

Stuart Davis

Painter, born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

He was surrounded by Artists

1. His mother was a sculptor. What is a sculptor? Has anyone used playdoh or clay? She would work with a material and create shapes.
2. His father was art editor with a newspaper. (the Philadelphia Press) and among his employees were the young artists John Sloan, William Glackens, Everett Shinn and George Luks that would influence him.

The Davis family moved to East Orange, New Jersey at the same time as the Philadelphia artist, Robert Henri, opened his school in New York City, which Davis left high school to attend. His teacher (Robert Henri) was a teacher who encouraged students to be spontaneous in their art. Davis responded to this progressive approach, which permitted him to learn the new styles that were emerging at the time. Spontaneity in art extended to life, and Davis and his fellow students became fans of jazz, resulting in Davis's lifelong sensitivity to both musical and visual rhythms.

Like other Henri students Davis supported himself by doing illustrations for Harper's Weekly (a newspaper). He exhibited watercolors in the famous an art show (Armory show of 1913). At this show he saw other artist use different styles. Just like when you see someone in your class color a certain way or draw a certain way and you like it – he did the same. He tried to copy the style.

For the next few years Davis experimented with the collage. He pasted paper on the surface of his canvases and painted imitations of wallpapers, labels, etc. In these collages of 1921 he first introduced words and letters, elements that were to comprise an important part of his pictorial vocabulary. These early collages were a suggestion of the form that Pop Art would take in the 1960's.

Davis enjoyed translating the sights and sounds of American life. He was one of the first artists to appreciate jazz music. He blended hot, fully saturated oranges, pinks and magentas and lively dancing shapes to form a pictures to show the rhythms of jazz. He began shapes and words in his paintings. Stuart Davis tried to use many styles of art – but still had his own style and was well respected by other artists

Davis had thousands of pages of notes writing his theories of color and space. He had an infatuation with the hustle and bustle of the urban environment. The result is a sweeping document that brings to new light often-overlooked aspects of his work.

Painting is on the next page→

Davis was inspired by taxis, storefronts, and neon signs. The dissonant colors and lively, repetitive rhythms in his work can be seen as visual analogs to jazz music, which he loved.

