

Introducing Modern Western Art : Movements and Artists
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Lecture – 05
Beginning(s) of Modern Art – 2 (Impressionism & Post-Impressionism)

Hello viewers. Welcome to MOOC's online course on Introduction to Modern Western Art, 5th module first week. And this last module of the first week is also about the beginnings of modern art. And today we will be looking at two very significant art movements, which took place in late 19th century. And little bit of early 20th century as well, called Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.

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- 
- **IMPRESSIONISM**
 - **POST-IMPRESSIONISM**

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Photography

Not just a new
way of making
images . . .

a new way of
seeing



Now, impressionism in post-impressionism these 2 movements are not necessarily kind of quantized art movements. This simply happened in response to certain situations that developed in the western world particularly in Europe during the mid 19th century and late 19th century, particularly after romanticism and realism art movements.

Now, before we move on to discuss impressionism and post-impressionism, let us take note of something very briefly that is advent of photography. By 18, 1840 around that time camera was invented, and photography gradually and rather very fast, developed as a new medium of replicating the reality visually and it become a very powerful tool.

So, photography appeared to be not just a new way of making images, but it is taught ask a new way of seeing images looking at the visual experience is around.

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Félix Nadar

Sarah Barnhardt

1865

gelatin-silver print



Let us look at a few photographic examples from mid 19th century onwards for example, this one by very, very famous photographer called Felix Nadar who took this photograph in 1865 as earlier as that.

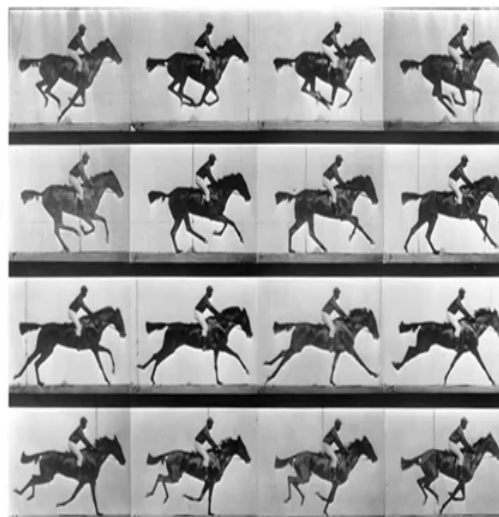
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Eadweard Muybridge

Horse Galloping

1878

collotype print

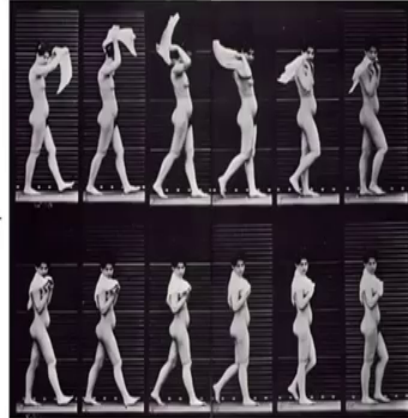


Then by Muybridge horse galloping 1878 and these are different kind of a technology called collotype prints. And what photography did as far as painters were concerned. It showed the painters that how camera could actual capture the details of a movement for

example, which our naked eye tends to miss out on it is difficult to notice each and every detail of a moving object where as camera can do that.

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Eadweard Muybridge
Walking and Throwing a Handkerchief
1884-85
gelatin-silver print



So, in not that photography was posing a stiff competition for the painters, but because of this wonderful visual developments and technological developments, happening in the field of photography the art the visual art. Part of painting and sculpture certainly got a signal they received a signal that will be now they have to do something else, because that very realistic kind of paintings which the painters used to do before was gradually becoming irrelevant.

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Etienne Jules Marey
Chronophotograph
1883a
gelatin-silver print



Because photography can do that a camera can actually replicate and represent a reality perhaps better than many painter.

So, photography kept on developing very rapidly and it kept on changing not only our visual experience, but also our expectations from a produced image.

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Dead Confederate Soldier with Gun,
Petersburg, Virginia
1865



And with camera a photographer could reach places spots, areas, which was difficult for a painter to reach. So, the access for a photographer seems to be very wide. The ranges extremely open possibilities and multiple. So, in the week of these in the context of this

what would be the new position, what would be the new ideas that painter should now ideality looking at.

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Gertrude Käsebier

Blessed Art Thou among Women

ca. 1900

platinum print on Japanese tissue
9 3/8 x 5 1/2 in.



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Impressionism


- Photography changed painting immensely, when artists like Monet discovered how photography worked - the capturing of individual grains of light - they began to change the concept they had of art and painting.
 - Trying to capture things realistically via painting was pointless since a camera could do that.
- Rebelled against hard lines of neoclassicism - There are no hard lines in nature, lines don't exist in nature. Concern of the painter should be more with light and color.

So, impressionism in no way is connected to the advent of photography, because photography changed painting immensely this is also true. When artists like Monet discovered how photography worked the capturing of individual grains of light. Monet and other artists they also began to change the concept they had of art and painting.

Trying to capture things realistically via painting was pointless since a camera could do that.

So, impressionist painters rebelled against hard lines of neoclassicism. There are no hard lines in nature this is what the painter's impressionist painters noticed. And thanks to photography they notice that lines do not exist in nature. Concern of the painter should be more with light and colour. Because light was more or less taken for granted or light was used as a tool to create the caress of light and shade. But the fact that light can actually create the form the fact that light can be considered as a component perform was something new in the history of painting, and impressionists were trying to do that precisely.

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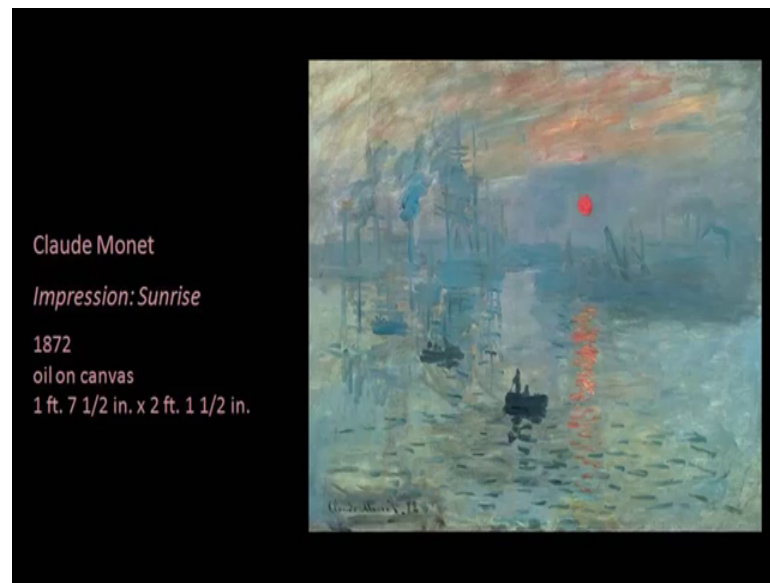
Painters felt that objects are not so much things in themselves as they are agents for the absorption of color and light. Shadows are not black or gray, but tend to take on a color complementary to object.

Tried to brighten up paintings by using primary colors to increasingly convey the illusion of sunlight through a prism.

Because the painters and impressionist painters felt that objects are not so much things in themselves as they are agents for the absorption of colour and light. Probably they took this idea from the when latest developments in the optical science. So, shadows are not black or grey, but tend to take on a colour complementary to that object.

We tried to brighten up paintings by using primary colours to increasingly convey the illusion of sunlight through a prism. So, as a result the colour pallet and particularly the ranges of tones and colours in impressionist paintings became quite prismatic in a sense.

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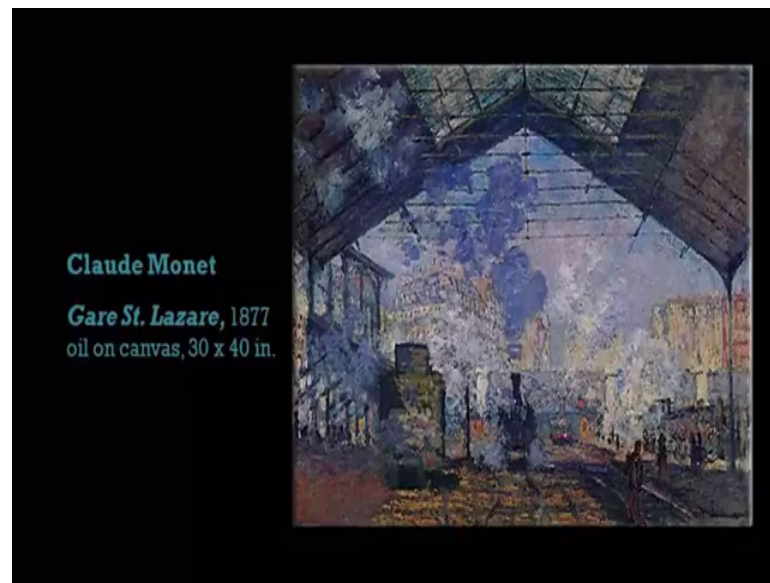
And the very notion of colour, the very reason for the existence of colour in a painting also changed a grating. And along with that of course, subject matter which had been undergoing some changes right from the romanticism period.

The Claude Monet this particular painting called impression sunrise painted in 1872 is considered to be the first impressionist painting ever painted. Do Claude Monet himself that realize that he was creating history, but he did realized that his painting when you first put it on display, and not many people could actually accept this painting. This painting received severe criticism very harsh criticism, and many art critics.

In fact, criticized this painting by saying that this painting is a sketchy painting, this painting is in incomplete painting, this painting does not have the clarity of lines or forms. This is a clear less painting, and they further said that painting is such a grand activity you cannot do a painting simply based on ephemeral a very movemented inspiration or impression. It has to have a grand content which is particular painting was apparently missing according to the art critics.

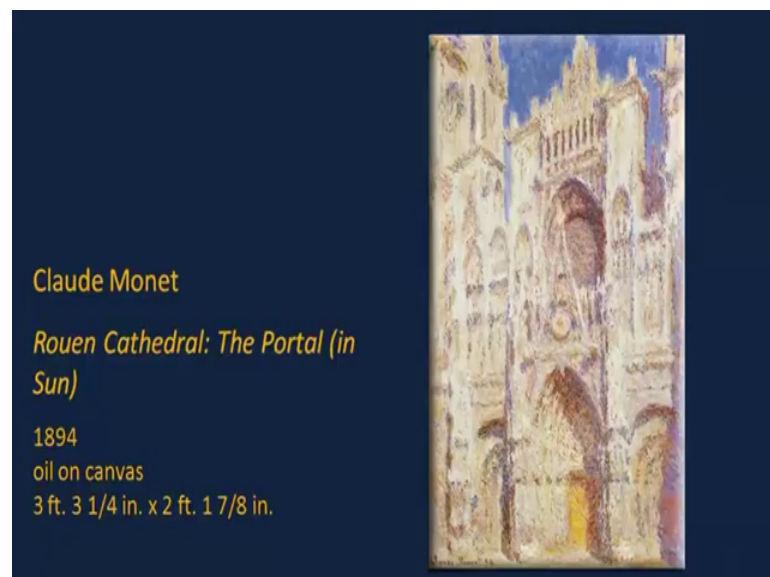
Interestingly later on when Claude Monet painting this particular an other paintings and paintings sent by other painters who also followed a similar idea of painting got accepted in the history. Their entire movement or the title the name of the movement was derived from the title of this painting and hence the movement came to be known as impressionism movement.

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Look at this painting by Claude Monet, once again a similar approach. A similar concern can be observed in this painting as well, where Monet is not at all bothered with the details or the clarity of the details, but he is more bothered and concerned and more interested to deal with the role, that light and shade and light and darkness and it is tonalities play in constituting and image a visual image.

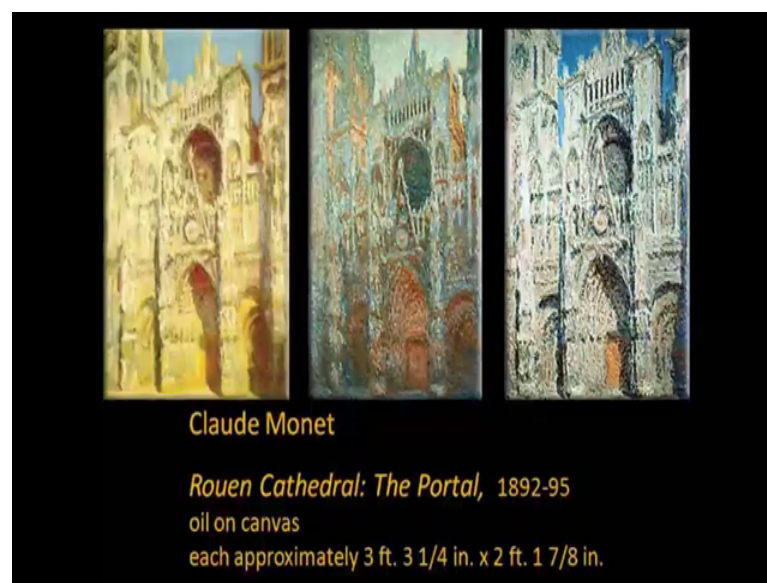
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And as a result somebody like Claude Monet would be all most like a study that artists are usually expected to go out and study may be an architecture or figures or land scale or an object.

So, similarly Monet used to go out outdoor, and he is to study the same object in this case for example, this particular cathedral called Rouen cathedral again and again. In order to captured the essence of this particular architecture, not the static a essence, but the changing essence.

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In fact, what is shown in his several studies of this painting of the same architecture is how the appearance that looks like the impression of a solid architecture like this one, like Rouen cathedral keeps on changing as the direction of the light changes. As the quality of the light changes, as a colour of the light changes the object and in this case the architecture also changes.

Now, this was certainly something new a very, very new proposition, because until impressionism painters took light or the relationship between light and object for granted. Light might be changing the deduction of light also changes, but apart from a slight tonal change the general impression of the object architecture or figure has always remained more or less static and same.

Now, this is going to change once in a for all once the impression needs to movements gear sub.

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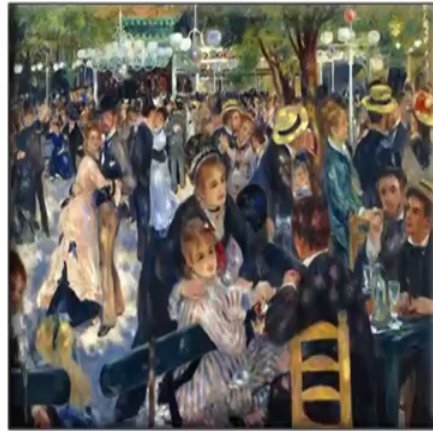


And other painters not only Monet, but Monet then Pisado Sisley, they will all be more or less following and they will be studying how the quality the character of the object changes along with the change in the light. Because their premise was light is something that is not constant. This is a very important premised based on which their entire movement called impressionism developed. Light is something that is not constant light is something that is constantly changing, shifting; not only in terms of direction, but also in terms of the quality of light, A.

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Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Le Moulin de la Galette, 1876
oil on canvas, 4 ft. 3 in. x 5 ft. 8 in.



B, According to impressionist artists, not only that light changes enhance the colour and tone of the object on which the light is falling is changing, but even the colour of the shadow keeps changing. Until impressionist paintings colour of the shadow was thought to be something that is fixed. Little brownish, darkish, but in impressionist paintings you can see that the car shadow shadows on the ground they also assume different colours depending on the surrounding colours or colours of the surrounding objects.

So, the fact that life the visual reality around is something that is not static is something that is not fixed is something that keeps shifting in changing all the time. And that how do you captured these changing and shifting character in a painting which is also fixed within a given frame. Impressionist painters have always tried to solve this paradox by inventing new methods of painting, and also innovating new ideas of painting. So, it is not only in landscape paintings you can see a similar phenomenon happening also in paintings like this by Renoir, where the subject matter is the cell impression or may be a party gut of a middle class society.

Even here you can see that the flickering light that you can see the shifting light is visible very evidently, and perhaps it has got something to do with a life also which is as shifting as nature.

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Edgar Degas, now he is also looking at the possibilities of capturing a movement that itself is not static, and hence he selects ballet rehearsal. He selects different postures of dancers and ballet dancers as his subject matters. And at the same time the fact that his paintings look cropped, almost like a photograph, are also an impact of his exposure to photography. Otherwise Degas' paintings would have looked a very truncated, very incomplete.

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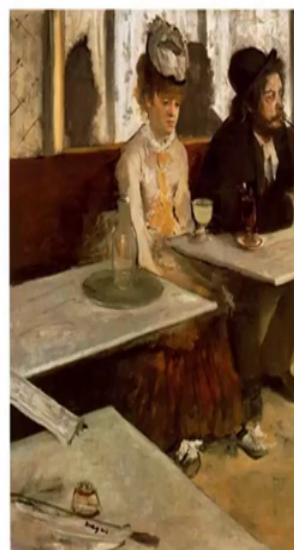
Edgar Degas

L'absinthe

1876

oil on canvas

36 1/4 x 26 3/4 in.



But in the light of the new aesthetic ideas Degas' paintings do not look truncated, but from the point of view of a classical painting Degas' paintings would look in complete truncated, and even the composition would have looked disbalanced.

So, even like Degas and Monet, Monet not only that they are inventing new methods of dealing with the shifting character of light, but they are also looking for new subject matters and new compositions. Composition becomes immensely important for the impressionist painters.

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Post Impressionism

- A Collection of artists with very diverse, individual, styles influenced by the Impressionists
 - in fact, Post Impressionism was a reaction to the limited impressionist view that paintings should be all about light. Post Impressionists wanted to do more.
- Post-Impressionists continued using vivid colors, thick application of paint, distinctive brushstrokes and real-life subject matter, but they were more inclined to emphasize geometric forms, to distort form for expressive effect, and to use unnatural or arbitrary color

Now, post-impressionism is in some ways a continuation of impressionism, but at the same time it is also slightly different from impressionism, how?

For example in post-impressionism you find a collection of artists with very diverse individual styles influenced by the impressionists. So, it is here that post-impressionism is a continuation of impressionism, but it seems that post-impressionism was also a reaction to the limited impressionist view that paintings should be all about light. Post impressionists wanted to do something more.

Post impressionists continued using vivid colours no doubt about that, they continued applying thick layers of paint and pigments with distinctive brushstrokes and real life subject matters, but they were more inclined to emphasize geometric forms like Paul

cezard, to distort from to expressive effect like vangog and to use unnatural or arbitrary colour like polgo gag.

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Paul Cézanne
Mount Sainte Victoire
1897
oil on canvas



So, this is how many post impressionist paintings look like.

For example if you look at this painting by Cezanne, Mount Sainte Victoire. You can see that how the land scale has been painted not simply as a view, but as a pretext to deal with the relationship between line, light font space and also a vision a very personal individual vision of cezard, towards this phenomenon called land scale Paul Gauguin.

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Paul Gauguin
The Vision after the Sermon
1888
oil on canvas
2 ft. 4 3/4 in. x 3 ft. 1/2 in.



Look at this painted by Paul Gauguin. Here he is obviously, referring to some kind of mythical subject matter. But the sense of colour that is applying to his painting is absolutely unconventional, nonacademic and in that sense arbitrary very, very arbitrary, but; obviously, he is having his own logic he is having his own sense of why and how he is using the colours and he what says. Then of course, you have one of the most famous painters of all times Vincent van Gogh.

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Vincent van Gogh
The Night Café
1888
oil on canvas
2 ft. 4 1/2 in. x 3 ft.



Now, whatever he paints it could be his interior room or a night café, or a starry night, or cornfield, or a simple sunflower or portrait of his strains or himself self portraits, he is looking at the possibilities of using line colour forms space, in a way that expression of the subject matter gets a privilege or the most privilege over anything else. And it is also true that in many of his paintings Van Gogh is not really bothered with perspective or the correct anatomical features and all that.

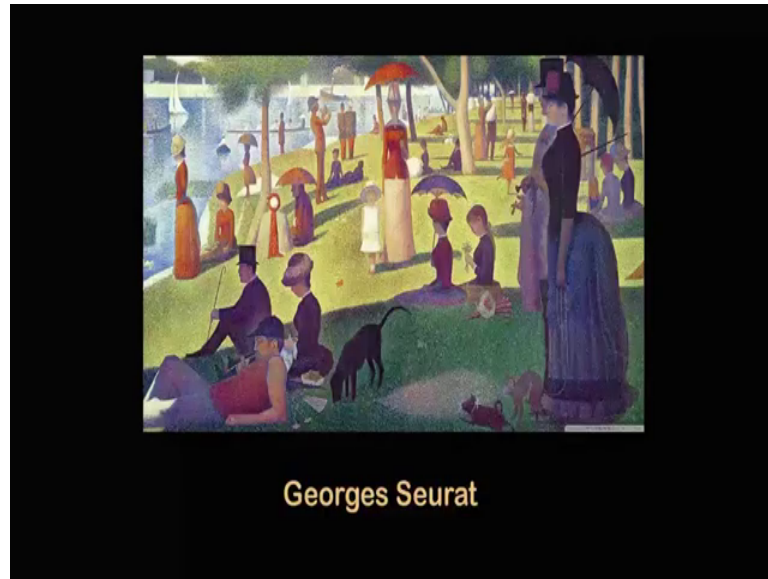
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His bothered with expression, he is also following his initiative sense of colour space inform like the way romantic painters also (Refer Time: 20:34).

In post impression is spheroid we also have this very interesting artist called Toulouse Lautrec. And his subject matters are mostly about people who he used to observe in opera in theater houses, in bars and in brothels. Lautrec had hardly done in land scale, but the way he painted the people his subjects, and the way he empathized with them with very sketchy drawing based kind of idea is amazing because the very notion of oil painting was different at that point of time.

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Equally exceptional was George Seurat another French painter who belonged to that entire movement if we combine both the movements impressionism and post-impressionism, there we will find many painters like deka Seurat, who were part of both his movement both his faces Seurat was one of them.

Now, Seurat went on to develop a particular technique of painting called pointillism. If we have a closer up look at his painting you will find that his forms, whether it is a figure or tree, or dogs, or water or (Refer Time: 22:07) anything they do not have a solid entity. All his forms are met up of small tiny dots or points. He developed pointillism because this is what he wanted his paintings to perform the task of breaking down forms into small little tiny light particles.

Possibly Seurat was greatly inspired by the developments of optical science and that point of time, go to applying that knowledge to a creative work like a painting was a big challenge. Of course, after Seurat there were a few painters who followed this method and that is how this kind of painting got this name called pointillism, but pointillism itself was not an art movement. Pointillism was a technical method.

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Each painter in the movement pursued unique, personal subject matter and, while sharing stylistic goals with the other Post-Impressionists, had a personal form of expression.

For example, Cézanne abandoned the Impressionists' virtuoso depiction of evanescent light effects in order to pursue his preoccupation with the underlying structures of natural forms and the problem of unifying surface patterns with spatial depth.

Both Gauguin and van Gogh rejected the indifferent objectivity of Impressionism in favor of a more personal, spiritual expression.

Seurat and his followers concerned themselves with Pointillism, the systematic use of tiny dots of color.

But at least when Seurat was falling this technical method he was able to arrive at a wonderful visual resort. May be his figures often look very study, stiff almost like they are not able to move their fixed in specific position and points. Yet his figures, his land, his sky, his light they all have a tremendous vibrant quality. And this quality connects Seurat paintings to both impressionism and post-impressionism in a very meaningful way. And each painter in this movement pursued unique personal subject matter, and while sharing stylistic course with the other post impression is impressionist painters. They all had a personal form of expression which is quiet obedient when you go through the paintings by Cezanne, Gauguin, Seurat Lautrec, van Gogh and all.

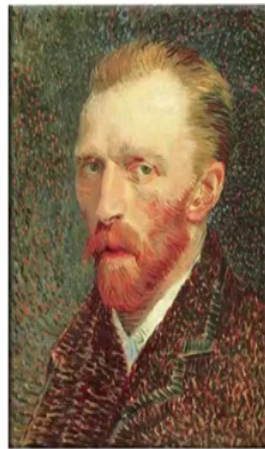
For example Cezanne abandoned the impressionist virtuoso depiction of evanescent light effects in order to pursue; his preoccupation with the underlying structures of natural forms, and the problem of unifying surface patterns with spatial depth. Both Gauguin and van Gogh rejected the indifferent objectivity of impressionism, in favor of a more personal spiritual expression. Seurat and his followers concerned themselves with pointillism the systematic use of tiny dots of colour.

So, the diversity that is evident in post impressionist period is quiet interesting. At the same time all this painters and along with their previous masters, who belong to impressionist period or impressionist movement, they signaled absolutely clear deviation from anything or everything that was traditional. And that was one of the reasons why

many of their paintings, like van Gogh's paintings one of his earlier paintings many of these painters had a tough life when they were at the top of their (Refer Time: 25:57) in the sense that very few people during that time could actually understand what exactly they were doing.

By and large most of these painters were completely misunderstood by their contemporaries. And today of course, we got accustomed to their paintings we are able to appreciate these paintings, we are able to enjoy their paintings, but just imagine how these paintings must have appeared to the eyes of art critics and art lovers, and art viewers who were familiar with and more habituated with a certain kind of art tradition. Against which impressionist and post impressionist paintings; obviously, looked in complete sketch a careless, and also meaningless to many people. Because they failed impressionist and in post impressionist paintings failed to satisfy the norms of the traditional western art.

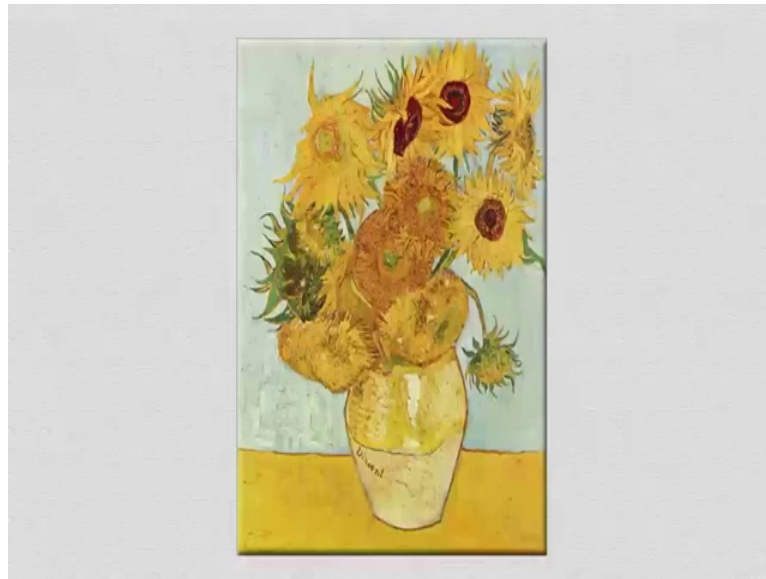
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Van Gogh
Self-portrait

Yet these painters like van Gogh, Cezanne, Lautrec then in untaunted they went ahead with their ideas, because they were convinced with what they were doing.

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And as a result today we should feel grateful to these artists to this movements, because it is because of them that modern art has reached where it has reached today. They pay the way they liberated the history of modern art from the shackles of the norms of the traditional art.

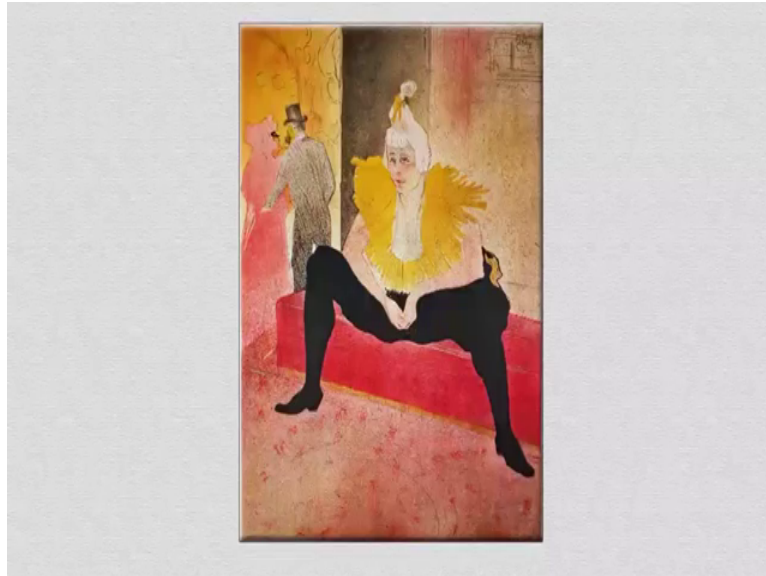
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And that is why today in van Gogh's paintings we do not have for example; any problem to appreciate the solid sky, very agitated brush work. Extremely imaginative colour

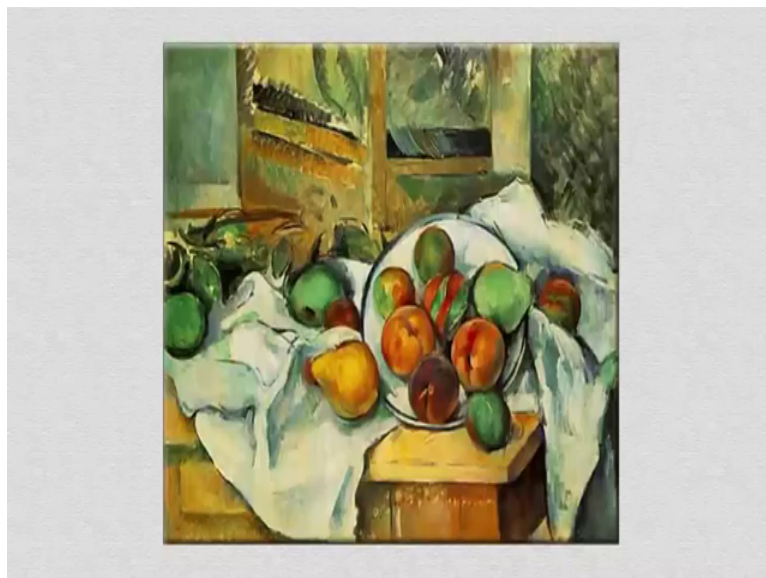
pallet, but definitely it must have looked very odd and unexcitable to the people who were more familiar and more comfortable with the traditional art.

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This is by Lautrec a painting like this, without any grand subject matter even in terms of composition it must have looked tilted (Refer Time: 28:46) balanced.

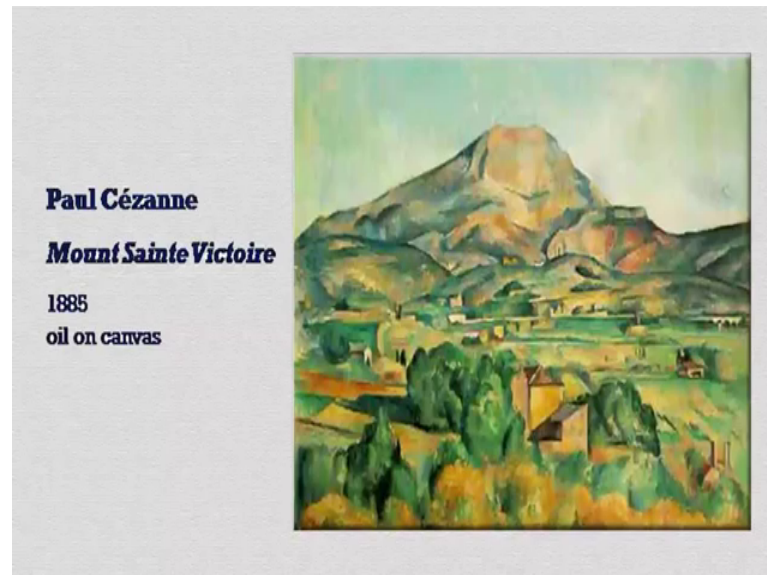
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But today we know how to admire these paintings. Or for that matter a still like by seiza were there is a sense that the fruits are about to fall off from the fruit bowl perspective is not study at all. There is a sense of tilted sense of topples, but yet there is a very strong

substantial feel about every object and the entire composition, which makes Cezanne paintings so admirable.

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If that Paul Cezanne has been considered by many art historians as the true beginner of modern art, why? Apart from various reasons the fact that somebody like Pablo Picasso one of the greatest icons of modern western art would be inspired by Cezanne's paintings. And very soon in early 20 century Picasso would be introducing a very radical art movement called cubism. In fact, this incident makes Cezanne the true beginner of modern art.

So, we have been looking at the several beginnings of modern art. And from the next week we will be looking at all the major early movements of modern art which took place from early 20th century.

Thank you.