

Review Article

Investigating the Emergence of Bright Circles in «Orphism» Based on the Evolution of the Color Element and Geometric Shapes

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Abstract

Introduction: «Orphism» is one of the most important artistic movements in world art history, and its bright colors and circular shape are among its most essential features. This movement is a branch of «Cubism» style. Cubism was an advancement in art that influenced artists to abandon existing traditions and form new movements, such as Orphism. The present research first examines the color and form in the works of Orphism, and in order to investigate its evolution, it examines the color and geometric shapes in Cubism to discover the factors that cause changes in the transition from Cubism to Orphism. Then, it explores what is so powerful about the circle shape that drives artists to use it to convey ideas. This research aims to investigate the emergence of bright circles in Orphism based on the evolution of the color element and geometric shapes in the transition from Cubism to Orphism and to identify these developments in the works of artists such as Picasso, Braque, Gris, Delaunay, and Kupka.

Research Method: The current research method is descriptive-analytical, and data collection is conducted using documents and library materials, such as note-taking and photo reading. The statistical population of this research is thirteen paintings in Cubism and Orphism styles.

Findings: The circle shape was the best way to evoke music due to its endless and continuous movement in combination with bright and vibrant colors. When music is depicted, the evidence shows that abstraction and reaching something beyond the material world are concerns for them; this is one of the other reasons for choosing the circle shape, which symbolizes the reflection of the world, unity, sublimity, integrity, and divine nature. The representation of movement, music, and celestial symbols with bright, vibrant colors and a circular shape in the works of Orphism can be seen as the continuation of the geometry of Cubism, and on the other hand, compared them with everyday day and earthly scenes, such as nature and still life with limited colors and dimensions of Cubism.

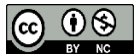
Conclusion: Cubist artists with a realistic mentality sought to express earthly and material events. Orphisms followed an extraterrestrial and spiritual point of view and displayed it in their works with bright circles, one of the oldest meaningful symbols of humanity.

Keywords

Color, Geometry, Cubism, Orphism, Brilliant Circle

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Introduction and Problem Definition

Orphism is an art movement that relies on the feeling of pure color as a means of expression and structure. This movement was always considered a branch of Cubism. Due to the innovation in the way of seeing, Cubism was considered the most revolutionary and predominant artistic movement of the 20th century, which had a significant impact on artistic productions with a different approach and caused many changes after itself, and eventually led to the creation of new trends such as Orphism. In the Orphism movement, the form moved away from simple subjects and still life, based on the geometry of the cone, cylinder, and sphere, which were the favorites of Cubism artists, and moved towards pure abstraction until the circle became the central element of Orphism artists. Another significant development in the transition from Cubism to Orphism was the emergence of Orphism's vibrant color palette in contrast to the primarily monochromatic compositions of Cubism. Robert Delaunay, who was considered the pioneer of Orphism, saw color as an element that could create rhythm and movement as well as the lines and forms of Cubism. Accordingly, the combination of bright colors and circular forms, in general, changed the structure and content of art. Therefore, the current research aims to investigate the emergence of bright circles in Orphism based on the transformation of the color element and geometric shapes in the transition from Cubism to Orphism, according to the works of several artists. In this regard, the works of each artist are studied based on their attitude and approach to form and color. Finally, by examining the course of evolution from Cubism to Orphism and comparing the works of artists of these two movements, their discrepancies in form and color are determined. In line with the aims mentioned above, an attempt has been made to answer the following questions: How are the color and geometry in each of the works of Cubism and Orphism artists? On what basis did the developments in the color element and geometric shapes happen during Orphism? What has made the circle shape become a lasting and recurring element over time? The present research has tried to achieve a clear understanding of the changes in the geometric forms and colors used in the works of Orphism.

Research Method

The current research method is descriptive-analytical, and data collection is conducted using library materials, such as note-taking and photo reading. In the process of this research, the desired information was collected using written documents from library sources and databases, and then the description, analysis, and evaluation were continued. The data analysis method is qualitative. The statistical community is a sample of paintings by the artists «Picasso», «Braque», «Gris», «Delaunay», and «Kupka», in the styles of Cubism and Orphism. The intended time frame is the beginning of the 20th century, and it has been carried out in the territory of European geography. In the present research, the works of two styles have been studied based on changes in color and geometry.

Research Background

Many studies have been done so far about Cubism. One of the essential articles that examines Cubism is «Modern art and movements influencing it» by «Gudarzparvari and Zaimran» (2012). This article explores the most critical work of Cubism (The Young Ladies of Avignon). The result suggests that Cubism describes the foundation of its approach in the art of simplification, and Cubism artists summarized their works in the realm of geometric shapes and volumes. In his thesis entitled «Comparative study of the painting works of the school of Futurism with the school of Cubism having an emphasis on time and movement», «Zamani Tehrani» (2021) discussed items such as the dimension of time in Cubism and compared it with Futurism. He concluded that the compositions of Cubism do not exist in the real world if they are inspired by nature. At the same time, Futurism praised the modern world, the machines, speed, and violence. Regarding the background of studies on Orphism, investigations by «Chipp» (1958), an art historian and critic, can be mentioned, who, in the article entitled «Orphism and color theory» examines the origins, development, and importance of Orphism on the broader framework of modern art. He deals with the theories and techniques used by Orphism artists. Generally, Chipp's writings on Orphism and color theory provide valuable insights into the artistic philosophy and strategies employed by Orphism painters, as well as a broader understanding of art.

Color and Geometric Shapes in Cubism

Cubism artists tried to present the totality of a phenomenon at once on a two-dimensional level. They tried to express the...ir mentality of objects and creatures in the form of geometric shapes (Seyed Hosseini, 1997, 731). Picasso and Braque, two of the most influential artists of this style, stated that the two-dimensional and flat space cannot show multiple perspectives realistically (Stokstad, 2017, 486). During its first six years, from 1906 to 1912, Cubism has been called Analytical Cubism because of the gradual breakdown or disintegration of natural forms. In this period, color was gradually eliminated in the works of artists, especially Braque and Picasso (Barr, 1936, 78). By limiting themselves to brown, ochre, green, and gray shades, they emphasized the form of their work (Bocola, 2014, 169); as in work entitled «My Pretty Girl», the association of music can be seen by placing the treble clef at the bottom of the work close to the stenciled letters. The name of this work is taken from a famous song. Although this image has lost its conventional legibility, it displays a traditional and familiar subject created with limited brown and gray colors (Fig 1). Referring to the mentioned work, it can be seen that Picasso remained indifferent to the temptation of color. It is clear that the literary expression that was present in his earlier works has disappeared, and a reflection of the form that maintains loyalty to nature has begun to take shape (Kahnweiler, 2008, 6). «Georges Braque», one of the other famous artists of this style, used Cézanne's color passage technique to connect all the elements on the same level. Instead of breaking a form, Braque gathers the broken elements together and reassembles them. In fact, the shapes have turned into spherical, cylindrical, and conical shapes, which, according to Cézanne, are the constituent parts of natural forms (Pakbaz, 2016, 480). In the work entitled «Vilon and Candlestick», it seems that the artist has fragmented the image into broken geometric forms that are simple in size and put them together to create the shape of an instrument and a candlestick (Fig 2).



Fig 1. «My Pretty Girl», Pablo Picasso, 1911-12 A.D.

Source: Pablo Picasso, May 28, 2023



Fig 2. «Violin and Candlestick», Georges Braque, 1910 A.D.

Source: Georges Braque and his paintings, June 17, 2023.

In the development of Analytical Cubism, the disintegrated image of the natural body gradually took on a more abstract geometric form. In inanimate nature, every object seems to be an invented geometrical form; therefore, they can be considered not an analysis but a construction or synthesis.



Fig 3. «A Table in a Cafe», Juan Gris, 1912 A.D.
Source: Juan Gris, June 19, 2023.

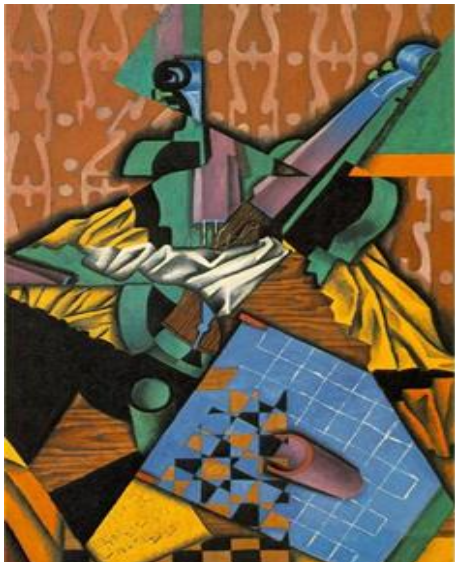


Fig 4. «Violin and Checkerboard», Juan Gris, 1913 A.D.
Source: Juan Gris, June 19, 2023.

The second phase of Cubism is known as Synthetic Cubism because, in this method, the artist created motifs by combining more superficial elements like chemical processes (Stokstad, 2017, 487). At this stage, the Spanish «Juan Gris» joins Braque and Picasso and simplifies the structure of his paintings (Bocola, 2014, 169-170). Gris produced works such as «A Table in a Cafe», in which conventional modeling was abandoned and the tones became almost monochromatic (Fig 3). Before that, such an approach was seen in the works of Picasso and Braque in 1911, who used limited tones of gray, green, and brown, while Gris's palette was seen with a different brilliance that was often not found in the analytical-cubist works of his colleagues (Soby, 1958, 20-25). In this period, Braque and Picasso used the pure elements of form to create a new reality; thus, the image itself became an object (Bocola, 2014, 169-170). By 1913, like Picasso and Braque, Gris began to enrich the color and form of his paintings, in a word, progressing from Analytical to what is commonly called Synthetic Cubism (Soby, 1958, 22). In work «Violin and Checkerboard», color variation is the first thing that separates his work from the Cubism works before him (Picasso and Braque). Bright blue, yellow, green, and orange colors are the main characteristics of Gris' works, which are combined with geometric shapes (Fig 4). In fact, it can be said that Gris brought color back to Cubism painting in his experiences (Pakbaz, 2016, 428). Gradually, Gris became an important colorist (Soby, 1958, 32). Color in Gris' works was a new phenomenon that could influence contemporary or later trends.

Color and Geometric Shapes in Orphism

During 1911-1912, Picasso and Braque were very close to abstract and geometric design in their Cubism and still life works; however, in these years, two painters «Delaunay» and «Kupka» moved further and depicted the first pure abstractions in Western Europe (Barr, 1936, 73), which was called «Orphism» movement. Robert Delaunay, who is considered the pioneer of this movement, saw color as an element that could create rhythm and movement with the same power as Cubism's lines and forms (Chilvers & Osborne, 2003, 41-42). He longed for non-figurative painting based on the optical properties of bright and prismatic colors to function as form (Chipp, 1958). In 1912, Delaunay brought forward windows wholly painted in bright rainbow colors (Barr, 1936, 82). By examining the «Window» work, it is understood that the geometric treatment of Orphism artists, including Delaunay, is

different from that of Cubism artists. Delaunay's geometry with circular forms and bright colors, as much as it follows the rigid geometry with the combination of limited colors of the works of Cubism, also stands in front of it (Fig 5). The Orphic paintings of Delaunay were manifested in his abstract paintings with rainbow colors, which did not have any signs or references to objects. These works were mostly admired for their enchanting richness of color. Orphic is defined as an occult mystic who evokes the melodious and intricate music of «Orpheus» (Chilvers & Osborne, 2003, 41-42). In Greek mythology, Orpheus was known as a lyrical singer and musician whose music was so glamorous that he tamed wild beasts and moved trees, rocks, and rivers to gather around him and listen to his music (Locke, 1997). Therefore, a connection between the myth of Orpheus and the musical sense of Orphism's works can be established. What the painter used to express the musical feeling to the audience was the circular forms of the circle with the combination of bright colors that can be found in the work of «Rhythm». In addition, the name of this work was chosen under the influence of music (Fig 6).



Fig 5. «Window», Robert Delaunay, 1912 A.D.
Source: Robert Delaunay, June 10, 2023.



Fig 6. «Rhythm», Robert Delaunay, 1912 A.D.
Source: Robert Delaunay, June 10, 2023.

The circle was the best form for Delaunay to convey the sense of movement. He retained geometric shapes like Cubist artists; however, by changing the subject from nature and still life to abstract forms, he tried to reflect something beyond the material world. Based on the concepts followed by the circle, Delaunay could be searching for the reflection of the meaning of the world and himself. In fact, in the continuation of his experiences, he reached absolute abstraction, which sometimes gave a colorful interpretation of the objective world (Pakbaz, 2016, 221-222). It is clear that Delaunay was also using the interplay of colors instead of lines to define forms. He used color as the most illustrative means of expression because he was a lyrical painter by nature (Cooper, 2011, 83). As mentioned above, in the works of Robert Delaunay, circular shapes are of particular importance. Since 1906, they appear as landscapes composed of circles and discs or «circular-sun shapes», where the sun is surrounded by dynamic concentric circles that cover the entire sky, and due to the «sun and moon» effect, the rotating suns, with their huge orbits, intersect. It seems that these multi-colored circles and rings, which are reminiscent of the circulation of light, were born from observing the sun (De Beaucorps, 2017, 112) (Fig 7). Delaunay often uses the words «Sun and Moon» in the titles of his paintings in order to make his paintings more understandable and to protect them from superficial and tasteless interpretations. On the one hand, he likes paintings that use musical language. On the other hand, he does not want to cut his connection with the realities of everyday life (Lynton, 2003, 81-84), and this view made him adapt his art to these two opposing trends.



Fig 7. The Sun and the Moon, Robert Delaunay, 1913.
Source: Robert Delaunay, June 10, 2023.

In connection with Orphism, Apollinaire mentioned Frank Kupka, one of the most unknown but early pioneers of abstract painting. Kupka was never a Cubist, but in 1911, he worked in a simple, almost abstract 'neo-impressionist' technique, leading to his 1912 work «Newton's Discs», which seems to have anticipated Delaunay's discs (Fig 8). Kupka's art, like Delaunay's, reflects music not only in the titles of his works, but also through subject, form, and color, revealing a profound purpose for creating «musical» art during the 1890s and throughout his career. In 1912, he further simplified this effect, showing a pattern of circular and oval lines enclosing the red and blue areas (Barr, 1936, 73). It seems that Kupka, like Delaunay, has used circular forms and bright color combinations to express the sense of music that can be found in the naming of his works (Fig 9).



Fig 8. «Newton's Discs», Frank Kupka, 1912.
Source: Robert Delaunay, June 10, 2023.



Fig 9. Amorpha: Fugue in Two Colors.
Frank Kupka, 1912.
Source: Robert Delaunay, June 10, 2023.

Another reason for Kupka's tendency towards the circular form can be examined based on his lifestyle; he was a clergyman throughout his life (Bonsdorff, 2019). Kupka's mystical Orphism is based on the belief in life as a unified moving essence, understood spiritually or scientifically, or both (Taylor-Horrex & Spate, 1982). Accordingly, we can understand why Kupka used the circular form many times. Kupka believed that the principles of spiritual reality and cosmic order are hidden in nature, and the role of the artist's higher consciousness is not to copy nature but to create a parallel order (Bonsdorff, 2019); this can be another reason for using the circle. According to «Jung», the way of artistic expression had undergone changes that could be justified by the living conditions of the people of their time. The circle no longer comprises the world that covers the entire painting. Sometimes, the painter takes the dominant aspect from it and puts a number of relatively irregular and frail circles in its place; sometimes, he draws the circle asymmetrically (Jung, 2021, 377), which can be seen in the works of Orphism artists.

Conclusion

Evolutions in the structure and content of artworks have always been influenced by different factors, such as social conditions and cultural changes, which have led to changes in the subject, shape, technique, color, and presentation of works in different styles. In the present study, two styles of Cubism and Orphism were explored, and the factors that caused the change of form and color structure in the transition from Cubism to Orphism were investigated. Cubists showed typical and traditional subjects such as nature and still life using simple volumes such as spheres, cylinders, and cones with limited colors; therefore, they tried to show common, logical, and earthly subjects in their own way, while the color and geometry in Orphism underwent dramatic changes, and bright colors and the element of movement were taken into consideration. Influenced by music and achieving something beyond the material world, the Orphisms chose the shape of a circle to show movement, fluidity, and smoothness, while in the works of Cubism, all the elements in their most stable state with the help of geometric volumes showed a natural and everyday synthesis. When music is depicted, it can be seen that abstraction and reaching something beyond the material world was a concern for them; this is one of the other reasons for choosing the circle shape, which was a symbol of the reflection of the world, unity, sublimity, integrity, and divine nature. With innumerable circles, they showed a combination of heaven beyond the material world. Accordingly, some of their works were named after astronomical and celestial signs such as the sun and the moon. Therefore, one can look for the circle in the oldest symbols of humanity and find out that its repetition in different historical periods was due to the concepts that always attracted the attention of humanity, which led to its permanence. Also, the representation of movement, music, and celestial symbols with bright and vibrant colors and a circular shape in the works of Orphism can be seen as the continuation of the geometry of Cubism, and on the other hand, they can be placed in front of the display of every day and earthly scenes, such as nature and still life with limited colors and cubism volumes. Therefore, it can be concluded that Cubism artists with a realistic mentality sought to express earthly and material events, while Orphisms followed an extraterrestrial and spiritual point of view and displayed it in their works with bright circles, which were one of the oldest meaningful symbols of humanity.

Author Contributions

In the preparation of this article, the research and data collection was done by the second author, and the first author conducted the data analysis and the careful revisions of the paper. This manuscript was written with the participation of all authors. All authors discussed the results and reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The author (s) declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to this research, in writing, and publication of this article

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