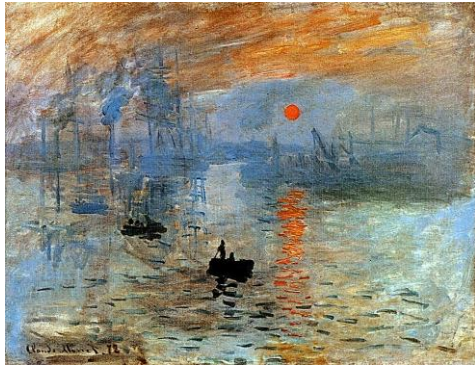


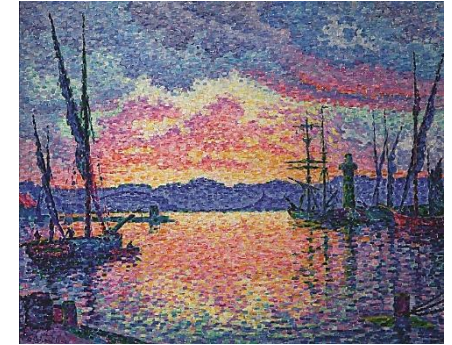
The importance of colour in painting



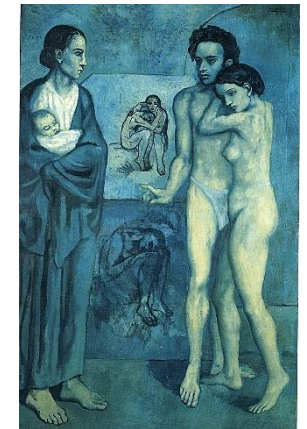
Colour is a fundamental element of painting. It has given the paintings of Monet, Matisse, Picasso and Boccioni, and of movements such as impressionists and fauvists, a means of rebelling from norms and creating an expressive character which photographs often lack.

Impressionist art sought to capture a fleeting moment within time. In Monet's 'Impression Sunrise' (left), the use of a bright orange, against contrasting hues of green and blue, invokes a sense of life or energy. The blurred background creates an atmosphere of peace and serenity, yet the black boats and reflection of the sun in the foreground contrast strongly with this. Reasonably short brushstrokes of colour create an element of movement, which

heightens the sense of the fleeting moment. The long brushstrokes showing the orange sky highlight the way in which the sunrise brings a new warmth and element of life to the scene. This painting was so strongly identified with the "revolt" against traditional methods by Monet's circle that it gave them their name, "Impressionists".

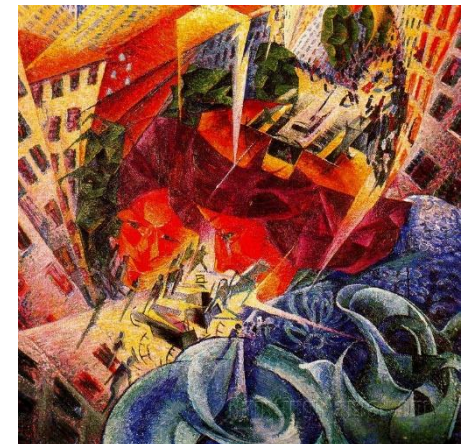


In the *pointillism* of Seurat and Signac (e.g. Signac, *Le Port/Soir. Couchant rouge (St Tropez)* 1906 – top right) "points" of colour are used to build up the various shades that, often merging together, create a scene. The young Matisse was strongly influenced by this style. However Matisse's outlines are much more clearly defined than those of Seurat and Signac. After he worked with Derain, the outlines became bolder, and the colours more stark, as seen in *The Open Window, Collioure* (left). Indeed, in the paintings of Matisse, unlike those of Picasso's "blue" period, red becomes the dominant colour. Shapes are not outlined by a harsh black, but by a variety of vivid colours, especially red. In his work 'Woman with the Hat' Matisse applied non-naturalistic colours in order to evoke shock and demonstrate the rise of something new. The use of bold and unnatural colour continued in Matisse's later works such as 'The Green stripe', leading to the creation of the artistic movement Fauvism.



Colour can reflect personal aspects of an artists' life. During Picasso's 'blue period', after the death of his close friend Carlose Casagemas, he used colour to convey a sense of grief. In "La Vie" (right), the use of only dull two colours portrays a sense of lifelessness and stillness. The dull hues of blue and brown seem a metaphor for Picasso's depression and sadness. The Madonna wears not her usual royal blue, but a washed-out blue and brown. The use of black outlines is then necessary to encase the colours. It brings with it an element of negativity.

The role of colour to channel political motive is most evident in Futurist artworks. Boccioni's 'Simultaneous Visions' (right) contrast bold hues of vivid red and a cooler element of blue to portray the Futurist manifesto, the need to destroy symbols of the old culture and celebrate modernity (particularly in warfare). These striking colours represent speed, noise and violence – all elements of early Fascism, which many members of the Futurist movement adopted. Nazi banners were bright red, showing a similar intention to attract notice as appears in Matisse's later works, even if the ideology was different.



It is evident in these works and styles that colour can be the most important tool used to create an artwork. An artist can use it to highlight elements of a scene, to express his response to a particular scene, or even to help viewers to see a scene (and maybe even society) in a different way. It can express the feelings of the artist, and become a means of initiating change, heralding a movement away from the norms of artwork and even of society.

ASSIGNMENT: Keats wrote, "Truth is beauty." Can a work of art (literary, musical or visual) be truthful without being beautiful?