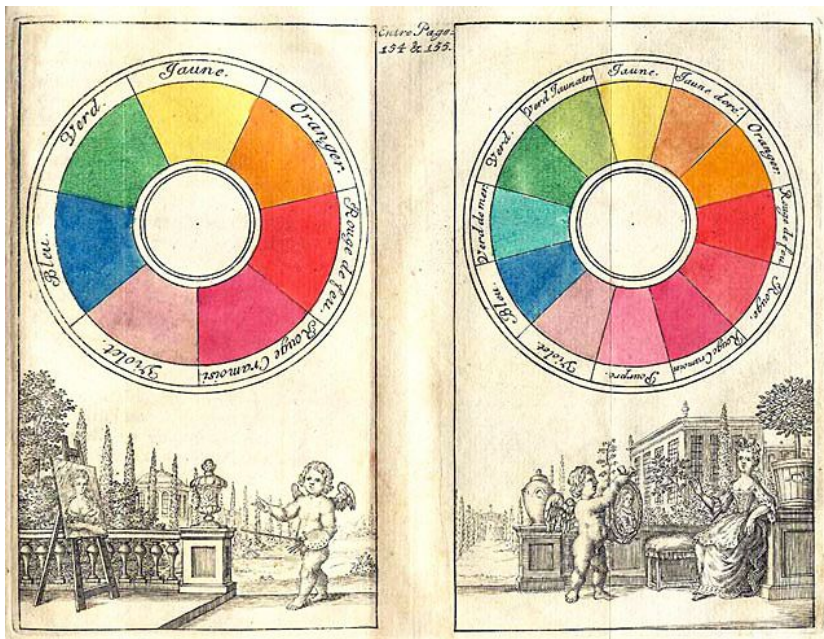
Even though perspective was lost for a period of time, it hasn't changed how heavily it has impacted how we create art today. We can manipulate perspective to create illusions to trick the audience or to simply create more



convincing scenes where the viewers believe in its existence no matter how dissimilar from reality it looks. It allows us to create drama and action from just the simple motion of looking at a view from a perspective we never see in our day to day lives. Perspective has become one of the key fundamentals that artists from all different backgrounds and mediums use in their work and will always be a solid tool to fall back onto no matter how much art evolves.

Keyword Two: Colour

Another major fundamental is colour theory, perhaps one of the most complex rules of art as there isn't a mathematical equation like there is in perspective. Colour can be used for the artist to purley express themselves or to help harmonize composition in a piece, whichever way it is used, it is made with both careful planning and a natural instinct to see beauty at the same time. There are various ways in which different groups of colour can be used such as analogous colours, complementary colours, triadic colours etc. and there's different factors to keep in mind that will also change the way in which we see colours. Being able to create colour groups like this became easier when Isaac Newton observed the way light traveled through a prism and was able to see all the colours in the spectrum and was a crucial moment in the way we observe light and colour.



"Artists were fascinated by Newton's clear demonstration that light alone was responsible for color. His most useful idea for artists was his conceptual arrangement of colors around the circumference of a circle, which allowed the painters' primaries (red, yellow, blue) to be arranged opposite their complementary colors (e.g. red opposite green), as a way of denoting that each complementary would enhance the other's effect through optical contrast."

(Taylor, (2017) was a useful source of information)

Colour doesn't only serve a purpose in creating something appealing to the eye, it is subjective and has different meanings to what those colours connote depending on the viewer and changes from person to person. In the modern age there are general meanings that are universally agreed upon for the most part about what certain colours invoke in us. For example the colour red usually means danger,

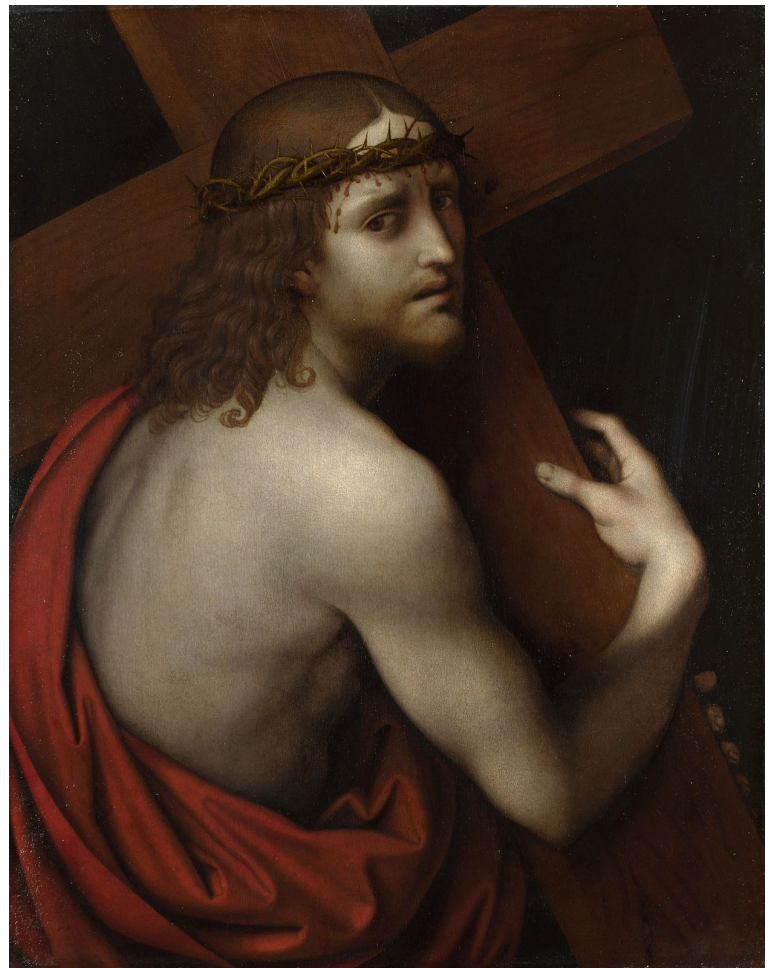
whereas blue symbolises calmness but again these can vary depending on who is viewing them.

"Since colour occupies so important a place in the series of elementary phenomena, filling as it does the limited circle assigned to it with fullest variety, we shall not be surprised to find that its effects are at all times decided and significant, and that they are immediately associated with the emotions of the mind."

(Goethe, 1810, pg. 304)

Throughout history certain colours are there to represent certain symbols different than what we think of today, a great example of this is within christian works of art. This piece Christ Carrying His Cross (Giampietrino, 1500-1550) is very simple in its use of its colours but has this overall warm tone to it due to all the browns and reds within it, the contrast of the red against their skin immediately jumps out highlighting the vibrancy of this colour. Within biblical paintings such as this, red has a different meaning than what we know as danger, it symbolises the Holy spirit and the presence of God. This is why Jesus is often seen throughout a multitude of historical paintings with a type of red dress around him or another artifact within the piece, because that colour at the time carried a different meaning than what we think of now. The use of colour isn't limited to symbolism, it is also a tool for storytelling and composition, for example again the only other place where we see the same saturated red colour as the clothing is in his face where he wears a crown of thorns, subconsciously connecting the two leading our eyes to jump back and forth between the two areas due to the fact that it's the most vibrant areas against the beige, desaturated colours.

Even though colour theory does help create more visually appealing paintings it does not mean that it is not subject to an artist's interpretation. The rules of art should be challenged when it can be, to both understand why those fundamentals are in place but to also experiment to see what you can get away with, and when it comes to colour there are multiple possibilities to experiment with and it should never be taken as final law. It is up to the artist themselves to decide what to do with the tools given to them, it is simply a guideline in which we can use in whatever way we please.



One popular instance of this happening was when Thomas Gainsborough actively went against what the rules dictated an artist must and must not do.



“When the great English painter Sir Joshua Reynolds explained to his students in the Royal Academy that blue should be reserved for the distinct backgrounds, for the fading hills on the horizon, his rival Gainsborough- so the story goes- wanted to prove that such academic rules are usually nonsense. He painted the famous ‘Blue Boy’ whose blue dress, in the formal foreground of the picture, stands out triumphantly against the warm brown of the background.”

(Gombrich, 1951, pg. 15)

The result of this rule break is evidence that the fundamentals of art isn't something that needs to be adhered to at all times, as we can see the use of blue isn't what's needed to create depth, it's how the different components work together to create that sense of depth.

As the principles of colour theory is so open it has allowed artists today to freely express themselves through the use of colour and has let that freedom give them space to create vibrant pieces of work but to

also create artworks that are toned down and desaturated. It has moved into a place where pure emotions drive the colours forward and is no longer just a tool to serve a functional purpose. Even though colour is completely free flowing in nature, it is nevertheless an essential part of art.

Keyword Three: Comparison

There are a lot of similarities to be drawn from artists dating as far back as the 1200's to artists today, through the history of art we can see this gradual increase in quality and knowledge of artists as a collective whole, and can see how it evolved from simple 2D outlines of figures to intricate landscapes. This development of art is a reflection of the artistic journey one will go through today, there are the same learning curves an artist will face and the same way of visualizing the world. It shows the beginning stages of an artist all the way up to a professional level.

In the early periods of art we were still visualizing what we saw in symbols, not thinking of the world as a true 3D space only creating the idea of what was real without actually truly looking at the forms in front of us. People, objects, spaces were only a symbolic representation of real life put down onto the 2D surface not something that could be a believable living and breathing thing. This way of thinking and way of drawing harkens back to the way children draw today, with basic symbols of what they can recall from their memories, getting out of this mindset is when artists can truly begin to create worlds in their paintings that feel more alive.



In the next stage there is a significant improvement, there is a basic understanding of human anatomy and form but everything is still outlined and each individual thing is blocked out with the same amount of detail all around. There is no indication of creating groupings to allow areas of rest, every single thing in the piece has the same level of visual importance and lacks direction. This is yet another stage of art development that an artist of today will go through, it's at a point where truly understanding the fundamentals of art comes into play and by doing this will allow them to improve their artistic skill.

From here on we can see drastic improvements in the overall quality. There is more awareness of how a 3D light environment works and there are clear focal points in which to guide the viewer's eyes around the piece. There are now obvious signs where light and shadow merge

together in groups creating a more dynamic composition. There is also added emotion and drama that can now be fully expressed because they are no longer held back by knowledge that they previously lacked. This is now at a stage in modern times where the artist can be considered of a more professional standard.



So from just looking at a few pieces of art through the different centuries we can see how their development is the same way we develop now as artists but instead of it being a collective of artists evolving for 100's of years, it is done in just one individual artist's lifetime. We at this point in time have access to thousands of resources in order for us to use to help us along our artistic journeys and there is such a widespread increase in how much art is being created today that is nowhere near the same amount of what used to be made, we are in a point of time where there has never been such an influx of art seen before.

The Question

From researching and learning more about the history of art and how it reflects artists today, It has led me to think about multiple ideas on what developments could be made in the future of art and what else there is to learn in terms of fundamentals and techniques. I wish to pursue this further for my dissertation and discuss theories about how it would even be possible for us to find something new. Whether it means the discovery of a new colour, something in the way technology enhances our sight or do we simply just need to use the past as a framework for how we create today, similar to what the masters from the Renaissance era did to enhance their own work, is this where we would find our answers.

"To go forward it was necessary to go back; to advance from the Middle Ages, it was necessary to return to the antiquity and relearn the lessons which had enabled Rome to produce her great civilization."

(Hale, 1975, pg. 13)

Are there certain techniques that the artists of the past used that are now lost to the artists of today due to the technology we use, where it's no longer required for us to learn the same methods that they had because of the sheer difference in the tools and resources available to us? Is it even possible for us to discover something new that would completely change the rules of art or are we stuck in an era of expressionism and have seemingly reached the end of those advancements? Overall the question I choose to ask and discuss within my dissertation is, what is the next major step in art and how would that impact the art world?

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