

Example of essay on creation of adam vs. paradise

[Art & Culture](#), [Painting](#)



For the final project I will present and analyze two famous Renaissance artworks: Michelangelo Buonarroti's "The Creation of Adam" and Lucas Cranach's "Paradise". Both of them were painted in approximately same time and belong to the same artistic epoch. Still both are very original and significant for the history of Art. The decision to compare these two works, which will be central for this essay, came to me with a thought that both of them represent the same artistic wave, show the flow of humanist ideas, and include religious characters, but at the same time they are completely opposite. The images of God, Adam, earth and paradise differ a lot. One of the paintings depicts an image of unity of God and human while the other shows the place where humans and the creator were disunited.

Painting of the creation of Adam belongs to an Italian painter Michelangelo Buonarroti. It was carried out as a part of a series of ceiling frescos for the Sistine Chapel in Vatican, Rome. It was completed in 1510-1512 and its sizes are 280x570 cm. The painting illustrates a famous scene from the Bible, the book of Genesis. The work symbolizes a man who is created in the image of God. Also the image of nearly touched hands of God and Adam has become a sign of humanity. Artists claim that "the non-quite meeting of hands" in this picture is "the most famous detail in Western art and contribute various interpretations to it. Michael Salzman investigates Buonarroti's life and informs that he put in the picture his interpretation of Platonic philosophy and used the brain as "the divine gift that makes us truly human". At the same time it is not a hand-shake which suggests that God and Adam are not on the same level. What is the most fascinating in this painting is the beauty of a naked body: while God is dressed, Adam stays completely nude.

Lucas Cranach's artwork called "Paradise" is dated the beginning of the 16th century, a year 1536 and localized to Germany. It belongs to religious writings genre and fits the style of Northern Renaissance. The painting has been done with a panel by oil and its original dimensions are 81 x 114 cm. This work, in contrast to "The creation of Adam", is not as bright but full with many little details. For instance, besides of people it includes animals and the patterns of nature. Adam and Eve are pictured in the paradise in action – walking or just about to eat an apple or right before being thrown away from the paradise. The bodies are almost naked with the only leaf covering their genitalia. This adds some dynamic to the drawing and looking into the details of the picture I firstly noticed not the central act, but a fullness of the place. I can easily associate "The Paradise" with a documented Bible film as one painting contains many scenes showing the consequences of Adam and Eva's disobedience.

Identifying the similarities and differences between the two works I can say that both of the pictures are composed on a basis of a Biblical narrative. Although the Renaissance art is rather characterized by a turn away from religious topics towards physical phenomena and people instead of saints and spiritual things, those two are both representing Biblical story events. But interpreting these paintings suggests that they have very different messages inside. Buonarroti's work first of all shows the act of creation while Cranach's is concentrated on the acts preceding the exile of the paradise. Cranach's work was very likely inspired by Martin Luther, whom he knew well and the Protestant Revolution, while Buonarroti's painting was rather aimed to show the humanity of a person and the connection with the Creator. This

work was meant to remind people, who enter the church, about the very beginning of humans' existing as the Creator's act of love. The message is very positive and optimistic in contrast to various threatening medieval paintings.

Both of the artworks point to a chance given for humanity in Adam's person.

Michelangelo depicts the exact biblical moment of the birth of Adam, Lukas points to the beauty of the paradise with its quintessence - first humans.

Whereas the Italian piece represents the action of God reaching out to Adam, the German author probably wanted to point out to humans communicating with God and being closely connected to him without any mediators.

Both pictures suggest a very intimate personal contact of Adam with God. In Buonarroti's work God seems to be in a separated space together with the angels reaching out to Adam. In Granach's painting God is walking together with Adam and Eve and, quite possibly, has a nice conversation with them.

Another noticed element is that portrayal of God as a middle-aged male appears in both works with a difference that in Buonarroti's piece he is dressed in a light tunic, while in the German masterpiece God seems to be overdressed in symbolical red and blue - the Eastern Christian symbols of divinity and humanity combined in one person.

The question I asked myself was why is Eve missing in Buonarroti's work? I considered displaying it as another difference between the paintings but after some reflection I suddenly noticed that there is an image of a woman there, just behind God's shoulders. In my opinion, this image belongs for Eve. As according to the Biblical text, Eve was created after Adam with one of his ribs, she could not be portrayed on earth yet. Still Bounarotti suggests

that she was already planned by the creator. Leo Steinberg, who investigated this painting had some more possible postulates. It could be, according to him, Blessed Virgin Mary or the Holy Ghost or maybe a mere personification of knowledge.

Works Cited

- Characteristics Of Renaissance Art (9 of May 2011) <http://www.studyarthistory.com/characteristics-of-renaissance-art-251.php>
- Tom Lubbock, Buonarroti, Michelangelo: The Creation of Adam (1510). The Independent's Great Art series (5 January 2007). <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/great-works/buonarroti-michelangelo-the-creation-of-adam-1510-744396.html>
- Michael Salcman, The creation of Adam by Michelangelo Buonarroti. *Neurosurgery*, Volume 59(6), December 2006, N11-N12. <http://www.nslc.wustl.edu/courses/bio3411/woolsey/2011/Salcman%202006A.pdf>
- Leo Steinberg, Who's who in Michelangelo's Creation of Adam? A chronology of the picture's reluctant self-revelation. *Art Bulletin*, December 1992. 553.