

# Orphism



By Jane Denison

**ORPHISM: "The art of painting new structures out of elements that have not been borrowed from the visual sphere, but have been created entirely by the artist himself.....it is pure art."**

Not long ago, after having been buried in a bookshelf, this Orphism quote uncovered itself for me. I had displayed it in various galleries and shows because it was so thought provoking and a good conversation starter.

As I began reading it again I was surprised at how accurately it described my present aesthetic evolution. The more recent paintings in my gallery clearly show some evolving. I had never heard of the word Orphism and just considered it as the title for the quote. Previously, just agreeing with this description of art in the quote was satisfying enough. I have now found that Orphism is actually an Art Movement. My art mostly expresses subjective ideas through abstract forms and colors in contrast to painting objects, things and places realistically. So the Art Movement I have identified with is Abstract Expressionism and Conceptual Art (Idea-Art).

Many of the conceptions included in the Orphic Art Movement are specific and relevant to what is attracting my creative interest. I enjoy being part of the mental process of allowing forms and colors lead me, step by step, towards the final creation of a unique drawing.

So what IS Orphism?

## ORPHISM

The author of the quote is Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), a French poet, playwright, short story writer, novelist, journalist and art critic. He is considered to be one of the foremost poets of his time, the forerunner of the literary revolution of the first half of the 20th century, one of the most impassioned defenders of Cubism and a forefather of Surrealism. It was Apollinaire who he came up with the word Cubism (1911) to describe that newly formed Art Movement. The terms Orphism (1912) and Surrealism (1917) Art Movements were also originated by him. Orphism as a Movement was short-lived, essentially coming to an end before World War 1.

After seeing and admiring the colors, shapes and fresh styles of art being created by several young artists Apollinaire realized that art is not based on any particular theory, but on this simple principle: "The art of creating must come from the imagination, from intuition, because it must be as close as possible to life and nature, to the environment, and to the human being." This was achieved through expressions of Non-Representational or Anti-Figurative Art Form. A view clearly stated in the above quote.

Apollinaire's personal view of such "pure art" is that an Orphic painting should "convey an untroubled aesthetic pleasure but at the same time have meaningful structure and sublime significance." Its aim is to dispense with recognizable subject matter and to rely on forms and colors to communicate meaning or an artistic creation. He saw Orphism as representing a move towards a completely new Art-Form of its own. A distinction that he says is "similar to how music (no words) can be compared to literature (no sound) and pure art (without person, places or things)." His thinking seems to have entered a subjective base for creativity rather than an objective perception of what was commonly considered the way art should be expressed.

## ORPHEUS ?

The root word of Orphism came from Apollinaire's interest and appreciation of the legendary Greek God Orpheus, known for his poetry, art, and music. Orpheus's musical talent was magnificently played on the Lyre. He was associated with a mysticism that would greatly inspire artistic achievements. Primarily, Orpheus inspired "The artists power to create new structures and color harmonies in a creative process that merged to form a sensuous experience."

It was believed by Aristotle that Orpheus never existed. But to all other ancient writers he was a real person, though living in remote antiquity. Many believed he lived several generations before Homer.

The use of the word Orpheus by Apollinaire relates to his idea that painting should be like music, which is an important element in the development of Abstract Art.