

FUTURIST PAINTING: TECHNICAL MANIFESTO

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In the first manifesto that we launched on the 8th of March, 1910, from the stage of the Chiarella Theater in Turin,¹ we expressed our deep-rooted disgust with, our proud contempt for, and our happy rebellion against vulgarity, mediocrity, the fanatical and snobbish worship of all that is old, attitudes which are suffocating Art in our Country.

On that occasion we were concerned with the relations between ourselves and society. Today, instead, with this second manifesto, we are resolutely abandoning contingent considerations and rising instead to higher expressions of the pictorial absolute.

Our growing desire for truth can no longer be satisfied with traditional Form and Color.

The gesture that we want to reproduce will no longer be a *moment* in the universal dynamism *which has been stopped*, but the *dynamic sensation* itself, perpetuated as such.

Indeed, all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing. A profile is never motionless before our eyes, but constantly appears and disappears. On account of the persistency of an image upon the retina, moving objects constantly multiply themselves, change shape, succeeding one another, like rapid vibrations, in the space which they traverse. Thus a running horse has not four legs, but twenty, and their movements are triangular.²

All is conventional in art, and what was the truth for the painters of yesterday is only a falsehood for us today.

We declare, for instance, that a portrait, in order to be a work of art, must not resemble the sitter, and that the painter carries in himself the landscapes which he would fix upon his canvas. To paint a human figure you must not paint it; you must render its surrounding atmosphere.

Space no longer exists: a street pavement that has been soaked by rain beneath the glare of electric lamps can be an abyss gaping into the very center of the earth. The sun is thousands of miles away from us; yet the house in front of us can seem to fit into the solar disk.

Who can still believe in the opacity of bodies, since our sharpened and multiplied sensibilities have already grasped the obscure manifestations of mediums?³ Why should we continue to create works that don't take into account our growing visual powers which can yield results analogous to those of X rays?⁴

Countless examples positively sanction our claims.

The sixteen people around you in a moving tram are in turn and at the same time one, ten, four, three; they are motionless and they change places; they are coming and going, they leap into the street, are suddenly swallowed up by a flood of sunlight, then come back and sit before you, persistent symbols of universal vibration. Or sometimes we look at the cheek of the person with whom we were talking in the street and can see the horse which is passing at the far corner. Again: Our bodies penetrate the sofas upon which we sit, and the sofas penetrate our bodies, just as the tram rushes into the houses which it passes, and in their turn the houses throw themselves upon the tram and are merged with it.

The construction of pictures has hitherto been stupidly traditional. Painters have shown us the objects and the people placed before us. We shall put the spectator in the center of the picture.

Just as clear-sighted individual research has cast its light on the unchanging obscurities of dogma in every field of human thought, so in painting the vivifying current of individual freedom has to replace the academic tradition.

We desperately want to reenter into life. Nowadays science has disowned its past in order the better to serve the material needs of our time; art, likewise disowning its past, must at last serve the intellectual needs of our time.

Our renewed consciousness does not permit us to look upon man as the center of universal life. The suffering of a man is of the same interest to us as the suffering of an electric lamp, which can feel pain, suffer tremors, and shriek with the most heartrending expressions of torment. The music discernible in the lines and folds of modern clothing works upon our sensibilities with the same emotional and symbolic power as the nude once possessed for the old masters.

In order to conceive and understand the new beauties of a modern picture, the soul must become pure; the eye must be freed from its veil of atavism and culture, so that it verifies its observations by recourse only to Nature, not to the Museum!

Then, when that has been done, it will be admitted that brown tints have never coursed beneath our skin; it will be discovered our flesh is shining with yellow, that its red blazes, and that green, blue, and violet dance upon it with untold charms, voluptuous and caressing.

How is it possible still to see the human face as pink, now that our life, redoubled by noctambulism, has multiplied our perceptions as colorists? The human face is yellow, red, green, blue, violet. The pallor of a woman gazing in a jeweler's window is more iridescent than the glistening prisms of the jewels that fascinate her.

The time has passed for our sensations in painting to be whispered. We will make them sing and shout on our canvases, which will sound forth deafening and triumphant flourishes.

Your eyes, accustomed to semidarkness, will soon open to more radiant visions of light. The shadows that we shall paint will be more luminous than the highlights of our predecessors, and our pictures, next to those of the museums, will shine like blinding daylight compared with deepest night.

This naturally leads us to conclude that painting cannot exist today without *divisionism*. This is not a technical *device* that can be methodically learned and applied at will. Divisionism, for the modern painter, must be an *innate complementariness*, which we deem essential and necessary.

In conclusion, we reject the charge that our art is too baroque. The ideas that we have explicated here derive wholly from our sharpened sensibility. While *baroque* suggests artifice, overheated and yet feeble displays of virtuosity, Art as we foresee it is wholly derived from spontaneity and power.

WE DECLARE:

1. That innate complementariness is an absolute necessity in painting, just as free meter in poetry or polyphony in music.
2. That universal dynamism must be rendered in painting as a dynamic sensation.
3. That in the manner of rendering Nature the first essential is sincerity and purity.
4. That movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies.

WE FIGHT:

1. Against the false patinas and varnishing by which it is attempted to give modern paintings the aura of older pictures.

2. **Against the superficial and elementary archaism founded upon flat tints, which reduces a painting to a powerless synthesis, both childish and grotesque.**
3. **Against the false claims to belong to the future put forward by the secessionists and the independents, the new academics now to be found in every country.**
4. **Against the nude in painting, as nauseous and as tedious as adultery in literature.**

You think that we are mad. Instead, we are the Primitives of a new sensibility that has been utterly transformed.

Beyond and outside the atmosphere in which we alone live, there is nothing but shadows. We Futurists are ascending to the highest and most radiant summits, and we proclaim ourselves the Lords of Light, for already we are drinking from the quickening sources of the Sun.