

# The swing by fragonard - the eroticism of the portrait created in the rococo styl...

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The paper "The Eroticism of the Portrait Created in the Rococo Style of Painting" is an outstanding example of an essay on visual arts and film studies.

### Understanding 'The Swing

'The Swing' is an interesting portrait done by Fragonard in the pre-French revolution era. Fragonard belonged to the rococo style of painting. True to the style the painting is elaborately done. The texture of the trees and the bushes, the darkened shadowy color of the surroundings all highlight the color of the dress and the mood the lady is having at the moment. The lady's husband is relegated in the background and we see the statue hushing to the conspiracy. The concept of lover hiding in the garden for a view may not be exactly original but the way the garter belt is shown in the painting and the way the shoe flies off to raise the legs for a better view to the young man, it suggests eroticism. She is joyous, the lover is happy and discreet and the husband in the background is ignorant and unaware. Fragonard has managed to create an impression of an outrageous affair in a very erotic way. The baroque style of painting would choose the highest moment of action point when the action is taking place while renaissance painting style would choose a moment just before the action happens, the preparation for action. If we compare 'The swing' with these two styles then it would come close to baroque in terms of depiction. The use of light and shadows, darkness and richness of colors are also close to Baroque. We can see that in the contrast of the lovely pink color the lady is wearing against the dark silhouettes of practically everything else. Also, the light is bright on the lady indicating the high point of the swing, the flying of the shoe, raising of the

hat by the young man in the bush, all indicating that the action is happening right now which is very baroque in style and depiction. The subject would not come into exactly in the new enlightenment era of baroque as baroque coincided with the revolutions happening in science and society around. But the subject chosen is bold, erotic and definitely, a concept represented other than subjects which are influenced by a church who used art as a tool to reinforce values of religion and doctrine.

Criticism for Vigee-Lebrun:

Vigee-Lebrun was the most noted painter and artist prior to the French revolution era and afterward as well. She was the only female artist of the time to get admitted into various art societies not only in France but also all over in Europe at that time. She started when people had started appreciating the neoclassicism style of painting.

How and why an artist chooses a particular subject is a difficult process to understand. Leaving aside the commercial constraints, an artist is always happy and expressive while painting subjects closer to his or her heart, beliefs and most importantly life. Vigee-Lebrun was influenced by Rousseau's thoughts on maternal love. Her own experience of motherhood is seen vividly in her portraits. Motherhood is the greatest joy for a woman and this would become a dominant factor in choosing of subject for expression. The fact that she was the same age as Marie Antoinette also drew both of them close. She has portrayed the queen in her simplicity and with her children. She might have chosen to do so because that's the way she sees the queen. This softer angle as seen by a close friend and a mother herself was not seen

very kindly by the people. They assumed it to be a deliberate attempt to paint the royal family in a softer angle. Painting till then was a male-dominated category. This also drove the critics to claim that there is a lack of variety in the subjects chosen by Vigee-Lebrun to paint. In fact, constantly improving on her style and work she has done many illustrious paintings depicting various stages of her life, her motherhood, and the surroundings. The fact that French subjects had already turned against the royal family did not help Vigee-Lebrun. She in fact had to flee from France because of her portrayals of the royal family. The queen in the history and on the throne was unkind, demanding and ruthless. The queen in the portraits is kind, loving, motherly and a very close friend. Both were realities and both were contradictory and hence criticized.