The role of the Parisian café in the emergence of modern art: an analysis of the nineteenth century café as social institution and symbol of modern art

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Abstract
This thesis analyzes the significance of the Paris café in Modern Art. In discussing the social and historical events of mid to late nineteenth century Paris, it establishes the atmosphere in which the first modern artists broke from the formal academy system. The primary focus is two-fold. First, how the café was established in Parisian culture as a social institution and the role this played as a replacement for the École des Beaux Arts and in the formation of a new art movement. Second, how the new artists incorporated the café culture into their art as a representation of modern life. In discussing the café culture of the late-nineteenth century, it goes on to examine the role of the drink absinthe as a symbol of café life. The works of Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Jean-Francois Raffaelli and Vincent Van Gogh are analyzed and compared in order to establish the symbolism of the café. Primary and Secondary resources were used, including original illustrations and quotes by the café patrons, artists and writers, to establish physical descriptions of the café interiors. This study shows that the café culture in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century was an influential factor in the birth of modern art. For the new artists who portrayed the café in their works, it was a symbol of modern life.

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The onset of the nineteenth century saw a drastic transformation of Paris under the direction of Baron Haussmann. Key drivers for this transformation was the desire to improve public health through better sanitation, strategically widen the streets in order to clear congestion and implement security measures to counter revolutionary behavior. At the same time the European enlightenment period was well underway and with it came the wave of artistic, philosophical, cultural and engineering sophistication. This introduced the dichotomy of urban...
life which saw the emergence of middle and upper class. The Paris of the 1860s and 1870s was supposedly a brand-new city, equipped with boulevards, cafés, parks, and suburban pleasure grounds. The birthplace of those habits of commerce and leisure that constitute "modern life." Questioning those who view Impressionism solely in terms of artistic technique, T. J. Clark describes the painting of Manet, Degas, Seurat, and others as "The Paris of the 1860s and 1870s was supposedly a brand-new city, equipped with boulevards, cafés, parks, and suburban pleasure grounds. The birthplace of those habits of commerce and leisure that constitute "modern life." Undoubtedly, the same work of art can stir up absolutely opposite feelings in people’s souls. For example, looking at the fresco "Last Judgement" by Michelangelo, the splendid and talented creator of the Renaissance era, in the Sistine Chapel, some people admire the beauty of conveyed images, other people think about the idea of world division into saints and sinners, someone thinks about the correlation between good and evil and this consequence of emotions and thoughts can be endlessly. continued. All kinds of art enrich our inner world and give us new knowledge about surrounding world.