

Art Enrichment

Artist Biography

Grade 2

*****Please do not read the biographical information word for word to the class. Paraphrasing would be best.**

Pieter Cornelius Mondriaan

(pronounced PEE-tur cor-NEE-lee-us MON-dree-Yon)

Dutch, 1872-1944

Painter

Pieter Cornelius Mondriaan was born in 1872 in Amersfoort, Holland. He was called Piet (pronounced pee-ay), Dutch for Pete. When he was 18 years old, he began teaching drawing lessons for primary school children. During this time, he painted a lot- mostly naturalistic/realistic.

From 1908-1910, he painted the famous series of paintings about the Church of Domburg while living in a small village in Holland. When he moved back to Amsterdam, he became a member of a group for artists where they discussed their thoughts on how art should be. Mondriaan was heavily influenced by these artists.

Years later in Laren, Holland, Mondriaan met Theo Van Doesburg. He was looking for members for a new artists group called The Style (1915). Piet became a member a year later. The Style was interested in breaking down images into its simplest form, as in geometric and abstract paintings. Straight lines, pure primary colors (yellow, red, and blue), and geometric shapes were characteristic of what the artists of this group painted. Mondriaan liked to divide space, often spending many hours making sure his paintings were perfectly divided. They were balanced but not necessarily symmetrical. He preferred rectangles and primary colors.

Around his 50th birthday, the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam put together an overview exhibition of his work. In 1922, he met an architect (someone who designs buildings), Oud, and the two became very good friends until they had a fight about building design in modern society which tore them apart and their friendship ended.

Mondriaan was very strong in his beliefs and the beliefs of the particular artist's groups he was involved in during his life. In 1925, another long friendship ended. Mondriaan's long friendship with Theo Van Doesburg ended because Van Doesburg began experimenting with the color green and diagonal lines! This went completely against The Style's beliefs which apparently were unacceptable to Mondriaan. Later, Piet began experimenting with diagonal lines and different colors and in 1929; Mondriaan and Van Doesburg became friends again.

In 1938, Mondriaan moved to London because of the threat of Nazi Germany. Two years later, he moved to New York because the Germans were bombing London (WWII). He stayed in New York until he died in 1944.

Mondriaan's work was influenced by the many artists he met in his life yet he maintained his own unique style and stayed strong to his ideas and principles to make him one of the most recognized artists of his time.

From the 1970's TV show, The Partridge Family, the bus they rode in is painted in the style of Mondriaan. His paintings also had an influence on fashion design in the 1960s.