

Urban Inspirations: The Influence of 19th Century Parisian Cityscapes on Impressionist Art

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Abstract: The development and planning of Parisian cities in the 19th century provided inspiration for the Impressionists, who responded to the changes of the times with their unique painting techniques and concepts. From their own special point of view, the painters chose the boundaries of their vision in their paintings. The change in the combination of figures and landscapes meant a new shift in the way painters looked at modern life in the city. More and more man-made landscapes were included in the Impressionists' landscapes, and the integration of the countryside and the city made the suburbs the subject of the painters' depictions, which not only reconstructed the visual culture of the city, but also presented a picture of modern life in Paris. The experience of life in the context of urban landscapes provided Impressionist painters with a constant source of creative materials, and they thought about the development of urbanised landscapes and industrialised civilisations, and formed their artistic thoughts and tried to integrate them into their own paintings, presenting a portrait of modern life in Paris. This study aims to explore how the urban landscape of 19th-century Paris influenced the creation of the Impressionists, especially how they expressed the experience of urban life and social changes at that time through their art. By reviewing the history of urban development in nineteenth-century Paris, combined with in-depth analyses of representative works of the Impressionists, this study reveals the influence of the urban landscape on the artists' perspectives and the content of their creations. At the same time, the artistic reflection of the impact of the urbanisation process and industrialisation in Impressionist paintings is examined. The study finds that Impressionist painters not only made technical and stylistic innovations, but also transformed the way they represented modern urban life. They gradually added urban elements to their works, such as streets, buildings and urban people, while also reflecting the fusion of the countryside and the city. In addition, the painters reflected their thoughts on the process of urbanisation and industrialisation through their works. Through their works, the Impressionist artists reflected the changes in the urban landscape of nineteenth-century Paris, which not only influenced their themes and styles, but also profoundly revealed the social and cultural transformations of the time. These findings are important for understanding the importance of Impressionism in art history and its close connection to the era in which it was created.

Keywords: Impressionism, Urban landscape, Artistic creation, Nineteenth-century Paris.

1. Finding the "Shift" in the Context of the Era

(1) The Transformation from "Quasimodo's Paris" to "Haussmann's Paris"

First of all, Impressionism emerged in France from the 1860s to the 1890s, when France had already completed the Industrial Revolution (1920s-1960s). Taking Paris as an example, the Industrial Revolution greatly increased the local productivity, and the way of life began to change, and Paris gradually began to transform itself from a traditional medieval city to a modern metropolis. In the middle of the 19th century, with Mayor Haussmann as the chief architect, the city renovation plan began to fall into place, this will be a complete transformation of the Parisian cityscape of the grand project is also known as the "Haussmannisation", which is of transgenerational significance to the development of the city of Paris, from the commercial district planning, down to the residents of the infrastructure construction, including the road system, the lighting system and so on, the renovation has brought The renovation also brought Paris a new urban style, well-connected traffic and the completion of the planning of the romantic streets have brought the city more noble and a sense of order, the city has become neat and orderly, and more modern living landscape has been created, which has also become one of the symbols of Paris into the "modern city", realised by the "Quasimodo's city". "Quasimodo's Paris" to "Haussmann's Paris".

Pissarro's work "Place de la Théâtre de France" created in 1898 is a perfect representation of the transformed Paris, this painting is very characteristic in its composition, Pissarro's overhead angle makes the viewer feel the magnificent and lively cityscape of Paris at this time, there are people coming and going, carriages loaded with goods, as well as street lamps in the middle of the square and the public landscape art installations, such a unique angle of overlooking This unique overhead perspective seems to remind the viewer that Pissarro is on the balcony of a high-rise building, watching the traffic flow through the streets while completing this work. The whole painting is rich in soft colours, not as varied as Monet's, the overall warm colours form a high-level and thick grey tones, and the picture can be peeped into the lively strokes in the evenness, combining the rough strokes and delicate colours, while appreciating its artistic characteristics, one can also feel the fast pace of Paris as a modern city at that time, as well as the development of the cityscape and the improvement of the people's quality of life.

(ii) Transformation of the group of painters

The change of urbanisation also changed the original intention of the painters, because the change of urbanisation made the painters feel that the world was no longer stable and real to a certain extent, which also prompted the Impressionist painters to try to catch the fleeting moments, capture the scene in front of their eyes, and record it through the transformation of the form of paintings, the Impressionist style of painting in the early stage of the development of the painting was not

favourable, because at that time, the academy is still the mainstream of the school, and the Impressionist style was not favourable to the painters, because at that time, the academy was still the mainstream of the school. In 19th century France, the art discourse was still in the hands of the Salon judges, most of whom were academics, who could not accept the aesthetic standards of the Impressionists, while the Impressionist painters were unwilling to stick to the traditional techniques of the academics, and were opposed to the outdated Classical School and indulged in medieval chivalric literature, and fell into the pretentious Romanticism, and attempted to pursue their own artistic pursuits, which led to the emergence and development of the Impressionists. They tried to pursue their own artistic pursuits, which also led to the creation and development of Impressionism.

(iii) Transformation of the relationship between human beings and art

At that time, Europe was making great strides towards modernity, and the relationship between people and art had changed drastically. From the people's point of view, the change of life, so that people's attitude towards art changed: the emerging middle class jumped into the mainstream of society brought a new leisure and cultural life, before only the aristocratic class unique art consumer goods began to have more and more recipients, in the mid-to-late 19th century, more small families became rich, they decided to abandon those old-fashioned, empty decorative paintings, turned to the natural, fresh, close to life impressionism. They decided to abandon their old-fashioned, empty decorative paintings and turned to the natural, fresh and close-to-life subjects of Impressionism, which were warmer and more likely to impress them. From the artist's point of view, modern life liberated their creativity, and the Impressionists no longer had to adhere to the same standards of reproduction and perfection as the Academics.

2. The Development of Impressionism and Its Characteristics

(i) Capturing the fleeting beauty of visual impressions

Before the development of Impressionism, Western art was mostly about the pursuit of the painter's realistic skills. Impressionist artists were keen to study the interplay between light and colour and apply it to their works, and they were good at capturing certain specific moments. Since light is ever-changing, they believed that only by capturing the light that shines in an instant could they reveal the wonders of nature. Therefore, they paid attention to the study and expression of external light in their paintings, and advocated going outdoors, painting under the sunlight based on the observation of the eyes and the intuitive sense of the scene, and expressing the subtle changes of colours of the objects under the irradiation of light. Impressionist paintings thus used bright green and purple colours for shadows, instead of the traditional black. Impressionist paintings used dots to replace the simple lines and surfaces of traditional paintings, thus achieving the depiction of light and specific corners that traditional paintings could not, as the writer Camille-Lemonnier. In his "notes on the universal exhibition" of 1878, he said of the Artistic Impressionists such as Degas and Manet, "None of them seems to possess the idea of painting. They painted fragments; they painted only certain observed particulars; they were familiar only with certain corners of human nature, and this is what is most surprising in the

depravity they displayed. They linger on the superficiality [of modern life], but this superficiality has its own profundity, and is much easier to represent and to approach than the simple order of bourgeois life (which is difficult to add "to the representation because there is nothing surprising about it")

(ii) Urbanisation and the embodiment of modernity

Paris in the 19th century underwent massive urban planning and construction, such as Georges Eugène Haussmann's renovation programme. These changes provided Impressionist painters with entirely new visual landscapes and themes, such as avenues, parks, and railway stations. The new lifestyles, social activities (e.g. café culture, open-air galleries) and technologies (e.g. railways and automobiles) introduced by urbanisation provided the Impressionist painters with inspiration to capture the moments of modern life. This also helped the Impressionists to artisticise everyday life. Impressionist works often depicted the daily lives of ordinary citizens, such as street scenes and dancers in ballrooms, which reflected the changes in social structure and lifestyles in the context of urbanisation. Through their improvisational style and naturalistic representation of everyday scenes, the Impressionists broke away from traditional art's reliance on idealised, formal themes. Taking Renoir as an example, he was adept at finding inspiration for his paintings and creative materials in daily life and entertainment scenes in France. In 1876, at the age of 35, Renoir completed his work *The Ball in the Rue de la Moulin Rouge*, which is almost a perfect representation of the Impressionists' work, which depicts a typical weekend afternoon in the Montmartre district of Paris in the 19th century. In the picture, young Parisian men and women are sitting in the street for an open-air ball, all dressed up and sitting under the trees, with dappled light like a spotlight on the crowd, dancing, drinking coffee and chatting, in a totally modern and modern lifestyle. The bright chandeliers, bright yellow men's hats, colourful dresses, and black dresses and railings form a strong contrast, the brushwork is loose, the main colour of the picture is blue and purple, and the characters are dispersed in all corners of the composition, creating a strong sense of space and a multi-layered sense of rhythm. In this work, Renoir combined group portraits, still lifes, and landscapes, focusing on fleeting visual moments, Renoir's delicate portrayal of the light, smooth brush strokes, the most noteworthy, Renoir will be the sense of recreation and entertainment of Parisian life is aptly demonstrated, a group of men and women seated around the front of the picture, seems to be in the exchange of what is on the desktop with a drink, which was a fashionable way of leisure, but also popular in Paris. This is a fashionable way of leisure and a new idea of cafe socialising popular in Paris. From the point of view of dress, the women are wearing skirts and waist pads supported by hoops, wearing hair bands, and are dressed exquisitely, which reflects the pursuit of fashion by Parisian women at that time, and most of the men are wearing high hats or straw hats, which shows that the modern way of life has provided the Impressionists with sufficient creative materials and sources of inspiration.



Author: Pierre Auguste Renoir
 Name of work: the ball at the moulin de la galette
 Size: 131 x 175 cm
 Period: 1876
 Material: oil on canvas
 Now in: Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France

The social scene was full of changes under the Impressionist painters. Regular international exhibitions held in Paris improved the way art was exchanged, spreading the branches of art, generating new concepts and methods of expression, and giving birth to important works of pictorial art. There is a clear distinction between the fast-growing, vibrant cities of this period and the rural idylls depicted by the Barbizon School, who were clearly more attracted to the countryside. The Barbizon School depicted roads, trees, water, hay wagons, mills, and other scenes in a true representation of bright and quiet nature, based on observed facts, starting from personal feelings, and expressing emotions with colours. The rural scenes of the Barbizon School contrasted sharply with the modern city life where people gathered in parks and cafes to talk about their lives. In Manet's paintings, the image and attitude of the characters change with the changes of the spatial environment, and he used the mirrors in the bar to depict the real and the mirror image, depicting the modern city life in Paris.

(III) Transforming Industrial Civilisation into Artistic Reflections

From the point of view of image and subject matter, Impressionism is an artistic product of the combination of industrialisation and urbanisation. Monet's work St. Lazare Station, completed by Monet in 1877, embodies his desire to capture a certain moment in the development of those industrial civilisations. This is a series of works, which Monet created through his meticulous observation of the railway station, and St. Lazare Station expresses the interior of the station, filled with dynamic scenes of steam and light. Monet captured trains, tracks, platforms and the structure of the station in his paintings, reflecting the modern transport and industrial elements of urbanisation. Technically and stylistically: Monet used typical Impressionist techniques such as rapid brush strokes, sensitive capture of light and shadow and sharp contrasts of colour. The vapour and light in the painting not only expresses a momentary visual effect, but also conveys a sense of dynamism and vitality. The work is a direct reflection of 19th century urban life, demonstrating the impact of urbanisation and industrialisation on the lives of individuals and the social environment. Through his depiction of the Gare Saint-Lazare, Monet not only captured the urban landscape of Paris at the time, but also recorded an important

moment of social change. The work also further confirms the Impressionist artists' preoccupation with modern urban life and how they expressed their views and feelings about these changes through their art. Perhaps in the times we live in now, trains have long been a means of transport that has been eliminated by the majority of people, but in Monet's time, the development of trains was a sign of industrial civilisation, and he was in a world where industrial civilisation was ever deepening. "whirring, whirring, the wheels rolling and whistling by! Boom, boom, boom, the steam engine is running hot!" In this series of works, Monet depicted the long shadow of the railway station, cross and horizontal tracks, a very design sense of the station roof, the rolling smoke from the locomotive, he desperately wanted to highlight a kind of misty and hazy station scene, and the smoke from the station greatly increases the atmosphere of the picture, and on the other hand, the smoke produced by the train is also the embodiment of the development of industrial civilisation, compared to the present day, when people When people want to express the industrial civilisation of the city, they will always choose the high-speed railway or the overpasses which are interlaced with the high and low, which are the embodiment of different times of industrial civilisation. Monet's St. Lazare Station also embodies his praise for the industrial civilisation, and he thinks about the art from the signs of the development of the industrial civilisation and expresses it through the creation of Impressionist paintings.



The Saint-Lazare Station Railway Station
 Oil on canvas 75cm × 105cm
 Now in the collection of Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France

Impressionism was also a challenge to traditional aesthetics: the development of Impressionism was closely linked to the flourishing of urban culture in Paris, and artists of this period began to challenge traditional aesthetic norms in pursuit of more direct and realistic expression. The diversity and dynamism of the urban landscape inspired the Impressionists to innovate in their compositions, focusing more on capturing instantaneous perspectives and dynamic scenes.

Conclusion: Looking back at the history of Western art over the centuries, it is clear that Impressionism was born from the interplay of many factors, both large and small, and that its emergence and development were inextricably linked to the era in which it was created, which coincidentally coincided with the convergence of all these factors in Paris: rapid technological advances, the birth of the camera, and the emergence of ukiyo-e painting. The interplay of these factors, the play of light and shadow, creates a light of the mind, which illuminates the modern city and allows the viewer to discover

and perceive the beauty of life. Painters view everything and depict modern life from the perspective of life. Impressionist painters depicted the dryness of nature and the glamour of the city, expressed their direct and strong inner feelings through painting, and promoted the continuous development of the art of painting. Courageous and resilient, they focused on the tangible changes before them and embraced the life of Paris as it grew into a modern metropolis.

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