

Wrapping Your Head Around Cubism

Cubism is a form of abstract art that had its start in Paris during the early years of the 20th Century (around 1907 to 1908). It reached its peak a few years after it began and significantly lasted up to the 1920s. The artist Henri Matisse is said to be the one who coined the term “cubism” in order to represent an art form that required the palate to be split into different areas where the artist could do a separate form of representation.

The greatest movers in cubism were Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. These two were known to be contemporaries and friendly rivals. They each inspired and propelled the work of the other and both have gone through several phases from Analytical Cubism to Synthetic Cubism. The rivalry and influence on each other is perhaps best depicted in similar works like Picasso's *Le Guitariste* done in 1910 and Braque's *Woman With a Guitar* done in 1913. One of the biggest influences that led young artists like Picasso and Braque into the world of cubism was the work of renowned artist Paul Cezanne. Another great artist who portrayed art in cubism is Juan Gris. Gris was greatly inspired by the work of Pollock and Braque and this is best depicted in his work entitled: *Portrait of Picasso*, which he completed in oil during 1912.

There are two accepted branches for the art form cubism and they are Analytical and Synthetic Cubism. Analytical Cubism was the first form of cubism to be used and by its name suggested that the artist analyzed the natural image of his subject. Analytical Cubism was characterized by the near absence of varying colors except for monochromatic shades and defining lines. Synthetic Cubism on the other hand is the second branch of cubism. This form was developed by the two leading artists, as well as by Juan Gris. Synthetic cubism unlike Analytical Cubism incorporated a wider range of shades. New paper clippings, sheet music and letters were common inclusions to the design. Also, unlike analytical cubism which was the analysis of a subject in different planes, synthetic cubism often involved various ideas gathered together to create one image. This is also the reason why synthetic cubism was much flatter compared to analytical cubism.

Cubism also managed to find its way into other forms of art other than that of painting. All over the world, cubist architecture emerged and was most notable in South America. Poetry also had its taste of cubism. Like the way it is with the painted form, cubist poetry involved the deconstruction and reconstruction of forms and ideologies. Notable cubist poets include: Max Jacob, Guillaume Apollinaire, Andre Salmon and others. The work of Wallace Stevens entitled: “*Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*” is said to epitomize what cubism truly is in poetry.

Modern artists continue to be inspired by the cubist work of masters like Picasso and Braque. They may take their own liberties to the art form, but the heart of cubism continually remains and you can tell that a certain piece is indeed influenced by cubism even at first glance.

About the Author

Art Prints and [Photos on Canvas](#) are available to buy from GetCanvas.co.uk. Benedict is a freelance article writer for Dolphin Promotions [SEO](#) Company.

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