Mona lisa analysis essay

The Mona Lisa is a half-length painting of a woman, believed to the wife of a rich silk merchant called Francesco del Giocondo from Florence. The woman herself, is believed to be Lisa Gherardini. Her husband contracted a painter for his services as a gift to his wife for having conceived their second son, Andrea and also as a celebration of their new home. Prior to the identity of the portrait as Lisa Gherardini, various art experts had suggested different identities as they believed her to be the identity of four other paintings. In this case, various women have been suggested to be the painting models, such as Constanza d'Avalos, Cecilia Gallerani, Isabella of Aragon, and even the painter and his assistant as well (Wood 20).

The artist commissioned to paint the Mona Lisa was Leonardo da Vinci, a famous Italian artist. The identity of the artist was ascertained by Giorgio Vasari, a Renaissance art historian (Kuligowski 35). This fact was later established in 2005 by a scholar from Heidelberg University who made a discovery of a marginal note in a volume written in 1477 by Cicero, an ancient Roman Philosopher (Kuligowski 57). The note, written by Agostino Vespucci, Leonardo's contemporary, indicated that Leonardo da Vinci was working on Lisa del Giocondo's painting. The painting was named Mona Lisa as Mona is the short form of the complete term, ma donna, a polite form of the Italian name referring to Madam.

The period which the Mona Lisa was painted was approximated to be between 1503 and 1506 (Wood 22). However, the exact date was established to be October 1503 upon the discovery of the marginal note as indicated above. According to Vasari's account, Leonardo took several years to complete the painting, as evidenced by the cracks which appear on the

subject's face and hands. Various art historians believe the environment upon which the painting was done was in Florence in which case the landscape is prominently featured. The background comprises of mountains and valleys. Other individuals believe the environment was idealized from Leonardo's imagination, while others believe the landscape to be a real place.

Leonardo achieved and established new innovation standards with the Mona Lisa. Previous artists used different techniques in portrait painting, particularly in posture and demeanor. In the past, women did not look directly towards the viewers, a technique Leonardo differed from as the painting's subject looks directly to the viewers. In addition, the portraits of both women and men in the past were cut off from the middle of the torso in traditional paintings. However, with the Mona Lisa, Leonardo shows the subject's head, upper torso, as well as much of her lower body right until the waist. Also, as opposed in past paintings where subject's hands were raised up in order to occupy most part of the painting's frame, the Mona Lisa's subject has her hands rested comfortably on an arm rest. These techniques were innovative and started a new trend in portrait painting at the time.

Over the years, the importance of the Mona Lisa has been determined by the high level of curiosity it causes on the audience. The painting is arguably the most famous art piece in the world and has created enthusiasm in art from individuals in different parts of the world to view the painting, in Louvre, France. In addition, the painting is shrouded in the subject's mysterious smile, as it incites various views in regards to her facial expression. It is also

widely referenced that Leonardo has never really completed the painting, thereby inciting interest as to whether the painting is indeed finished or not.

According to Gardner and Kleiner, an art piece is influenced by various factors such as material and technique and color (7). In the first case, artists may adopt different materials to create their art such as gold, clay, and marble amongst others. Technique refers to the process which an artist adopts to handle their materials (Gardner and Kleiner 7). In Mona Lisa's case, Leonardo used populous as the material upon which he painted the subject.

Gardner and Kleiner (7) indicate that artists' perspective of light is in reference to objects and pigments and thus constitutes to subtractive light. Leonardo adopted the concept of color when he used dark colors in order to create an illusion of depth and perspective in the painting. This aspect can be illustrated in the various points of the painting, such as the subject's neck.

Works Cited

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