

Henry ossawa tanner and henri de toulouse-lautrec: impression and inspiration

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The perception of the world is the most emotional in childhood. Children have strong feelings on simple things, such as every day life, friends and relatives, and, of course, environment, conditions of social existence.

Nevertheless, the way of world perception, formed in childhood influences the whole way of life understanding. The early years of Henry Ossawa Tanner and Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec are incomparable, as social environment that surrounded young painters was different. The Toulouse-Lautrec family lived in wealth and honor. The painter was surrounded by people, whose love reflected as an eternal beauty in his heart. " Henry seems to have been a normal, healthy child. However, his naturally high spirit and wit were soon called upon to mask the discomfort of sore joints, cramps associated with his stymied growth" (Ives, 14).

" Henry Ossawa Tanner grew up in a religious household that was enriched and inspired by the teachings of African Methodist Episcopal Church" (Baker, 7). As the African-American social uplift is one of the main components in this religion, the idea of cultural identity and racial equity became one of the main subjects for Tanner's works. Henry Tanner was full of enthusiasm about suppressing the prejudice. Nevertheless, the misunderstanding of white people was not the only challenge in the Tanner's career. As cultural identity was one of the main subjects for his art, the author was ready to perceive and depict African heritage and American identity as inseparable unity in mentality of black people. The two works to compare are The Banjo Lesson by Henry Ossawa Tanner, painted in 1893 and Sitting Dancer by Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec, painted in 1889.

These pictures have much in common, and much to be contradistinguished. At first, the characters depicted on the canvas, the dancer and teacher with his student on the music lesson - their art process on both pictures symbolize emotions, expressed through the art. The child on The Banjo Lesson symbolizes connection through generations and culture heritage, an important thing for black people. The young girl at Sitting Dancer canvas expresses the fatigue, the motionless dynamics, and inner emptiness. Both painters depicted their own state of creation, things they are trying to fight with, and things, they are trying to understand in themselves. As the creation is the part of the world perception in combination with personal emotions and feelings, both painters tried to express their own cheer, sorrow and pride.

The little boy on Henry Tanner's canvas learns how to play banjo from old black man. This silent process symbolizes the bulk of knowledge and huge cultural heritage that could be given to the new generations, that is highly important for cultural identity of black people. The uniqueness of African-American culture helped white people to feel their spirituality, morality, helped them to get accustomed with their traditions, to understand and respect African-Americans. Performance - is a process of acting, during which any actor or dancer should smile, whatever happens with his soul. Nevertheless, hypocrisy is exhausting, and when the inner pain doesn't stop, it is so hard to continue smiling.

Toulouse-Lautrec's pain was the helplessness of his physical state. The dynamics meant life for Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec, but his illness didn't let

him feel all the colors of his life. The dancer is tired too. She is devastated, her pain is her burden and she also can't enjoy this life, this empty dynamics sincerely. The range of colors, used for these pictures is also important for its perception. The Sitting Dancer was made by motley strokes of the paintbrush, the painter depicted bright figures, trapped in their form lines as in their own loneliness.

Despite its colorfulness, this picture shows how tired the girl is, expresses melancholy, loneliness in a crowd. Whereas the colors used for The Banjo Lesson are dark, there are no bright figures, no sparkling elements or smiling faces. Nevertheless, the picture shines with the glory of knowledge and inner beauty. Poor decoration, dim light symbolize the oppression, the desire to overcome the intolerance towards black people, but the inspiration hidden in this process could be perceived despite oppressive atmosphere and indigence. The household furnishing and domesticity reminds each colored person his or her home, problems and cheer common and understood for all of them. He shows that white people have much to learn from African-Americans, their strong will and desire to preserve cultural heritage show the uniqueness of black people mentality.

As honor and wisdom of generations of colored people deserve to be respected, the main mission for the first African-American painter was to show how unique these people are. The interrelations between Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec and dancers, private dancers and prostitutes were unconventional. He felt sympathy towards beautiful women, whose beauty and intelligence became unimportant and withdrawn due to the

misunderstanding of the outer world. These girls couldn't satisfy the expectations of society and Henri felt that he also couldn't satisfy his father's expectations. His illness disconnected him with his father in the same way that moral decadency dissocialized young dancers.

The young dancing girl was the main subject for majority of neo-impressionists, such as Edgar de Gas and others (Moffett, 32). But whereas other painters tried to capture their enthusiasm, the beauty of their work, Toulouse-Lautrec looked into their souls and saw tired women that dance to express their emotions, to make this world more beautiful with the art of their body movement with the beauty of dynamics that is so distant for Toulouse-Lautrec due to his illness. Henry Tanner expressed the uniqueness of the process, depicted in the interaction of generations, when the representative of the African culture convey the cultural heritage, left on the motherland, knowledge that should not be forgotten. " In Banjo Lesson he depicted his teacher, Thomas Eakins, in the sincere expression of life. This type of painting elevates African-American to a higher role than that of the simpleminded dark colors" (Mathews, 38).

The process of knowledge transfer looks almost sacrament, as the ritual, that was blessed by God. As Henry Tanner was born in a religious family, his father was the bishop, divine conception was primarily important for his art. Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec has shown the dancer, enlightening the issue about how lonely the young artist was, how deep was her pain and how hard it is to show the cheerfulness when the heart is full of suffering, and how tired the person could be of the public life, when there is no chance to live in

the dynamics of fast and energetic bohemian life. " The enormous disparity between his polite privileged backgrounds and his lifestyle influenced his relations with his parents". His way of living, including alcohol and sexually transmitted diseases, made his life socially rejected, immoral and get him closer to his favorite characters - dancers. To sum up, it should be mentioned that name is not the only thing that is common for both painters.

Henry Ossawa Tanner and Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec were grown and educated in intelligent families and spiritual values were inculcated since their childhood. Their spirituality reflected in the way of understanding of the main issues, inner beauty, ethics and aesthetics. Religiosity was the main feature of Tanner's family, his father bishop helped him to understand how important it is for the colored man to follow the religious traditions. The process, during which generations exchange their knowledge looks dark, but sacrament and inspired. Plain figures emphasize the importance of inner beauty.

Dark colures symbolize the submissiveness of the student. The banjo as an instrument symbolize the uniqueness of African heritage, whereas American traditions are reflected by the religiosity of obedience to the forefather's wisdom. This picture is addressed to both African-American and white people. It is about to show how unique the culture of colored people is and how important it is to be proud of themselves and how important it is for white people to respect culture of African-Americans that is rich despite material indigence. The Toulouse-Lautrec's massage is more psychological. He tries to express the inner pain of public people, devastated by their

suffering, by moral prejudice and how hard it was, when his father was disappointed by his illness and turned the cold shoulder on Henri.

He shows how painful and lonely the echo of melancholy is in the cheerful crowd, full of people that want to see the smile, but not the tears, and how hard it is to pretend for the audience. In conclusion, people on these canvases are in the process of the art creation, though they tend to express the state of painters. But the inner and outer world are opposite in these pictures as the distorted reflection: there is a beauty and emotiveness in the decoration at *Sitting Dancer*, but the girl is tired and depressed inside. The environment in *The Banjo Lesson* is dark and oppressive, but the inner sense, cultural heritage and the message make the picture shine.