

# Biography on antoine watteau



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Antoine Watteau Jean Antione Watteau was a French painter born in October 10, 1684. He was credited by the world for the revival of the Broque idiom also known as “ Rococo”. His artwork were depicted by simple rural landscapes filled with theatricals which became known as fetes galantes. Watteau’s beginnings as painter can be traced back to his childhood when he underwent apprenticeship with a local painter named Jacques Albert Gerin. Immediately after Gerin died in 1702, the impoverished young Watteau travelled to Paris and landed a job with the scene painter Metayer ( NNDB 2009). He was not able to get along well with Metayer and ended up working in a factory painting devotional pictures, he did not have a choice then since he was already starving and had to sacrifice his art. Thus, as early as 18 years of his life, Watteau began to make copies of Flemish and Dutch genre paintings which resulted to the development of his technique characterized as sketchlike. After a year of working at Pont Notre Dame, he became an assistant to the painter Claude Gillot whose paintings depicted mythological landscape. Gillot was a good mentor since his apprentice surpassed him in popularity and developed their own technique. The main contribution of Gillot to Watteau was his association with character s of commedia dell’arte which heavily influenced Watteau’s works later in his life.

Another mentor in Watteau’s life is a Flemish interior decorator named Claude Andran III. By profession, Adran was the curator of Palais de Luxembourg. This allowed Watteau to view the famous paintings made by Pater Paul Rubens for Queen Marie de Medici. In his life as an artist, Watteau experienced disappointments especially when he was disqualified by the Academy to obtain Prix de Rome. He took this as a challenge and surpassed <https://assignbuster.com/biography-on-antoine-watteau/>

the expectations of the Academy that he himself became a member of that prestigious organization. Sadly in 1720

Watteau's health began to fail him and he sought the advice of Dr. Richard Mead who was then a notable physician. Admittedly, he was a sickly boy since childhood days and his devotion to his work made him neglect his failing health. As a result Watteau's life as an artist was cut-off in 1721 since he died from tuberculous laryngitis at the age of 36. Eventually, he paid the price at the cost of his life.

#### Watteau's Controversial Works

Antoine Watteau has created many artworks yet some of them raised controversy through the meaning they seem to interpret or symbolize. Among the art works that was known as provocative was the famous "Pilgrimage to Cythera" which illustrates the island of Cythera ( known as the birthplace of Venus ). During his time, this piece of art was hidden from angry protesters since the painting depicts the aristocracy of the elite. As related in Art Bulletin :

".. in the aftermath of the French Revolution, it sparked the outrage of an audience that read it as a reactionary touchstone of aristocratic privilege.... the curator of the Louvre was forced to place the painting in storage for a time in order to protect it from the defamation of angry protesters". ( Cowart , 2002 461)

Another controversial painting of Watteau is the " Pierrot or Gilles". Like the enigmatic Monalisa, the subject known as Pierrot or Gilles is illustrated with a slowly fading smile. Surprisingly, Pierrot or Gilles shows a sad expression, somewhat interpreted by critics as an actor who hides his shame by smiling awkwardly. It may also mean failure in playing one's role in life. Much

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argument has been raised if the painting was a self-portrait of Watteau , however, there has been no substantial proof of that claim.

Bibliography :

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