

Leonardo da Vinci and Picasso



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Leonardo Da Vinci and Picasso are just some of the many artistic figures that have graced the world of art. These artists are responsible for one of the finest paintings and drawings, some that fetch a lot of interest even centuries after they were created. This paper traces the Classic artists of the 16th and 17th centuries, their works and how they were conforming to the different changes in the religious, social and political life of the society. It will also analyze how some of the artistic elements are still apparent in today's works.

Classic Art

One of the most common themes in the art was religion. In this case, there are three phases; almost exclusive Catholic Orthodoxy, Reformation and Catholic Counter Reformation. In 1510, Matthias Grunewald started to work on "Isenheim Altarpiece" that reflected the Catholic beliefs and doctrines; the lamb, crucifixion, Saints Anthony and Sebastian. The Altarpiece addresses themes such as dire illnesses and miraculous healing (504).

Around the same time, one of the most popular painters of his epoch, Albrecht Durer, came up with an engraving: "Fall of Man." This was a picture of Adam and Eve at the Garden of Eden after the deception. The inclusion of a cat and mouse in the picture symbolizes the tension between Adam and Eve at the time of fall. Durer also engraved "Knight, Death, and The Devil" which ideally represents a Christian knight, who has put on the full armor of God as depicted in the Bible. The knight has managed to vanquish both, death and the Devil (507).

The Reformation represented a time when there was conflict between the Catholic and the emergence of Protestants, led by Martin Luther. Both these parties had diverse views on the use of visual imagery in the place of worship. The Catholics had no problem with church decorations, while the Protestants had the belief that these pictures would distract the worshippers. Therefore, Catholic churches had many engravings within their churches, as opposed to the Protestants' (510). However, one of the most iconic oil paintings during this period was "The Four Apostles" by Durer. It was a painting of Saints Mark, John, Peter and Paul. The positioning of these figures shows his Protestant stance. Peter, perceived as a representative of the Pope, is placed behind John who was always fronted by Luther due to his Christ's person focus (in the book of John). Both, John and Peter read from the Bible, the only basis of Christian faith (508).

After the period of religious conflict, the Catholic Church engaged in what was called Catholic Counter Reformation. Therefore, the 17th century art and architecture of Italy (which was mostly Catholic), and in particular Rome, was dominated by the Counter Reformation theme. These efforts were conspicuous in structures such as Santa Susanna, Maderno, Bernini, Baldacchino and other catholic churches built at the time (528-34).

Apart from mainstream religions, witchcraft was also rife in Europe at the time. It was seen as counter-religion, often involving magical rituals, secret portions, as well as devil worship. As a result, it was widely condemned by all the Churches and one popular artist – Hans Baldung Grien. In 1510, he produced a chiaroscuro woodcut called "Witches' Sabbath." He depicts nude seductresses in a forest at night around a jar with fuming concoctions. A

young witch is aboard a goat sitting backwards, depicting witchcraft as being the reversal of Christianity (506).

Most of the artists based their works on the society they were in. For instance, Netherlands was prospering due to trade. As a result, wealth became the obsession among its people. To capture this, Qinten Massys produced “ Money-Changer and his Wife”. These two were so obsessed with wealth that they had forgotten their religious duties (518). Another piece of art with the same theme was by Pieter Aertsen, “ Butcher’s Stall” (518). The people of Netherlands were also very obsessed with proverbs. This led Bruegel to come up with a painting “ Netherlandish Proverbs” (521).

Other artistic works like “ Great Pieces of Turf” by Durer were inspired by nature (507); “ Battle of Issus” by Albrecht Altdorfer was inspired by sociopolitical conflict (510); “ The French Ambassadors” (Hans Holbein the Younger) was inspired by the tension between secularism and religion, especially in France. French king, Francis I forced the artists to come up with paintings that glorified him and the state (512).

Style Changes

The main factors that affected the change of style of the artists’ works were religion and economic status, which came from regions. For instance, the Reformation forced the Protestant artists to adopt the cheaper prints that could easily be circulated to the people. These were fundamental in promoting Protestantism. As a result, the prints became very popular in Northern Europe, as they became a very effective alternative to handwritten manuscripts (510).

As the paper had mentioned, Netherlands was wealthy due to its affluent trade. Therefore, portraits became very popular in the region. Caterina van Hemessen and Levina Teerlinc became popular due to their painting prowess (519).

France had affluent leaders that always valued material wealth and popularity. Francis I, apart from controlling the artists' works, commissioned the iconic Chateau de Chambord, one of the largest chateaux. He had a penchant for elegant, erotic and mostly unorthodox buildings (513). His successor, Henry II deviated from Francis' structures by incorporating Italian architectural ideas. One of the structures that had to conform to his desires was Louvre in Paris (514).

Aspects of Modernity

One of the greatest architectural structures that have stood the test of time is the French Chateaux. Having been commissioned by its leaders more than 500 years ago, the Chateaux exist even up to this day in France. The structural designs are almost similar with the same purpose: to house the affluent. This simply means that the French have not yet relinquished their past.

The Catholic churches during Counter Reformation closely resemble the churches today. The works of art, the lamb, crucifixion are a mainstay in all Catholic churches who have them in plenty. On the other hand, many Protestant churches do not display such art. This simply means that the differences that emanated more than five centuries ago still persist. In fact,

it can be argued that almost nothing has changed since that time. The Catholic churches of today still have tombs in them for burying the clergy.

Many states nowadays have mausoleums where their most affluent leaders' remains are placed. This has always been seen as a sign of respect for their devotion and good work when they were in power. However, this is not a new phenomenon. Charles V left a will instructing his successor, Phillip II to construct a “ dynastic pantheon” to house the remains of monarchs. Phillip obeyed and, hence, built El Escorial, a royal mausoleum (523). This pattern would continue to be practiced for five centuries later, and not only in Spain, but almost everywhere.

Conclusion

Artists may die, but their art will always be etched in history. It is only natural that upcoming artists derive their ideas from the artists that lived before them. As the paper has outlined, aspects that were introduced a long time ago are still popular even now. This situation will surely be carried out into the future.