

Formal analysis of durer's knight, death and the devil

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Uriah Funk Leila Armstrong Art 110 7 February, 2013 Formal Analysis of Durer's Knight, Death and the Devil My first impression upon looking at Durer's " Knight, Death and the Devil" is one of impending doom met with courage and a feeling of resigning to one's fate.

The figure of the Knight is surrounded by the figures of Death on his sickly horse and the beast faced Devil, along with a treacherous landscape that seems to fold in upon itself and hold other unseen dangers.

The knight marches forward seeming to ignore the threats, as he leaves the safety of the city behind he is safe in his armor upon his loyal steed, for now. This engraving was done on copper; giving it a warm earthy tone. The absence of other colors gives the piece a dark feeling. Durer's etching uses light very realistically, giving the figure of the horse especially a very convincing sheen. The absence of light behind the figures lends an abyssal element of danger connecting the literal dangers of Death and the Devil in the upper part of the work to the implied dangers in the lower part of the etching.

With the abundance of hatching and cross hatching, lines appear from the texture of the objects and figures themselves, while other line work is direct and bold such as along the armor work of the knight. The eye is drawn to the left along the work at first by the implied motion of the knight and his dog. Other directional forces like the knight's pike and sword as well as the trees in the background and the devils horn and spear draw the eye back across the space.

The magnificent etching makes full use of shape, volume, shading, mass, size, scale, and texture to create an almost scientific realism that would not be out of place in biology textbooks. Durer uses space in the piece to create a sense of closing in around the knight with all of the darkest parts being immediately around the horse and rider. The only open space, or escape, is the sky above and behind the knight and he is not heading in this direction, further increasing the sense of danger.

Atmospheric and linear perspective while present is minimal and only serve to reinforce the claustrophobic feel of the foreground.

At first, the composition seems quite stable, the knight presenting a strong vertical line and his horse firmly grounding the rider, yet the relationship with background characters creates precarious unbalanced shapes. Overall these elements present a foreboding scene for the knight no matter how stable the stance of his horse and rigidity of his spine. The piece gives a very humanist feel, with texture, shading, and mass of the figures and objects having a down to earth almost touchable quality. Other elements like the lizard and skull suggest symbolism that intrigues the viewer to further investigation.

Created by Albrecht Durer in 1513 Germany, the piece, according to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has a connection to a religious literary work titled Handbook of a Christian Soldier.

The engraving is 9.6in x 7.5in on copper. The small size probably allowed for detail in the work as well as to be useful in book illustration. Works Cited
" Albrecht Durer: Knight, Death, and the Devil (43. 106.

<https://assignbuster.com/formal-analysis-of-durers-knight-death-and-the-devil/>

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