A study of the Impressionistic style of painting through the critical analysis of the works of Claude Monet

Claude-Oscar Monet was the most dedicated and single-minded of the French Impressionist painters. Interestingly the name of this very impactful and important European style of painting, which influenced art and artists all across the world, got its very name quite by chance. Impressionism was a 19th-century art movement that originated with a group of Paris-based artists whose independent exhibitions brought them to prominence during the 1870s and 1880s. In this research paper I would study the Impressionistic style of painting. My area of focus will be on the works and the critical analysis of the painting style and narratives of Claude Monet- the pioneer of Impressionism.

Key words : Impressionism, Claude Monet, French painters, art movement.

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Impressionism was a 19th century European art movement. This style of art focused on the study and emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities. The artists strived to capture the fleeting moment of light and how it changes the objects. In the 1860's some young dynamic group of artists with a notion do something different, met in Paris. They were drawn together by the desire to free themselves from the restrictions of the official Academy, refused to look at nature in the set Academic form.

Claude-Oscar Monet was the most dedicated and single-minded of the French Impressionist painters. Interestingly the name of this very impactful and important European style of painting, which influenced art and artists all across the world, got its very name quite by chance. The name of the style is derived from the title of a Claude Monet work, “Impression Sunrise”, which provoked the critic Louis Leroy to coin the term in a satiric review published in the Parisian newspaper Le Charivari. He wrote the article titled as 'Exhibition of the Impressionists'. In this exhibition Monet had other painters like Cezanne, Renoir and Degas. They all liked the name and it stuck with them this style became as the onset of Modern era of painting.

The term "Impressionists" quickly gained favour with the public. It was also accepted by the artists themselves, even though they were a diverse group in style and temperament, unified primarily by their spirit of independence and rebellion. They exhibited togetherness with shifting membership great times between 1874 and 1886. Impressionist's painters used relatively small, thin, yet visible brush strokes. They believed in painting outdoors studying the fleeting and changing effects of light and how it changed objects. The invention of bright chemical pigments enabled these painters to give up the duller earth colours and scientific studies of light and colour made them more sensitive to nature's hue. They observed that the colour of an object is constantly modified by the kind of light in which it is seen.

CLAUDE MONET (1840-1926) was a founder of French impressionist painting, and the most consistent and prolific practitioner of the movement's philosophy of expressing one's perceptions before nature, especially as applied to plein-air landscape painting. Today Money is almost universally admired for his vision and his desire to capture the fleeting moments of light, but at first he was mocked and misunderstood for his work.

As he grew up in Normady Coast, landscape painting was his true calling. At the age of 18 he left his comfortable and rich life to strive for art and make a name for himself in the creative field. When Monet travelled to Paris to visit the Louvre, he witnessed painters copying from the old masters. Having brought his paints and other tools with him, he would instead go and sit by a window and paint what he saw.

Monet was in Paris for several years and met other young painters who become his friends and were also fellow impressionists. The Impressionists was the collective name for a group of highly talented young artists who exhibited together, including Monet, Renoir, and Cezanne. Landscape and Still life provided subjects through which they could experiment with the objective recordings of their "Impressions". It was Monet who remained the most dedicated and consistent exponent of this type of Realism.

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Monet was very passionate in studying the fleeting impression of light. To achieve this Monet painted in open air with speed and fervor that no earlier artist had approached. He along with Renoir was developing techniques and speed needed to represent fleeting outdoor effects. Few of his paintings he was able to complete in one sitting only. Monet said, “Everything changes, even stone”. He observed that a landscape is also not the same at sunrise and at twilight, in spring or in summer. He was known to paint multiple canvases of the same spot, trying to capture the change in light and its impact on the same spot. The most famous of this series of experiments were his twenty six impressions of ‘Roven Cathedral’ and sixteen canvases done of the ‘Waterloo Bridge’.

**Monet’s Technique:**

Monet developed a free and spontaneous painting technique which helped him paint at a remarkable fast speed. He used a pale grey ground whose luminosity plays a crucial role in creating the illusion of light and sun in the painting. A pale ground or base coat was applied to a fine weave canvas, which allowed the texture to show through the paint. He would block large areas with colour and then applied a transparent layer on the original blocking-in of the colour. Then he would apply wet paint on the wet or a little dried up surface to blend the colors. His color palette was also very simple and fairly limited.

**About his paintings:**

1. He has used bold brushstrokes along the bottom edge of his paintings. The strokes generally become smaller as they go to the distance, giving the impression of distance.
2. He used to love giving different textures, using soft, rounded and short horizontal strokes. He would also use the back hard end of the brush to etch out colour thus adding to the texture in his paintings.
3. Warm and cool colors were used in close proximity to create contrast.
4. Reflections and images were well composed and sometimes were like mirror images.
5. His treatment of water is both original and distinctive as he makes no attempt to show the exact waves or ripples but just slabs of color to suggest reflections in water.

**Conclusion:**

During his life time Claude Monet was the most important, skilful and daring Impressionists painter who stayed true to the Impressionists ideologies. Today he is admired universally amongst the artists and the creative community, but at first he was misunderstood and also mocked at for his work. He struggled hard in his early years to establish himself and endured poverty and failure in his early career days. It was only in his forties that his work started to sell. By the end of his long life he was a wealthy man but success never got on to him and even in his 80's he worked tirelessly and passionately creating wonderful works of art.

**References:**