

Critical thinking on visual art history

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Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.) by Pablo Picasso can be analyzed critically using both Postcolonial and Feminist approaches. Picasso was so much interested in African art as he felt a personal attachment to this art. In his Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.) (Pablo 1907), he lines up (displays) women, especially for the potential customers, who in this case, are the males. This is probably at a brothel. In this image, some women are naked while others are wearing African masks. This reflects Picasso's interest in African art. It also depicts the Westerners' attitudes towards the non-Westerns especially the Africans during the colonial period. The masks are extremely stylized, as the reductionist presentations of the Picasso's Cubist style of the women (Said 2007). Classical symmetry can also be seen as depicted by the mask angles, which incorporates well with various vintage points (Boheemen-Saaf 1999). In this image, cases of binary opposition can be identified. The two binary opposite pairs are created by primitivism and feminism. The African culture is represented as being a direct opposite of the European culture, as created by the African masks.

The second binary opposition is between men and women. A man is always the direct opposite of a woman. Our societies always portray women as objects meant to fulfill men's desires. In this image, the women are nude as they are displayed for their customers in the context of a brothel, the men. Also, there is a fruit plate at the lower side of the image. These fruits suggest a warm invitation. Both the fruits and the women are placed in the same category: objects to be enjoyed by men (Said 2007). These intersect well with the concerns addressed in Irigaray's Feminist analysis.

Work Cited

Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf. “ Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History: Reading, Narrative and Postcolonialism.” Cambridge University Press, 1999

Edward Said, “ Theory for Art History”, Vintage publishers, 2007 pp. 219-225

Pablo Picasso, “ Les Demoiselles d’Avignon”, oil on canvas, 1907. Retrieved <http://smarthistory.org/les-demoiselles-davignon.html>

Tate collections <http://www.tate.org.uk/imap/pages/animated/keyterms.htm>