

Student Number: 5504930016

Name: Cetin Admir

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Paul Gauguin is one of the most famous artists from the 19th century but what was so special about him and his art? When you hear his name you immediately associate him with other leading artist from the past like Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse or Claude Monet but you cannot compare him with the others. He was a Pioneer. His way of thinking was different and new in those times. Paul Gauguin was the first artist who realized that simplicity in art or real life is not something bad, quite the contrary, it offers more opportunities to advance oneself and the art.

Paul Gauguin's preference to the primitive art of living is cognizable in his biography. He was born in a well-situated family in Paris on 7 June 1848. The most mentionable live events that happened in his childhood were that he lived with his family for 4 years in Peru with his uncle and that he lost his father on that trip. The reasons for this procession were the political circumstances in France. Basically, his childhood was not so abnormally like the years after his marriage in the year 1873 with a Danish woman whose name was Mette-Sophie Gad. At that time he worked successfully as a stockbroker but that did not fulfill him, although he had a so-called perfect life.¹

Beside his work he began painting, which should have a big influence on his private life. In the year 1883 Paul Gauguin stopped his job as a stockbroker to have more time for his passion. Due to this decision and the different attitudes towards life he tergiversated from his wife after 11 years marriage and his 5 children.² In the meanwhile he got in contact with the Impressionists, a group of artist who where

¹ Wikipedia contributors. "Paul Gauguin." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 16. Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Gauguin>

² Biography contributors. "Paul Gauguin. biography." bio. TRUE STORY. 16. Sept. 2012. <<http://www.biography.com/people/paul-gauguin-9307741?page=1>>

famous for their unconventional manner of painting but after some years he was bored of Impressionism. Paul Gauguin felt constricted in the art as well as in the customary way of life, which predominated in Europe, therefore he decided in 1891 to move to Tahiti.³

He intended to move to a place where he has the chance to develop himself and his art. He wanted to live in a simple environment where the people and the landscape were not affected by the European world. He wished to lead a primitive life, without thinking about money and without a close-minded society. Basically he wanted to live somewhere where he has the opportunity to fulfill his idea of perfect life so that he can concentrate wholeheartedly on his painting. Centralized you can say that he was searching after freedom. His desire after freedom is evident due to some famous statements he made.⁴ Despite of initial problems to find an adequate place on Tahiti like he dreamed of, he has never been dissuaded from his intentions. With the exception of a short return to Paris he spent the rest of his life in French Polynesia.⁵

As mentioned before, Paul Gauguin had not just a different perception of a nice and valuable life he had also another understanding about art. At the beginning of his bohemian life he was influenced by Impressionism. He got in contact with some Impressionists because of their interest in his paintings. Due to this, he was also allowed to exhibit some of his paintings on their 4th exhibition in Paris. The relationship between him and the Impressionists was a kind of win-win situation for

³ Wikipedia contributors. "Paul Gauguin." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 16. Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Gauguin>

⁴ Robert Genn. "Paul Gauguin Art Quotes." THE PAINTER'S KEYS. 16.Sept. 2012. <http://quote.robertgenn.com/auth_search.php?authid=38>

⁵ Biography contributors. "Paul Gauguin. biography." bio. TRUE STORY. 16. Sept. 2012. <<http://www.biography.com/people/paul-gauguin-9307741?page=1>>

both sides, because they influenced each other. Particularly Pissaro and Paul Cézanne had a lot of contact with him but probably the most famous liaison was with Vincent van Gogh. Short time after the meeting with van Gogh, Paul Gauguin digressed from Impressionism and he started to develop his own manner of painting.⁶

Paul Gauguin paintings were characterized through simplicity.⁷ Back then a lot of artists sought after perfect copies of the reality but Paul Gauguin's opinion was that this is not art. From his point of view too much copy of the nature does not have a lot to do with art. Art should be more than just a reproduction of the reality. Paintings should be abstract.⁸ He solved his idea of art by painting kind of primitively. He painted unproportional with simple forms and strong colors. The aim was it to excite one's fantasy.

Paul Gauguin was not just a painter he was also a revolutionary. He showed the people with his life and his art that the mainstream is not always the right way. Of course you might say that his life was not exemplary because he left his woman and his five children, but he followed always his dream and this is simplicity in art and in life. He was searching in his life after freedom to develop himself and to get the possibility to live in a certain way. The simpler the society the more freedom you have to lead your life after your wishes and conceivabilities. Freedom in art means in a certain way simplicity too. The simpler and the more unreal the painting the more freedom you have to interpret it. After his death a lot of artists understood his way of

⁶ Wikipedia contributors. "Paul Gauguin." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 16. Sept. 2012.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Gauguin>

⁷ Nicolas Pioch. "Gauguin, (Eugène-Henri-) Paul." WebMuseum, Paris. 16. Sept. 2012.
<<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/gauguin/>>

⁸ Robert Genn. "Paul Gauguin Art Quotes." THE PAINTER'S KEYS. 16. Sept. 2012.
<http://quote.robertgenn.com/auth_search.php?authid=38>

thinking that simplicity does not mean something bad. Famous artists like Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse were influenced by him. His manner of painting influenced art a very long time after his death even to the modern art.⁹

⁹ Wikipedia contributors. "Paul Gauguin." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 16. Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Gauguin>