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DLA Theses

Triplism in Modern Painting

Artists have been always trying to answer questions such as how to draw the invisible force? How to represent or recall an object in a painting? How to draw more true-to-life objects... there were of course some answers but this research would try to connect those answers to form a new concept. This raises some other new questions about the structure of this concept, and I try to answer and discuss also other issues such as how can we apply this concept in a painting?

This research is an attempt to analyze a certain type of artistic, intellectual attitude and its role in shaping a total artistic concept. The foundation of this deep analysis originates from my observation of my life in connection with my art practice. In addition, I used this observation method when I analyze two artists work Paul Cézanne and Francis Bacon, two philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gilles Deleuze, and a writer, thinker David Herbert Lawrence.

I believe it's very important to clarify the cultural and intellectual background of the artists suggested here, to extract what made them special to this research and which finally led to the main subject, Triplism.

At the beginning of my dissertation, with a deep analysis of my life, I'm looking for traces of my concept from my childhood to my adulthood, and how did my education affect my creative practice and my personality in high school, BA, and master's studies. Then I talked about the effects of war while I was inside Syria and then outside of my country. The main concern here is to point all the attention to the experiences that helped to shape a connection with a certain type of Western Art after. I'm trying to explain why I finally felt connected to two modern artists Paul Cézanne and Francis Bacon. My main subject will be enriched and based on philosophers' and writers' theories regarding Paul Cézanne's and Francis Bacon's art and way of thinking.

Through my dissertation, I clear out that my education and cultural background was different in comparison with contemporary Western/European young artists, I felt more connected to artists who came from the Modern Era and that was mainly because they talked about the same priorities in life which I have. I assume that was again because of the similar life experiences we have.

I think it's very important to repeatedly look through previous artists' work from a totally new perspective, from a different point of view. This research is analyzing concepts regarding two modern artists who lived in the late 19th Century and the second half of the 20th Century. and attempting to find out if Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of Francis Bacon's art, and if D.H. Lawrence and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Paul Cézanne's art can be seen in another way now at the beginning of the 21. Century.

But why Paul Cézanne

Paul Cézanne is one of the most influential artists of the late 19. Century art. His works established the base of the modern art movements by connecting 19th-century impressionism with early 20th-century cubism. His art inspire and evoke me because it was open to many implementations, possibilities, and interpretations

Cézanne wasn't trying to "copy" nature; he was attempting to bring it to his canvas and depict a moment. This is absolutely what Triplism is all about

His struggle in art-making characterized him, he always wanted more than art, rather trying to create nature, as he told Emile Bernard

*"They created pictures; we are attempting a piece of nature."*¹

Cézanne believed that while he was painting, he was capturing the passing moment in time where we could not go back. Cézanne tried to capture the atmosphere of the exciting reality when he was painting.

I think Cézanne was not just questioning the nature of the object in front of us, he was also representing the process of thinking regarding this object. Cézanne was painting those moments when we are inattentive toward what is around us, but at the same time when we see an object, our subconscious will drive us on a journey related to this object, into its past, to its future, and finally, to the truthiness of the object. That way of thinking about our cognitive relationship with the object is how Cézanne fights against the cliché of representing something.

Cézanne stretches the surface of the table toward the bottom of the canvas because he was trying to represent what will happen when we see a large surface from different points of view and we feel as is it "wrapped". Usually, painters try to depict the standard and perfect geometric perspective and ignore the unsettled movement that we can have a glimpse of when we have a short look at an object. However, Cézanne considered these incidences very important in his attempts to create a scene in his paintings.

Why Maurice Merleau-Ponty

"Cézanne's Doubt" by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, is one of the most distinguished philosophical sources of Cézanne's interpretation, maybe the first and most penetrating study of the profound perceptual connotation of Cézanne's art. Art historians today often analyze Cézanne in terms that Merleau-Ponty first made clear: the initial quality of the artist's vision, his attempt to arrive at the essential truths of a perceptual experience, and his pursuit of a "lived perspective" that exceed the traditions and systems of academic art. This essay titled *"Cézanne's Doubt"* followed by Merleau-Ponty's later work on Cézanne's phenomenology titled *"The Eye and Mind"*. This text served as a brief illustration of the principles of Merleau-Ponty's own philosophy, as a convincing example of his arguments about the nature of human visual experience.

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non -Sense*, translated by Hurbert L. Dreyfus & Patricia Allen Dreyfus, Northwestern University Press.. 1964. P 12

Let's take for example how he defined the contour in Cézanne's painting which emphasize the way Cézanne gives depth to his objects by making them a part of the geometric distorted perspective

"If one outlines the shape of an apple with a continuous line, one makes an object of the shape, whereas the contour is rather ideal limit toward which the sides of the apple recede in-depth".² He also added, " To trace just a single outline sacrifices depth—that is, the dimension in which the thing is presented not as spread out before us but as an inexhaustible reality full of reserves".³

Merleau-Ponty deeply analyzed Cézanne's art, because I think he understood him as a person and then as an artist. Merleau-Ponty researched every little detail of Cézanne's life, he went deep in his analysis to a point where he was united with the artist.

"Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incruited in its flesh, they are part of its full definition".⁴

Why David Herbert Lawrence

D. H. Lawrence considered Paul Cézanne in one of his essays titled Introduction to These Paintings 1929 as an idol that can be an example for English artists to understand the meaning of modern art

Lawrence thinks that Cézanne was the first artist who was been able to create something that was not related to his own personality.

"The most interesting figure in modern art, and the only really interesting figure, is Cézanne: and that, not so much because of his achievement, as because of his struggle".⁵

Lawrence seems to understand that how difficult it is to change the conformism of the people regarding art and culture. He understands that it's not a fight to destroy the old way of thinking rather than an attempt to form it, to put it under continuous argument, in other words, to put the cliché under the scope.

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sense and Non -Sense, translated by Hurbert L. Dreyfus & Patricia Allen Dreyfus, Northwestern University Press.. 1964. P 14, 15

³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sense and Non -Sense, translated by Hurbert L. Dreyfus & Patricia Allen Dreyfus, Northwestern University Press.. 1964. P 15

⁴ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. Edit by James M. Edie. Carleton Dallery. The Primacy of Perception, Northwestern University Press, USA. 1964. P 163

⁵ D. H. Lawrence. Late essays and articles. edit by James T. Boulton. Cambridge University Press 2004. p. 204

"To a true artist, and to the living imagination, the cliché is the deadly enemy. Cézanne had a bitter fight with it. He hammered it to pieces a thousand times. And still it re-appeared".⁶

Why Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon was known for his raw, unsettling imagery. Focusing on the human form. Bacon claimed that he tried to render "the brutality of fact" to be used as a term by David Sylvester as a title in the third edition of their interviews. He spent too long looking for subject matter that could sustain his interest. His use of probabilities and chance is very close to the concept of Triplism.

For me, painting is a window to a moment in life, everything in it is interacting with each other and they are all related, as Bacon called it, the invisible force. I think that what we see on the surface of a painting is definitely important but there is also a very important unseen element, and paradoxically it must be represented in the case we wanted to reflect the truthful natural objects and figures.

Bacon's famous triptychs are in fact the best manifestation of this attitude. Bacon very consciously uses the three paintings, the triptych.

Why Gilles Deleuze

In his artwork, Francis Bacon tried to answer a lot of fundamental questions that an artist has to face. One of them was put in words by Gilles Deleuze: How to draw the invisible force?

This particular question is very related to my research as well. Deleuze articulated this question to understand Bacon's artwork in a way that Bacon himself might never think of. My research also seeks to apply a concept to other artists' work, in the same way, knowing that they didn't mention the concept of Triplism directly. Therefore Deleuze's approaches can support my claims.

He was very interested in Francis Bacon's art because of the close way of thinking through ideas and his interpretation of multiplicity and repetition.

We can see the close understanding when Deleuze summarize these laws of the triptych

"We can thus summarize these laws of the triptych, whose necessity is grounded in the coexistence of the three panels: 1- the distinction between the three rhythms or the three rhythmic Figures; 2- the existence of an attendant-rhythm, along with the circulation of this attendant throughout the painting (visible attendant and rhythmic attendant); 3- the determination of an active rhythm and a passive rhythm, with all the variations that depend on the character chosen to represent the active rhythm".⁷

⁶ D. H. Lawrence. Late essays and articles. edit by James T. Boulton. Cambridge University Press 2004. p. 210

⁷ Deleuze, Gilles. Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation, Translated from French by Daniel W. Smith p.82

Triplism Identification

Triplism in art gives the ability to express the non-expressional such as life, time, energy, senses, soul... etc by referring to them through the components the painter has in his scene. The way to achieve that is entirely left to the artist himself or herself, and it could be different from one artist to another.

Triplism means not to be limited to a precise and identified number of elements or ideas that give a direct clear image for the suggested subject. It is an unusual behaviour or a sequence of unusual behaviours that led to a more true-to-life subject creation.

What Triplism could present is a continuous vibration between questions and answers to reach a point where the artist is creating multiple answers and more questions for any simple question, it creates a way to escape from what is logical and factual to our mind. It creates a space and time of real life.

Multiplicity, repetition, probability, possibility, choice, doubt, coincidence, and hesitance create a space that can contain the real complexity of life, within the unknown and the unimagined space and vacuum, which contributes to creating an atmosphere of the unexpected but also controlling the dialogue between different elements. Triplism suggests this as a way of representing the operation of creation.

Thank You