

The Influence of African Art on Pablo Picasso's Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)

Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* is a groundbreaking artwork that marked a turning point in the history of art. Created in 1907, this painting is considered one of the most important works of the twentieth century. It is also a prime example of how the influence of African art has affected Western art. This essay will examine how African art influenced Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* and how this painting revolutionized the way artists approached form, composition, and subject matter.

The influence of African art on *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* can be traced back to Picasso's fascination with African masks. In 1907, Picasso visited the ethnographic museum in Paris, where he was exposed to African art for the first time. He was particularly drawn to the masks from the Congo, which he found to be incredibly powerful and evocative. The geometric shapes, bold lines, and asymmetrical composition of the masks made a profound impression on Picasso, and he began to incorporate these elements into his own work.

One of the most obvious ways that African art influenced *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* is in the painting's composition. The figures in the painting are arranged in a way that is reminiscent of African masks, with their exaggerated features and asymmetrical forms. The women's bodies are twisted and contorted, with jagged lines that cut across the canvas. The faces are flattened and distorted, with exaggerated eyes, noses, and lips that are reminiscent of African masks. The overall effect is one of primal energy and raw emotion, which is characteristic of African art.

Another way that African art influenced *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* is in the use of color. Picasso's use of bright, bold colors is reminiscent of African textiles and pottery, which are known for their vibrant hues. The use of bright, contrasting colors is also characteristic of African masks, which often feature bold patterns and vivid hues. In *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, Picasso uses color to create a sense of tension and unease, which adds to the painting's emotional impact.

The influence of African art on *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* can also be seen in the way that Picasso approached form. African masks are known for their abstract and stylized forms, which often distort or exaggerate the features of the human face. In *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, Picasso uses a similar approach, flattening the figures and distorting their features to create a sense of otherworldliness. The forms in the painting are simplified and abstracted, which adds to the painting's sense of primal energy and raw emotion.

In conclusion, Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* is a prime example of how the influence of African art has affected Western art. Picasso's fascination with African masks led him to incorporate elements of African art into his own work, resulting in a painting that revolutionized the way artists approached form, composition, and subject matter. The composition of the painting, the use of color, and the approach to form are all influenced by African art, which gives *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* its distinctive style and emotional impact.

References

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