

Light * Form * Movement * Sound

By Mary E. Bute

The Absolute Film is not a new subject. It is concerned with an art which has had as logical development as other arts, perhaps slowly but naturally.

This art is the interrelation of light, form, movement and sound – combined and projected to stimulate an aesthetic idea. It is unassociated with ideas of religion, literature, ethics or decoration. Here light, form, and sound are in dynamic balance with kinetic space relations.

The Absolute Film addresses the eye and the ear. Other motion pictures, although making use of the sensations of sight and sound, address not the eye and ear but the intellect. For example, in realistic films, the onlooker is expected to enjoy the clever imitation of nature – to be deceived into thinking the living prototype is before him. Whereas the Absolute Film stimulates our visual and aural senses directly with color, form, rhythm and sound. In realistic films, the medium is subordinate to story, symbol or representation. We view an Absolute Film as a stimulant by its own inherent powers of sensation, without the encumbrance of literary meaning, photographic imitation, or symbolism. Our enjoyment of an Absolute Film depends solely on the effect it produces: whereas, in viewing a realistic film, the resultant sensation is based on the mental image evoked.

Cinematographers, painters and musicians find a common enthusiasm in the Absolute Film. Through using the motion picture camera creatively, cameramen find a seemingly endless source of new possibilities and means of expression undreamed of while the camera was confined to use merely as a recording device. But we must turn back to painters and musicians to find the ideas which probably motivated the Absolute Film into a state of being.

Work in the field of the Absolute Film is accelerating both here and abroad. The foundations for it were laid years ago and it was more recently anticipated by Cezanne and his followers with whom we have an abstract art of painting taking form. Cezanne used the relationships between color and form, discarding the former mixture of localized light and shade. By stressing relationship, he lifted color from imitating objective nature to producing a visual sensation in itself. His paintings of still-lives: apples and tablecloth, are not conceived in a spirit of objective representation; they are organized groups of forms having relationships, balanced proportions and visual associations. His use of color on a static surface reaches a point where the next step demanded an introduction of time sequence and a richer textural range.

The Cubists tried to produce on a static surface a sensation to the eye, analogous to the sensation of sound to the ear. That is, by the device of presenting simultaneously within the visual field the combined aspects of the same object viewed from many different angles or at different intervals. They tried to organize forms distantly related to familiar objects to convey subjective emotions aroused by contemplation of an objective world.

The element of music appears in the paintings of Kandinsky. He painted abstract compositions based on an arbitrary chromatic scale of senses.

The word color occurs often in the writing of Wagner. In the “Reminis of Amber” (1871) he writes: “Amber made his music reproduce each contrast, every blend in contours and color – we might almost fancy we had actual music paintings.”

There is simply no end to the examples which we might cite. Some musicians have gone on record as having color associations with specific instruments.

These experiments by both musicians and painters, men of wide experience with their primary art material, have pushed this means of combining the two mediums up into our consciousness. This new medium of expression is the Absolute Film. Here the artist creates a world of color, form, movement and sound in which the elements are in a state of controllable flux, the two materials (visual and aural) being subject to any conceivable interrelation and modification.

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