

The prairie is my garden and the old settlers

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Harvey Dunn Visiting the South Dakota Art Museum was a great experience for me. The exhibition that was chosen is “ Harvey Dunn Feminine Images.” It was full of magnificent artworks, and it was not easy to choose the best ones for the analysis. However, the two artworks were chosen for a comparison. They are “ The Prairie is My Garden” and “ The Old Settlers.” “ The Prairie is My Garden” was created by Dunn in 1950. Its material is oil on canvas. On the painting there are a woman and a girl. They are standing in the middle of the painting, surrounded by the prairie. Dunn himself was a son of homesteaders, probably this was a reason for his aspiration for painting prairies and small houses (South Dakota Art Museum, 2015). There are houses placed not far away, on the line of the horizon. The line of the horizon lies upper than the middle part of the painting. The lines are clear, the prairie is performed with the help of the wide brush strokes, small details on people are more accurate. The shapes looks very natural, the plain prairie is connected with right angles of the houses and the roundish shapes of a woman and a girl. The heavy weight of a land is balanced with the light sky. The lightest part of the painting is the sky. Overall impression of the painting is light. It is a day time and everything is rather light and bright, and the weather is good. The space is shown three-dimensional due to the usage of the perspective - houses seem to be small and people are big. Colors are mild, the balance is reached due to the composition of the ground and objects, the emphasis is put on the human figures.

The second artwork, “ The Old Settlers,” also oil on canvas, depicts the two old people, a man and a woman, who are standing near each other. They are also located in the prairie. The landscape is almost absolutely similar to the

previous one - the land, houses, farmers. Yet the weather is opposite - it looks like storm. The mood differs as well. An old man looks at the woman. She looks forward. As far as the first painting depicts youth and, sunny weather and good mood. These old people look not very satisfied, probably they are tired. The weather supports the contrast as well. The brush strokes seem to be wider as well. The perspective is the same, yet the horizon line is right in the middle. The overall impression produced by this picture is much harder than from the first one. Colors play solid role in the creating the hard mood. The material of the painting is evidently also oil on canvas.

Comparing these two artworks, it would be worthy to admit that the artist mastered to use almost the same background but the individuals depicted are absolutely different. Different is the weather, colors, and width of brush strokes. Both works are magnificent and authentic. Both of them depict the character of their creator.

References

South Dakota Art Museum,. (2015). Harvey Dunn Collection. Retrieved 12 November 2015, from <https://www.sdstate.edu/southdakotaartmuseum/collections/Harvey/>