

# Art appreciation essay example

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## **Bernini's David**

This sculpture is definitely one of the greatest ever conceived and includes various facets which are typical of the artist in question. David's poise is intrinsically beautiful with some aspects of homo eroticism in it and one can definitely identify with the sculpture in question.

The sculpture shows David gathering momentum causing a strain in his body and his face conveys willpower and concentration. The biblical David was a common theme among artists in the Renaissance period for instance Michelangelo and Donatello. Though connecting with these works, Bernini's David varies from them in some substantial ways for example, the sculpture relates with the space around it. Bernini's influence was prevalent during the 17th and 18th centuries. His sculpture wants us to convey the image not only in our minds but also our bodies; to relate to the image physically. David is perhaps seen as a small individual but in actual fact he looms large in the sculpture and it is portrayed quite beautifully in this regard. The concept of space is also crucially important and this is reflected many a time

in the way Bernini's portrays the work of David as he attempts to slay Goliath.

## **The Conversion of St Paul by Caravaggio**

This is perhaps one of the most famous of Caravaggio's paintings in the sense that it applies the methods that we are consistently familiar with especially the chiaroscuro which is one of the hallmarks of this artist. In this great painting we observe several of the facets which have made this artist famous and although the subject is biblical we can observe some striking differences with those of Bernini's David. First of all Bernini's sculpture is perhaps more classical in style while Caravaggio's painting looks forward into the dark with a certain sense of indissolubility.

The painting gives a picture of the events in Chapter 9 of Acts of the Apostles. In this painting, lighting, and low horizon lines are utilized by Caravaggio to create images that seem closer to the viewers. Use of foreshortening is emphasized and his main focal point is on action. In addition, he also makes use of chiaroscuro and atmosphere point of view. A bright light strikes Saul on his journey to Damascus to conquer the Christian population. God utters to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Following these events, Paul alleged to have seen Christ during the vision, and it's on this foundation that he justifies his claim to be accepted as an Apostle (Paul). The brilliant light that was visualized by Saint Paul signifies a heavenly illumination (a new exposure of who Jesus is). His conversion from being a Jewish or a Pharisee occurred at this point. A sense of crisis is and displacement in which Christ interrupts the daily world is generated by the light with its uneven shapes and incredible rays; which licks out features for

their spectacular influence. The application of chiaroscuro highlights the sudden enlightenment of a heathen. In the painting, one can spot Saul dressed in Roman costumes. One can also spot where Saul has tumbled down off a horse as he is hit by the lightning. He reacts as though God has touched him. (Lewis and Susan, 1995)

Personally I feel that Caravaggio's painting is one which definitely strikes to the heart and which has an incredible portrayal of the events which are going on in the work. His aesthetic treatment of the subject in question is quite brilliant as is everything else which is going on making the painting a rather busy one in this respect.

## **Bathsheba by Rembrandt**

Finally we have one of Rembrandt's most famous paintings which is Bathsheba where the feminine form is most certainly idealized in more ways than one. Again the aesthetic qualities of the subject are clearly idealized here with emphasis on the nudity of the woman and her plump beauty in this respect which comes to the fore especially with the dark background and intrinsic subject matter.

One of his famous paintings is Bathsheba at her bath that was completed in 1654. The painting captures a moment from the Old Testament narrative in which King David sights Bathsheba having a bath. He proceeds to spell bound, seduce and makes her pregnant. Bathsheba's husband is then sent to war by David and is put on the frontline. His generals desert him, exposing him to certain death. Previous artists had painted the scene of David observing Bathsheba but Rembrandt's portrayal differs in its strong illustrative focus and erotic strength, made possible owing to wide, thick

brushstrokes and use of lively colors. A description of how King David saw a lady bathing from taking a bath from his palace roof is found in the Second Book of Samuel (11: 2-4). David inquires about her and is told that she's Bathsheba, wife of Uriah and daughter of Eliam. David sends for her and impregnates her, He then marries Bathsheba after sending her husband to war where he was killed.

Before this painting, the normal treatment had been to depict Bathsheba taking a bath outdoors- as a result making her visible to King David- and escorted by servants. A tower could usually be spotted in the backdrop, and possibly a small figure of David. Rembrandt's previous work, "The Toilet of Bathsheba" followed these outlines. Rembrandt's depiction of Bathsheba is both intimate and immense achieved through getting rid of David, his couriers and the majority of the customary elements from the picture. The only indications are the letter from David (not stated in the book of Samuel) and the existence of a maid drying her foot. Thus, the moralistic theme of earlier treatments of the subject matter is restored by a direct eroticism in which David is perceived as having a fetish by the observer. (Lewis and Susan, 1995) The work is done as life size with Bathsheba standing out than in earlier versions. The painting is unusual in many ways. Bathsheba is depicted in a space that is hard to read. The dark backdrop is indicative of night, and at the same time an enormous column implies a large structural design. Around her, lies a thickly painted backdrop positioned upon her naked body. Her nude body is prominent for its solid form and the extravagant use of paint. The paint used to depict her figure is richly shaded while its thick brushstrokes and strong highlights gives an exciting, physical

quality making her presence conspicuous. In spite of its classical references, the description of the figure is unconventional, and the portrayal of her large stomach, hands and feet are as a result of observation rather than admiration for the idealized form.

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