His Majesty the King: the Great Artist Who Creates Modern Works of Art

By : Kongkiat Maha-in
Translated by : Thassanee Thasraibiab

Modern art began at the same time as the industrial revolution in Europe during the 19th century. From academy art on, artists had to serve the aristocracy, with an emphasis on craftsmanship method, towards the transfer of modern art forms which reflects social facts under a scientific base of ideas. The artists who had the same belief in beauty had assembled in order to establish art movements such as impressionism which believed that beauty originated from the impression of light and outside atmosphere by capturing the atmosphere painted with alla prima technique, expressionism which accepted beauty was initiated from emotional contagion by violent coloring, and cubism which credited that the beauty of the world outside was angles.

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej abundantly cherishes and admires works of art such as photography, music, and painting. Regarding paintings particularly, His Majesty is deeply interested in oil paintings. His Majesty’s most active period started around 1959, after he ascended to the throne. He gave an audience to leading Thai artists, including Hem Vejakorn, Klien Yimsiri, Chalerm Nakhirak, Chamras Kietkong, Fua Haripitak, Paitoon Muangsomboon, Chuladhat Bayakaranondha, and Bhirya Kairiksh to privately consult about painting creativity.

Prof. Dr. Wiroon Tungcharoen has stated His Majesty’s modern painting creativity in the research report titled, “The Evolution of Modern Visual Art in Thailand,” that in truth His Majesty has created modern art for the following reasons. He began to practice freely, namely this is the realism technique. His paintings were created from a sense of freedom. These works of art truly depicted His Majesty’s individuality without being restricted from form, content, and procedure. This resulted in free expression of belief, emotion, and thought. It reflects the King’s interest in modern art from a variety of artists (Wiroon Tungcharoen. 1991: 151).
His Majesty’s oil painting demonstrated the influence of modern art which he seeks and adapts for his own individual works. Most of his paintings are portraits of his father, portraits of Her Majesty the Queen and their children, landscapes, flora, rural women, as well as abstracts. Those paintings have portrayed modern art which His Majesty employed to create in the following examples.

Cubism (Cubismo) is an art movement that was developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in the early 20th century. It is characterized by fragmented, geometric shapes and a focus on the depiction of objects from multiple viewpoints. Picasso’s work, “The Old Guitarist,” is a classic example of how Cubism can be used to portray the human form in a fragmented and abstract manner.

Surrealism (Surrealismo) is an art movement that began in the 1920s and 1930s, and was characterized by a fascination with the subconscious mind and a desire to express the irrational and the hidden aspects of human experience. Salvador Dalí’s painting, “The Persistence of Memory,” is a famous example of Surrealism, with its melting watches and dreamlike imagery.

Expressionism (Expressionismo) is an art movement that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and was characterized by a focus on emotion and individualism. Max Beckmann’s painting, “The Night Watch,” is an example of Expressionism, with its dark and intense color palette and its focus on emotion and the nightlife.

Realism (Realismo) is an art movement that emerged in the late 19th century, and was characterized by a focus on accuracy and detail. Gustave Courbet’s painting, “The Stone Breakers,” is an example of Realism, with its focus on the reality of the working class.
Regarding His Majesty’s paintings, it is apparent that he finely executed visual works of art with deep learning on modern art philosophy and belief. In addition he applied his personal identity in his oil paintings. His visual paintings are extremely worthy examples for Thai people, therefore especially anyone who creates art works should respond to it.

Fashion and textile design, Faculty of Industrial Textiles and Fashion Design, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon has integrated learning management with science and art to produce quality fashion designers for the society. A group of excellent senior students have gathered to study His Majesty’s paintings. Following that, they used the results of the study to develop textile works, which was the important ideal background of fashion design. The works were eventually exhibited.

For studying all of the paintings of His Majesty, our students were fortunate that we have the honorable role model, His Majesty King Bhumibol; moreover, Thais always have many chances to get closer to their King, completely different from other countries in the world. ❖