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# Cubism Art Movement, and Its Analytical and Synthetical Forms

Developed in the early part of the twentieth century, Cubism introduced a reconstruction of space and the ideas of space being comprised of geometric and mathematical forms. As a result of artists no longer reflecting actual subjects and observations, it was common for people to reject the changes in art, as there was a new reality being introduced to the world and it wasn't easily understood. On the other hand, it could be said that rather than introducing new interiors, Cubism examined the notion of space as multi-dimensional and multi-durational. The qualities of interiority were also challenged by Cubism, as people's sensory experiences changed visually.

Breaking with the traditional pictorial technique of one-point perspective, the Cubist movement offered a new reality of space; one that was centred around human experience. As it was the principle of drawing, spatial perceptions were demonstrated through geometric figures, leading to an abstraction of what viewers have been previously taught to see. Rather than a literal representation of a subject, this abstraction involved an emphasis on the qualities of space, mass and volume; the concept of which was considered a 'revolutionary approach to the depiction. French poet, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) argued that it was due to the artist's intention '...to find a pleasure other than the one which the spectacle of natural things could just as well provide' that literal representation was no longer of importance. Ultimately, Cubism is distinguished by 'not an art of painting, but an art of conception', referring to the concept of reality, or one that has been fabricated in order to express three dimensions. The movement emphasises the notion that three dimensions cannot be shown through rendering reality as it is, rather, it requires the qualities of forms to be disfigured and rearranged. In terms of making revolutionary approaches, Cubism also offered a new vantage point of height.

In the new age of the machine, the Eiffel Tower was a structure that became a sort of monument for the people, giving them a different view of the world, as everything previously had been one-dimensional and at one level. The new age of the machine also meant that there was a significant interest in alternate ways of seeing, which is reflected by Robert Delaunay's, 'Windows' (1912)'. Inspired by the Eiffel Tower's light refractions, the painting captures not an 'actual subject', but rather, the atmospheric changes in light over time. The notion that space is comprised of multiple moments and views in time emphasises the interactive and ongoing quality of time that can reveal beyond what the eyes already see.

In turn, the dissection of space that the Cubists introduced revealed surfaces and facets that

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combined to create either a fragmented image, or a composition that became more recognisable to the viewer. This faceting meant that space could be pulled apart to reveal other material qualities and views, as opposed to having a singular volume of space. Through this method of arrangement, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were able to analyse shape and form further, leaving the final image open to interpretation for the viewer. It is for the viewer that they left the responsibility of ‘...preoccupying themselves with possible new measures of space’. As a result, it could be said that Delaunay’s painting reflects the analytic phase of Cubism (1908-1912), that saw an overlay in views and angles of the Eiffel Tower, in order to capture all sides. Variations in transparency, as well as the intersecting lines suggest that the space is infinite and encourages alternate readings of the painting.

Alternatively, the ambiguity left by the Cubists also results in a lack of understanding towards the endpoint and what the viewer is appreciating. As expressed by critic Pierre Reverdy in 1917, ‘this confusion has now lasted long enough...not only among the public, but among the artists themselves’, emphasising that the movement was never a coherent one. This new perception introduced by the Cubists posed the issue that the viewer is able to see art through an artist’s perspective, however, they may not have any other perception of the world and humanity other than through that new art. Conflicted emotions expressed by artists, Mr de Saint-Marceaux and Mr. Denys Peuch, who referred to the movement respectively as an ‘invasion of systematic ugliness in art’ and that ‘to wish to express life with geometric forms is to defy common sense’, highlights the issue that people of the time were unable to reach the same conclusion if they weren’t able to share the same mentality as the new painters. However, Cubism encouraged that freedom to depict reality however the artists wanted, which also intrigued others.

Furthermore, Cubism’s multi-dimensional depiction of interiors altered the way in which people experienced space. Apollinaire stated that these new ‘painters offered us works which are more cerebral than sensual’<sup>8</sup>, with the implication that Cubist art requires the viewer to make sense of what they’re seeing. In comparison to traditional art, it allows the viewer to feel a certain way. As shown by the complex forms of the Eiffel Tower in Figure 1, it challenges the initial thought that art merely evokes emotions. However, once that notion is dismissed, the viewer is better able to have a different kind of sensory experience that influences thought and reason, over aesthetics, which was a notion that the Cubists also prioritised.

In a similar way, an interior is a condition that triggers a response from the viewer, rather than one that is being affected by external factors. It could be said that Cubism sought to challenge intangible responses of the viewer so that they were seeing something differently. Rather than just feeling a certain way, ‘...the Cubist image both acts as a source of intense visual stimulation, and — like any developing language — stretches the mind in response to its novel and fructifying idioms’. With reference to Braque’s ‘Mandora’ (1910), the muddy brown

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aesthetic encourages the viewer to see things as the eyes see it, but not as the mind processes it. What is initially seen as a musical instrument can also be interpreted as a fragmented series of reverberations created by the mandora and is felt by the viewer. Cubism therefore introduced an embodied experience through viewing art. Rather than creating a physical interior, the movement encouraged sensory experiences which are significant in creating interiority, as intimacy is the physiological factor that can allow people to feel.

Following a closer consideration, Cubism was less to do with the introduction of new interior designs. Rather, it brought into place the idea of flattening space. However, in turn it created many viewpoints. The next phase of 'synthetic' Cubism (1912-1914) was distinguished by a breaking down of individual elements and reconstructing forms and tactile surfaces through collage. Although it made the subjects and the reading of images clearer, it posed the question of what kind of meaning the artists intended to express. Picasso's 'Violin Hanging On The Wall' (1912) expresses the idea that individual elements come appear to form a sort of collage, whilst also becoming an image. While it introduces the making of new objects from various materials, the collage seems to go against the rearranging of spatial qualities. Rather, it presents itself as a reorganisation of common objects and in this case, a violin. The differences between the analytic and synthetic phases of cubism may result in confusion, as to whether the ultimate goal was to provide realism in the context of the image and thereby dismissing the stereotype of painting, or whether the viewer was given an abstraction.

While the movement was fundamental in shaping interiors, Cubism offered new ways of depicting the world and gathering different realities from it. It is clear that the qualities of interiority presented at the time were constantly shifting and therefore it was impossible for people to reach the same conclusion. Perhaps the Cubists were merely working with the conventions given to them, which is what can be expected in today's society and the future. Ultimately, there will always be a better understanding of how the world functions and evolves, if people are only willing to accept change.

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