



Mary Cassatt

Impressionism

Impressionism is a 19th-century art movement, originally developed in France. It is based on capturing natural light by working in open air, painting natural subjects or situations. Due to sunlight being fleeting, painters had to work rapidly. This led to the characterising style of impressionism being small, thin and visible brush strokes, open composition, focus on natural lighting and how it changes, ordinary subjects and the representation of natural movement within the artwork.





Mary Cassatt's primary art discipline was visual arts. She created many artworks over her life. Although she experimented in other forms of art, her primary visual art discipline was painting. Her paintings were what gained her recognition in the art world and were what she continued to make over the course of her art career. Mary Cassatt mainly focused on creating paintings that were oil on canvas.

Art Disciplines



Chosen Artwork: A Woman and a Girl Driving. (1881)

Aesthetic Qualities

Art Elements

Colour: The colours used in this painting are dark and neutral. Warmer colours are used in the foreground of the painting to separate it from the cooler green in the background. The colours blend together to create a soft and peaceful setting. Colour is also used to add symbolism and meaning behind the artwork. The adults within the painting are painted in darker and harsher colours, whereas the little girl is dressed in a bright and happy pink. This furthers Mary Cassatt's message about the innocence of youth and learning.

Shape: Shape is utilised in this image to create a natural feel. The painting consists mainly of organic shapes, as the original inspiration has been drawn from real life. The use of organic shapes in this artwork creates a realistic look. As the artwork has been created in an impressionist style, the organic shapes help in adding reality to the subjects and definition to the overall painting.



Aesthetic Qualities

Art Principles

Contrast: Contrast is developed in this artwork through the distinction of the foreground and background. The dark forest in the background is pushed out of focus and created with less texture and detail. This allows for the subject in the foreground- the people and the cart- to stand out more against the forest. Although this contrast is not stark, it is noticeable enough to direct the eye across the painting.

Emphasis: Emphasis in this painting is directed to the little girl. The placement and colouring of the girl allows the viewer to be drawn to this aspect of the artwork. She is also placed in front of all other objects and has an abundance of light directed towards her, drawing attention as the primary focus. Having the little girl as the point of focus for the painting adds to the message behind the art.



Materials

The materials used to create this artwork include oil, canvas and paint brushes. Oil on canvas was Mary Cassatt's main method of art. In this painting, to capture the natural light, small and thin paint brushes have been used. These smaller brushes allow for more defined brush strokes that capture the light and intricate details. The use of these brushes can be seen in the artwork through the blotted light of the trees in the background and the defined yet streaky light on the subjects of the painting.

Techniques

A technique used to create this artwork is the use of small, loose and thin brush strokes. This is a commonly used techniques in impressionist paintings, as it allows the natural light to be captured. These smaller brush-strokes allow for detail in faster periods of time. It captures the natural light as the colour can be added to the composition efficiently, and then the changes in light can be accounted for with more brush strokes over time. These stokes can be seen in certain parts of the painting, especially near the base of the cart being driven.

Processes

A process used to create this artwork is the utilisation of natural subjects and environment. This process is a key aspect of impressionist artworks. The use of an ordinary subject matter allows the subjects to be capture with efficiency and ease. The natural environment as light is used to add detail to the painting and further the development of the artistic elements and principles within the artwork.

The background of the slide is a reproduction of an Impressionist painting, likely by Mary Cassatt, showing a woman and a child in a natural outdoor setting. The style is characterized by visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color.

Historical and Cultural Context

This artwork was created during the impressionist movement, which it can be linked to. The impressionist movement occurred in the 19th century. The beginning of the movement was in France in the 1860s. Over time, it spread to several other parts of the world. The movement was based on the premise of nature and painting organic subjects in authentic lighting. The artwork 'A woman and a girl driving' was created in 1881, at the height of impressionism in France. This artwork shows the key elements of impressionism as it was created in a natural outdoor setting and uses the native lighting. Mary Cassatt also drew inspiration for this artwork from events and situations that were occurring at the time. One of her main cultural focuses was the importance of women, especially mothers. Most of her artworks, including this one, depict women providing care for their children. This was to draw attention to sexism that was occurring during the time period and was taking a stand for female empowerment.



Conclusion

Summary and Personal Opinion

The background of the slide is a detailed Impressionist painting, likely by Mary Cassatt, showing a dense cluster of pink and white flowers, possibly peonies, with vibrant green leaves and stems. The brushwork is visible and textured, characteristic of the Impressionist style.

Bibliography

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