

Humanism and the baroque periods of art



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Humanism, specifically during the Renaissance, was a huge movement towards the human mind as a whole and how individuality in expression of thoughts and ideas was celebrated. Tradition was not something to be blindly followed anymore. One might argue that humanism played the biggest role in creating the Renaissance. This was because of the huge focus on studying Roman and Greek texts, which gave a new outlook on their modern world focused on the human ability. Painting was influenced by humanism by becoming more realistic while also keeping forms classic. It also heavily focused on the human experience. The two paintings I found to show this well were "The School of Athens" by Raphael and "The Tribute Money" by Masaccio. In "The School of Athens" it is clear education is the main theme, which makes sense because humanism during that period had a lot to do with educating and thinking for yourself. "The Tribute Money" portrays a biblical scene in which Jesus performs a miracle to satisfy the tax payment. It has multiple things going on from the story at the same time and the people are all doing different things. They are both great examples of focusing the attention towards everyday life. You can also see that, in every person depicted, they have a mind of their own. They look in different directions and are carrying out different actions, there is no one true center focus. Secularism and naturalism can be seen throughout Renaissance art as well. There is less focus on church scenes and more focus towards the outdoors and creating an environment of the world. They aimed for accuracy in the paintings as well, which can be seen especially well in "The Tribute Money". If you look towards the feet there are cast shadows and the lighting is used to create a much more realistic scene had there not been shadows. What can also be seen is the movement of the people depicted, except for

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Jesus, which sets the scene as more of a photo in time instead of a perfectly posed scene that was recreated.

The Baroque period was started around the 1600s. It is thought to be that the most important pieces of history relating to the Baroque period were the reformation and the Counter Reformation. The Catholic Church declared at the Council of Trent that art was to depict religious ideas and themes. It focused on the most dramatic point in the story, compared to Renaissance art which focused more on a casual portrayal of the scene. Baroque art is very dramatic and uses light to dramatize the scene even more. The technique used, in reference to the lights and darks, is called chiaroscuro. It used harsh lights and dimly lit scenes to make the painting even more dramatic. The color use was also very dramatic, although they might not be bright the emotional appeal behind colors was used to help stimulate and evoke emotion in the viewer. The common themes behind Baroque art were visions, ecstasies, death, and overall intense moments. One big difference in style between Baroque and Renaissance art is that the planes and depth in Baroque is much more limited than in Renaissance which had clearly defined planes and objects or people in the planes. Renaissance's use of perspective gave them realism, which didn't allow the emotion that was trying to be depicted. It fell a bit flat, but Baroque came along and "solved" this issue by their use of style and lighting to bring back the emotion that was lost in the Renaissance period. Two pieces of art from the Baroque period that showcase this are "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa" by Giovanni Bernini and "The Conversion on the Way to Damascus" by Caravaggio. "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa" held a very common theme in Baroque art, a meeting of the divine

and human. The sculpture is of the moment St. Teresa recalled an angel coming down and piercing her with an arrow of love. The way light is used on the sculpture is Baroque in every sense, from the light coming down from a yellow tinted window above and wooden rods falling from behind being lit the same. “The Conversion on the Way to Damascus” is a great example of how Caravaggio used light and dark to create drama and emotion. It is a dimly lit scene with harsh light coming from out of view, lighting one side of the horse and Paul, while the man in the back is slipping away into the darkness.

John Donne was known for his unusual style in writing. He had abstract verses, weird lengths, and often confusing metaphors. Although he went against the grain of writing at the time, he was given a better appreciation in later times. His unique style stemmed from religion and lust. He expressed both in a way those had not done before him, and it worked. I read that he was an Anglican minister, which gave his many contradictions life. His life was a bit of a contradiction seeing as he wrote about the physical nature of life and death while also weaving spirituality into his poems. Thomas Wyatt, on the other hand, took much of his ideas from Petrarch, although he did write poems of his own. They were more consistent in style. All of the sonnets we read by Wyatt were octaves followed by a sestet, and he had consistency in most of his writing. This is unlike Donne who was sporadic and had little continuous style. One thing they had in common was their impact on the poetry of their times, both could be called innovators. The poems of Donne were also livelier in the sense that they had more emotion. They both had poems dealing with thoughts that might run through your head at

certain times in your life, which I enjoyed. Wyatt's poems were more pleasing to me, aesthetically, because I can enjoy poems more when they have a consistent theme and style. His writing is very similar, and I was able to get more into it when I was able to understand the rhyme scheme. His theme behind his sonnets that we read was dealing with love and a loss of love. I was able to understand these even more as well because, as most everyone, has loved and loss that love at some point in their life. Not specifically a romantic relationship but any relationship allows you to feel those emotions and they are powerful, which made me enjoy them more.

Aesthetics, to me, is almost indescribable. It is all around us, beautiful and appreciative. What makes it interesting is everyone views and appreciates the visual and literary arts in their own subjective way. It brings up questions that are hard to answer. What is beauty? These questions are what made aestheticism a movement to begin with. To find something aesthetic is to have a sense of beauty and emotion, the art itself provokes emotion within. To me, an artwork that sticks out as aesthetic are sculptures, specifically marble. "David" by Michelangelo is what stands out to me the most. When I saw the David in person, I was not stuck pondering the idea or sitting there thinking purely intellectually about the statue, but instead had this emotion fill me that almost made my jaw drop. The sheer size alone had me breath taken and in awe. I think what makes something aesthetically important to me is the understanding of the time and craftsmanship it took to create it. The David is 17 feet tall and pure marble. Michelangelo took more than two years to create it as well. All that I learned after, which made it even more appealing, but even in that moment I knew there was something beautiful

and great about the piece. It is hard to describe why I liked it so much at the time, but I think that is why some of the beauty in art is so amazing, an indescribable appreciation and affection for the piece. It can be a different piece or everyone, which I'm sure will be seen by the responses to this question. Aesthetics of art is beautiful because of the subjectivity it innately has within. Whatever you are to find beautiful is justified, even if no one else does.