

The feast of the gods and laocoon analysis essay

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



\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

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1. [Work Number 1](#) \n \t
2. [Work number 2](#) \n \t
3. [Works cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Art is human beings way of expressing the world around them. It could be the real visible world or the imaginary world (Tolstoy 14). Human beings use various art forms to express themselves. This could be music, dance and literature or the finer skills of painting, carving or drawing. In essence, art combines both the human skill and imagination to produce a work that is emotionally appealing.

The works that are compared and contrasted in this paper have been selected from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. The two works of art are Laocoon by El Greco of Greek descent and The feast of the gods by Giovanni Bellini of Italian descent.

Work Number 1

Laocoon is the painting of a Greek mythological figure. It is an image of a Trojan priest. El Greco who was a gifted painter and architect painted this master piece to represent the Greek mythology. Considering that he was of Greek descent and also considering his love for religion as is evident on most of his works, El Greco must have been pushed by this religious craving to paint this image (National Gallery of Art (U. S), Brown and Mann 23). His style of painting has been regarded as expressionism, a modernist

movement in which artists expressed their view of the world in subjective terms. In this movement, most artists sought to express their emotions and the underlying meaning of the world than expressing reality.

The Laocoon is a representation of Roman and Greek mythology. Laocoon was a Trojan priest who apparently warned the Trojans against accepting the Greeks gift of a horse which is famously known as the Trojan horse.

According to the Greek and roman mythology, Laocoon pleaded with the Trojans to burn the great wooden horse to ensure that it was not a trick from the Greeks. He was blinded by Athena for his doubts. He continued to plead with the Trojans not to let the horse into their city and in return received a more severe punishment. Athena had two great snakes emerge from the sea and killed Laocoon and his two sons (National Gallery of Art (U. S), Brown and Mann 56).

Another version of the Greek culture asserts that Laocoon was killed by Apollo a roman and Greek god for allegedly sleeping having sexual intercourse with his wife in the temple of the divine image. This image is thus a true representation of the roman and Greek cultures as it connects the two with the events that unfolded at that time. Laocoon rejection of the Trojan horse connected the Greeks and the Trojans. In this mythology, the Greeks tricked the Trojans into surrendering by leaving a wooden horse behind as a trophy. The Trojans fell to the trick and pulled the horse inside the city of troy. Little did they know that there were Greek soldiers inside the horse who attacked them at night and ended the war (National Gallery of Art (U. S), Brown and Mann 78).

The painting on an oil canvas brings out the reality as it was at that time. El

Greco goes to great pains to bring out the fine details of the painting. You can get the gist of the whole story that transpired at that time by simply looking at the picture. He brings out Laocoon and his two sons being killed by the serpents while Athena looks on.

The painting creates rather sad emotions on my part and the audience. As an audience, you tend to pity the Trojans knowing that they were killing their own savior. That is exactly what it turns out to be. Laocoon's advice was worth it and could have saved the Trojans and troy as well.

Work number 2

The second work of art belongs to Giovanni Bellini. Bellini was an Italian, renowned for his artistic skill of using color and light in his paintings. Like El Greco, Bellini's works also have a lot of religious elements and the use of emotional appeal.

Painted in the period between 1514 and 1529, the feast of the gods, a painting on an oil canvas is a representation of the roman mythology that describes a feast thrown by the roman god of wine. In this painting Priapus, the god of wine tried to have intercourse with Nymph Lotis after she fell asleep due to the wine. This attempt is thwarted by the donkey Raucous braying at the wrong time. This made the god Priapus a laughing stock. This really wounded his pride and thus demanded the annual killing of a donkey as a sacrifice a culture that has been practiced for ages (Wind, 46).

According to this painting, Bellini deliberately lowers the top of their dresses to enhance some form of eroticism. Bellini uses lines to lay emphasis on the lowering of the dresses. He then enhances the bare women chests with subtle color to bring out the erotic element on his painting. This shows that

other than the religious conception at the time of this painting, Bellini also had a rather erotic mind.

On first glance at the painting, one cannot help but notice the obvious eroticism in the painting. One is also attracted to the magnificent use of color and attention to detail in the painting. The painting also arouses one's sexual appeal due to the erotic representations of the figures in the painting.

The attention to detail and the skillful use of color and fine lines enhances the communication aspect of this painting. The painting is very clear in expressing its message. As the myth says, the god of wine intention of taking advantage of nymph is evident on the painting (Wind, 67).

The two paintings both have a religious theme though set on different cultures. El Greco's painting is mostly inclined to the Greek culture though it has some elements of the roman culture. The paintings have a 100 year difference between them with Bellini's painting coming earlier. The styles of painting have some similarities and differences. The two painters paid a lot of attention to detail and used a great amount of light to enhance the figures on their paintings. Bellini's painting enhanced the use of many colors than El Greco who limited the use of color on his painting. They both painted on oil canvases and sought to express themselves rather than express reality.

El Greco has made use of elongated figures more than Bellini. The humans on his painting seem to be extra ordinarily large. He has achieved this feature by fine combination of lines and color. The lines have been elongated to bring out these large figures while color contributes to the overall dimension of this painting appearing to be in three dimensions. Use of lines in

this manner was to bring out the element of the figures in the painting being supernatural. There are more than the human beings

Art is a way of expression reality as well as subjective thoughts. There is no definite movement that can claim to define the use of art. It is purely the use of skill and imagination. This expression can traverse any periods. An artist can decide to go well ahead of time in his or her imagination or go behind to the annals of history in a bid to express him or herself. Art is in itself not a problem in any sense but a concept that is inherent in human kind. Every normal human being can express himself using a given variety of art forms. Some can express themselves better than others thus the difference in art works in the world today. Art is truly a human gift.

Works cited

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