

Buying Paintings: Synchromism

Synchromism paintings feature harmoniously balanced colors and a feeling of movement. It is believed that synchromist paintings evoke similar feelings and sensations as music. This is a basic tenet of the synchromism art movement. As such, these paintings make wonderfully pleasing additions to any modern art collection.

Founded in 1912 by Morgan Russell and Stanton MacDonald-Wright, synchromism was an art movement based on the idea that sound and color are phenomena that are similar in the way that the individual experiences and perceives them. Movement as well as organization of color into 'color scales' are the ways in which synchromism pieces correlate to musical art forms.

A basic tenet of synchromism is that color can be arranged or orchestrated in much the same way that notes of a symphony are arranged by composers. This harmonious arrangement of colors and shapes produces experiential results similar to that of listening to well balanced orchestral compositions.

Artists of the synchromism art movement believed that by painting in color scales could evoke sensations that were very musical in nature. Typically, synchromism pieces feature a strong rhythmic form or forms that then advance toward complexity in form and hue, moving in a particular direction.

In many cases, such explosion of color using color scales pours out in a radial pattern. It is most common for synchromism art works to have some sort of central vortex that bursts outward with color, into complex color harmonies.

The first painting to be dubbed a synchromism work, was Morgan Russell's 'Synchromy in Green' which was exhibited in Paris at the Paris Salon des Independants in the year 1913. That same year, the first exhibition featuring primarily synchromist works by MacDonald-Wright and Russell was held in Munich, Germany. Following the synchromist exhibition in Munich, there were exhibits in both Paris and New York.

These first synchromist pieces were some of the first non-objective abstract paintings found in American art. These later became better known under the label of 'avante-garde'. In this way, synchromism was the first American avant garde art movement that gained attention internationally.

Synchromism has been compared and contrasted to Orphism. Orphism refers to paintings that relate to the Greek god Orpheus, the symbol of song, the arts and the lyre. Though Orphism is rooted in cubism, this movement moved toward a

lyrical abstraction that was more pure, in the sense that this form of painting was about synthesizing a sensation of bright colors.

Though there is little doubt that Orphism was an influence to later Synchromism, Synchromists would argue that it is an entirely unique art form. As Stanton MacDonald-Wright said, "synchromism has nothing to do with orphism and anybody who has read the first catalogue of synchromism ... would realize that we poked fun at orphism."

Several other American painters have been known to experiment with synchromism. Whether synchromism was a branch of orphism or its own unique art form, there is little doubt that the harmonious use of color and movement based composition inspired many artists and art forms. Among these artists were Andrew Dasburg, Thomas Hart Benton and Patrick Henry Bruce.

Though the majority of Thomas Hart Benton's works centered on regionalism and murals, there was also a strong flair of synchromism. Benton's interest and incorporation of synchromism was due mainly from having studied with synchromism artists such as Stanton MacDonald-Wright and Diego Rivera.

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