

Portrait of augustus as general essay sample



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Roman portraiture was one of the most significant periods in the development of portrait art. The characteristics of Roman portraiture are more modest, realistic, idealized, and natural. Also, the body compositions, muscles and facial expressions of portraits and sculptures are more advanced. Many Roman portraits are directly linked to specific individuals, such as gods and emperors. They were often used for propaganda purposes and included ideological messages in the pose, accoutrements, or costume of the figure. In history, Augustus was the founder and also the first emperor of Roman Empire. Augustus was born Gaius Octavius on September 23, 63 B. C. E., in Rome.

His father had held several political offices and had earned a fine reputation, but he died when Augustus was four. The people who most influenced young Augustus were his mother, Atia. Another woman who also influenced him in his life was his wife, Livia. They were quickly in love and seemed to live happily together ever after. In about 31 BC, together with his two consuls, Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus, he formed the Second Triumvirate to defeat the assassins of Caesar. Following their victory at Phillipi, the Triumvirate divided the Roman Republic between themselves and ruled as military dictators. Finally, he replaced the Roman republic with an effective monarchy and during his long reign brought peace and stability.

One of Augustus' most famous portraits is called, Portrait of Augustus as general, from Prima Porta; the sculpture gets its name from the town in Italy where it was found. Now, it is placed in Vatican Museums in Italy. Originally it was made of bronze. This was a marble copy of the original piece. The reason I choose this art piece is because the artist used fine techniques

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carved out this fabulous piece and the technique has obviously advanced than early periods. The cloth, his hair and his standing pose show they are difficult to create. The most interesting object is the Cupid riding a dolphin, which attaches to his right leg. The purpose of this Cupid is not only to support or to stabilize the portrait but also it indicates Augustus' divine descent that he shares his connection to the gods and it is a symbol of Augustus' great naval victory.

This portrait was carved to commemorate Augustus's diplomatic victory. A more meticulous view of the statue though, reveals a whole host of differing opinions and interpretations concerning the symbolism, and the subsequent propaganda, it was intended to convey. When people first look at this portrait, they might see Augustus as a general or a commander with his hand pointing out imposingly. However, throughout deeply, this sculpture communicates a good deal about the emperor's power and ideology. It shows Augustus as a great military victor and a staunch supporter of Roman religion.

Looking in details, his standing pose and the entire composition are similar to another portrait, "Polykleitos Doryphoros", which came from Greek art; He stands in a contrapposto pose with all of his weight on his right leg and with his right arm raised demonstrate that the emperor is addressing his troops. His idealized hair is also similar to Doryphoros', and they were both portrayed as youthful and flawless individuals with the perfect body because the artist wanted to depict Augustus as the Greek athlete. The artist wanted to show he is youthful and virile, despite the fact that he was middle-aged at the time of the sculpture's commissioning.

The only difference is Augustus is not naked because as a general, he does not have the body of the god, but it is a form of identification with Greek models and a tribute to the Greco-Roman culture. Furthermore, the drapery or the cloth covers around his lower body is carved in high quality. It makes people can actually feel the fabric and the wrinkle on the drapery is extremely realistic. The drapery lies on his arm very naturally and the cuirass he is wearing almost perfectly fit in his body. These features showed the artist's technique has progressed a lot and they started to have the sense of how to present these figures naturally in artworks.

The most important object is the cuirass that Augustus is wearing. It is covered with figures that communicate additional propagandistic messages. In the central of the cuirass, there are two figures, a Roman and a Parthian. On the left, the enemy Parthian returns military standards. This is a direct reference to an international diplomatic victory of Augustus in 20 BCE, when these standards were finally returned to Rome after a previous battle. Surrounding the central area, there are gods and personifications. At the top are Sol and Caelus, the sun and sky gods respectively. On the sides of the breastplate are female personifications of countries conquered by Augustus. These gods and personifications refer to the Pax Romana.

The message is that the sun is going to shine on all regions of the Roman Empire, bringing peace and prosperity to all citizens. And of course, Augustus is the one who is responsible for this abundance throughout the Empire. Roman art were not only influenced by Greeks but also influenced by Etruscans. The Etruscans were organized into a loose confederation of city-states to the north of Rome. Because of Etruscan attitudes toward the

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afterlife, most of the art that remains is funerary. They made Bronze reliefs and sculptures; they used frescoes to paint and decorate the walls; they were excelled in portraying human and delivered the connections and expressions between human. Etruscan art also absorbed other ancient cultures, such as Greece, Egypt, and Assyria.

Although there are many similarities between Greek and Roman art, such as styles, materials, and techniques and they are both commonly referred to as classical art. There still have some significant differences between Greek art and Roman art. The Greeks were interested in ideals while the Romans were interested in reality. The Greeks believed that art was an expression of perfection. They often represented the gods in their art, in an effort to express the ideal form of beauty, physical strength and power. For the Romans, however, art had a more practical function. Artwork was primarily used for ornamentation and decoration. When we look at Greek sculptures and portraits, they tended to focus on athleticism and mythology.

Their statues represent their objects in an idealized fashion, making them quite unrealistic though beautiful. The Romans preferred to sculpt historical events and real people and are famous for their detailed busts. Roman portraits and art have certainly influenced later arts. For example, Roman art have great influences on Early Christians. From the church plans to the artwork, Roman influences can be identified all throughout Early Christian art. In the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, like Christ as the Good Shepherd, an art form that the Christians used to portray a message, much like the way the Romans used murals.

In addition, the influence from the Romans in sculpture is evident, especially in the “ Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus”, whose figures can be compared to the relief on the Arch of Constantine. The figures are placed deep within a space, drapery shows the body, the figures are distributing their weight, and there is a clear narrative. In conclusion, even though many styles of Roman art were inspired and adopted from Greek art, they still have innovated and developed their own styles. A number of artworks are well-known today. Roman art has dramatic influences and contributions to the modern art.

Work Cited

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