

MODULE - 2

Introduction of Western Art



Notes



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7

CUBISM, SURREALISM AND ABSTRACT ART

Cubism is a style of painting and sculpture, that began in Paris in about 1907. It was the most important trend at the beginning of 20th century. **Cezanne** was the pioneer of **cubism**. He said, "**Everything in nature must be treated as a cylinder or sphere**". The important artists included **Picasso, Braque and Leger**. They particularly chose subjects like still life, landscapes and portraits and the motifs in their works were broken up into small parts. The aim was to give importance on construction but not the emotions. The purpose was presenting the form, not richness of colour in terms of geometrical shapes. Forms became increasingly abstract and generalized. By 1920, this art movement came to an end.

Surrealism was another movement which started in 1924 and continued till 1955. The Surrealist artists tried to use the images of the unconscious in their works. The Surrealists considered themselves representatives of new outlook, mainly influenced by psycho-analysis. It originated as a revolutionary movement resulting from the **Dadaist's** revolt. **Giorgio de Chirico and Salvador Dali** were the most famous surrealist painters.

Abstract art is a general term for non-representational art, an art form that rejects the depiction of the contemporary world in a realistic way. It started in the year 1910. The pioneers of abstract paintings are **Kandinsky, Delarunay and Mondrian**. They tried to give a pictured form to depict abstract ideas which is not possible to represent in a realistic method.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, learner will be able to:

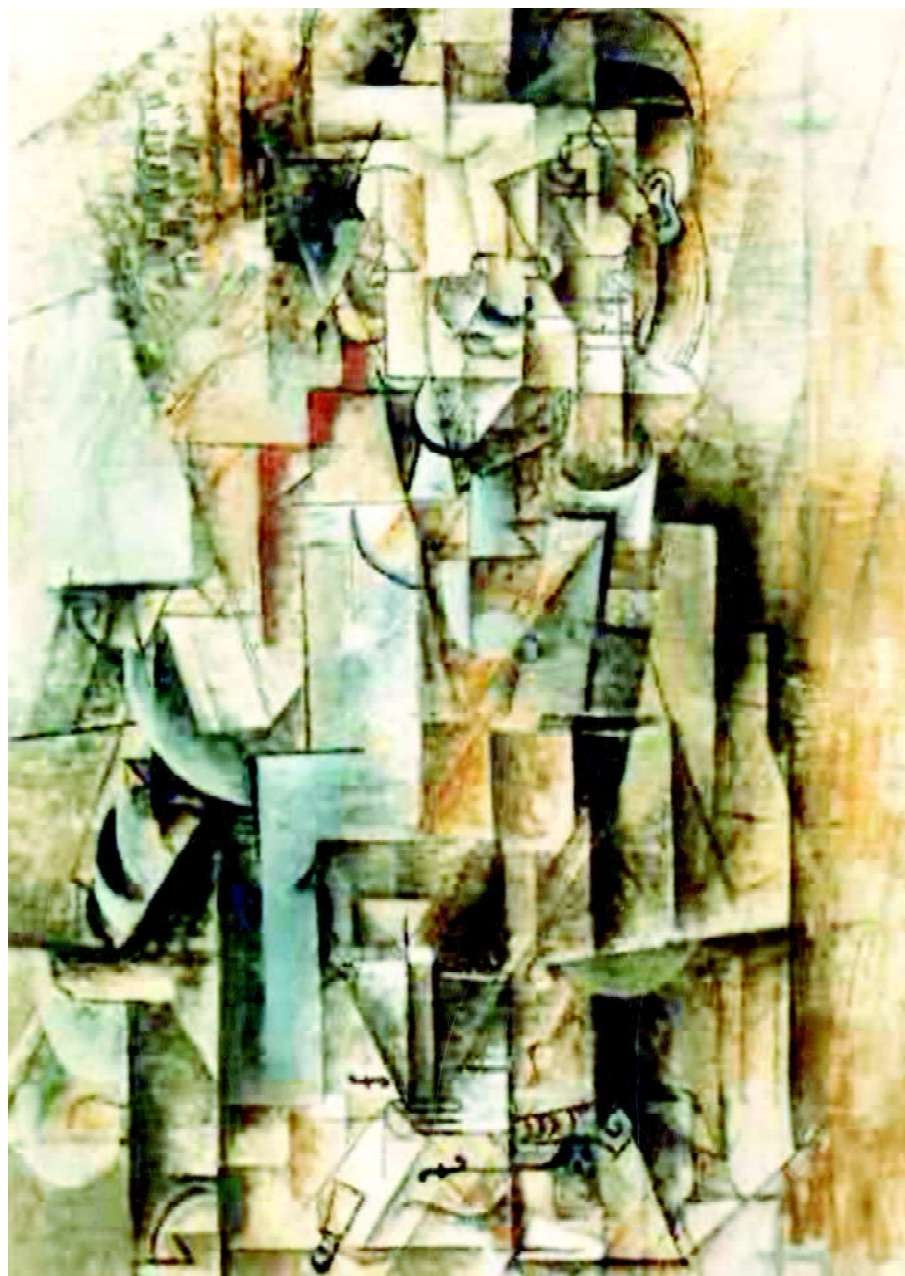
- 1 describe evolution of **Abstract Art, Cubism and Surrealism**.

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MAN WITH VIOLIN

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- | state the names of artists, methods and materials, sizes, themes and places of enlisted paintings.
- | tell the title of enlisted paintings.
- | differentiate between abstract art form and other arts.
- | identify **Abstract Art**, **Cubism** and **Surrealism** from other art movements.

7.1 MAN WITH VIOLIN

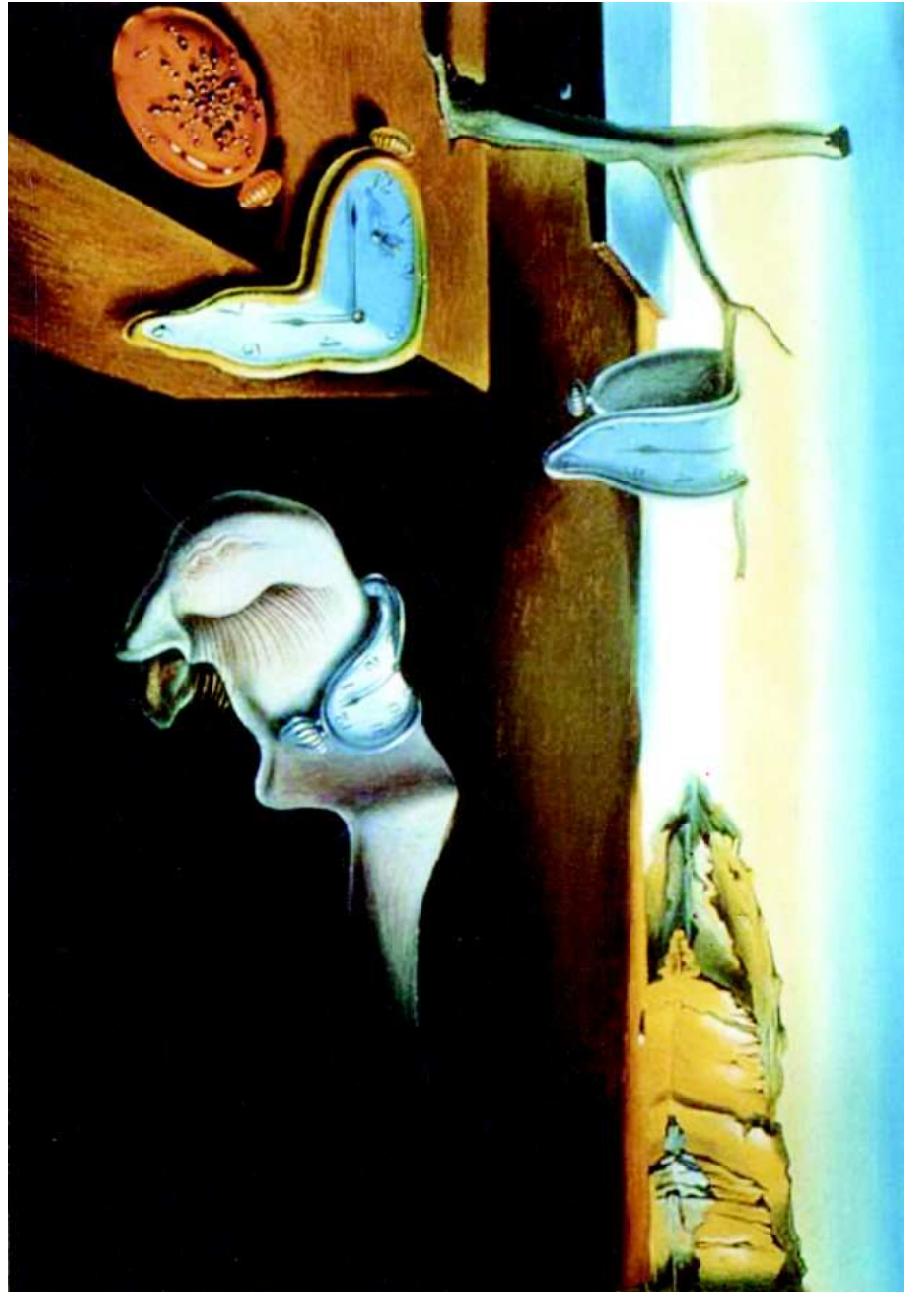
Title : **Man with Violin**
 Medium : Oil on canvas
 Date : 1912
 Size : 100 x 73 cm
 Artist : Pablo Picasso
 Collection : Philadelphia Museum of Art

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Pablo Picasso was born in 1881 in **Malaga, Spain**. He was a painter, sculptor, and ceramist. Throughout his long career, **Picasso** followed the principles of abstract composition. He was highly influenced by symbolism. He developed his own style in Paris during his **Blue Period, 1900- 1902**, named from the blue green tone of his canvases. **Picasso** developed his **Rose Period in 1905-1907**. In this period he used mainly pink colour in his paintings. After this period, his works were influenced by the African artifacts. From 1915, **Picasso** developed his **Cubist phase** which made him famous world over. **Cubism** is basically the breaking of three-dimensional forms into flat areas of pattern and colour, overlapping and linking so that shapes and parts of the human body or objects are seen from the front and back at the same time.

“**Man with Violin**” was painted in 1912. It is a fine example of **Analytical Cubism**. Objects were divided into parts depicting different viewpoints at the same time. Like any other painting of this period, forms are recognizable, but broken down into cube-like forms. **Picasso** tried to use space in a new way. The human form holding the violin is broken into various geometrical shapes and then arranged together. The colours used are typical of this period, using the shades of browns and green. Most of his paintings during this period were made with similar technique and colours. In this painting there is a continuous unity of form and colour. For him, reality had a different definition. He defined reality in a sense more real than that of nature. His brilliant and unusual way of handling paints and other materials made him most admired artist of the 20th Century. His one of the best works is ‘**Guernica**’ based on Spanish civil war.

Cubism, Surrealism and Abstract Art



PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

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1. Mention two of **Picasso's** famous periods.
2. What style made him famous?
3. When did he paint "**Man with Violin**"?
4. What are the years of the **Rose Period**?
5. On what subject **Picasso** painted '**Guernica**'?

7.2 PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

Title	: Persistence of Memory
Medium	: Oil on canvas
Date	: 1931
Size	: 9½" x 13"
Artist	: Salvador Dali
Collection	: Museum of Modern Art, New York

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Salvador Dali is the most famous **Surrealist** painter. He was a Spanish painter, film maker and writer. He adopted highly realistic technique. He continued with his practice of drawing which he had mastered in his youth while studying. After a brief period of experimenting with form, he used his drawings to depict the world of absurd, unusual and strange elements.

"**Persistence of Memory**" painted in 1931 is a fine example of **Surrealist Movement**. The bare landscape and calmness depicted in this painting could be regarded as life after all wars, after all humans have died. The only objects in the painting that give life and which can be associated with people are the "melting clocks". In this painting the melting clocks look very realistic and create the sense of disturbed mind which we all see in most of his paintings. **Dali's** own style was academic and precise but his subject matter was from his dreams or nightmares. The unconventional grouping of objects in **Dali's** pictures has a symbolic meaning. These soft watches create new and unpleasant images. Ants crawl over another, as they would over rotting food; their forms create a jewel like ornament covering the watch's surface. All his paintings create a different kind of pictorial language. None of **Dali's** paintings represent reality. They look as if nothing more than a few objects here and there which are out of place.

Though he was a great artist with talent and imagination, he had a way of doing

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BLACK LINES

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unusual things to draw attention to himself which many a times have annoyed those who loved his art as well as his critics. His eccentric theatrical manner was as prominent as his artwork and attracted lot of public attention. He died in 1989 and left behind him fantastic works such as “**Vilabertin**”, “**Large Harlequin**”, “**Small Bottle of Rum**” and “**Honey is Sweeter than Blood**”.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2**

1. What is the style of **Salvador Dali**?
2. What technique did he adopt?
3. Give an example of **Dali's** Surrealist painting.
4. What do you see in the painting “**Persistence of Memory**”?

7.3 BLACK LINES

Title	:	Black Lines
Medium	:	Oil on canvas
Date	:	December 1913
Size	:	4' 3" x 4' 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
Artist	:	Wassily Kandinsky
Collection	:	Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Wassily Kandinsky was born in 1866 in Russia. He was a famous painter and art theoretician of his time. **Kandinsky** is one of the founder figures of **abstract painting**. He laid the foundations for non-representational art in his three important series—**Impressions**, **Improvisations** and **Compositions**. His works were combination of abstraction and geometric. He wanted painting to be abstract like music is. “**Accompanied Contrast**”, “**Yellow Accompaniment**”, “**Angular Structure**” are some of his great works. His works had an enormous influence on the next generation of artists.

“**Black lines**” was done by **Kandinsky** in the year 1913. As the name suggests, the lines look as if they were put on with Indian ink but actually black paint was used. In this composition, a group of lines in a particular corner added different meanings according to the arrangement. Like other paintings of this period, his work showed simplicity and pure diagrams as if skeletons have no flesh on it. The coloured spots look as if applied by fingers of a giant hand and not brushes. They go well with the lines and its effect.

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For **Kandinsky**, line, shape, and colour all had their own meaning and function. Lines were free within the area. In most of his paintings, lines are sketchy and look as if they have lives of their own. He spent last part of his life in Paris where he died in 1944.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.3

1. What is the main contribution of **Kandinsky** to the modern art?
2. Name three important series of **Kandinsky**?
3. When did he paint "**Black lines**"?
4. What is the medium of this painting?



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

An important phase in Western Art began with the foundation of **Abstract Art**. Other art movements followed and there was a continuous change in understanding art. We find the influence of **Abstract Art** in works which can not be related to realism. Any work which is non representational is considered **Abstract Art**. Though **Abstract Art**, **Cubism** and **Surrealism** originated in the West, it left a deep impression on Indian artists and greatly influencing their many works.

Wassily Kandinsky, **Salvador Dali** and **Pablo Picasso** have left remarkable works for the future generation of artists as an inspiration. Though they represented important phases in these new movements, they remained very individualistic. His works showed the distinction from realistic work of the earlier periods. **Cubism** originated along the lines of **Abstract Art** and **Picasso** became famous for his **Cubist** paintings and sculptures. His works showed different periods and each period was very distinct from the other. **Dali**, who had a very interesting and unusual life, was the most famous amongst the **Surrealist Painters**. The beginning of the phase of **Abstract Art** starts with the works of **Wassily Kandinsky**.



TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Write short note on **Cubism**.
2. Briefly describe **Salvador Dali**'s contribution to **Surrealism**.
3. Write a paragraph on **Kandinsky**'s painting "**Black Lines**".
4. Write a brief note on **Abstract Art**.
5. Write in brief about **Pablo Picasso**.

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ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

7.1

1. Blue, Cubism
2. Cubism
3. 1912
4. 1905-1907
5. Spanish civil war.

7.2

1. Surrealism
2. Highly realistic technique
3. Persistence of Memory
4. Landscape, melting clocks, ants

7.3

1. Abstract painting
2. Impression, Improvisations and compositions
3. 1913
4. Oil on canvas

GLOSSARY

Impact	–	influence
Motifs	–	pattern
Unconscious	–	without awareness
Symbolism	–	the practice of symbols in art
Artifacts	–	work of art
Mystical	–	magical
Eccentric	–	a person who has unusual personality
Pictorial	–	illustrative
Dadaism	–	An art style of 20 th century in which normal rules of art are challenged.
Psycho analysis	–	A process to analyse mind of a person.