

# Museum of fine arts essay sample

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

After visiting the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston for the first time, I observed many interesting works of art representing various time periods. Of all the paintings that I saw last week, two landscaped pieces seemed to stick out in my mind; Andre Derain's *The Turning Road* and Thomas Hart Benton's *Haystack*. Though these two art works are similar in subject matter, they clearly reflect the different styles and time periods of their artists; the abstract Derain being a Fauvist and the more realistic painter Benton representing the American Scene style as a Regionalist.

Andre Derain became an accomplice to the well known Henri Matisse who founded the expression of Fauvism in 1905. Fauve, meaning "wild beasts" in French, was a movement driven by "a desire to develop an art that had the directness of Impressionism but also had the intense color juxtapositions and their emotional capabilities (964)." The Fauves expressively used vivid colors as the "conveyer of meaning (965)" to produce bold and intense images which in turn, awakens the emotions of the viewer. And Derain, being a Fauvist, "used color to its fullest potential...to elicit emotional responses from the viewer (966)" not only in *The Turning Road* but also in his work *The Dance*, which perfectly supports the audacious style of Derain's Fauvism. Although this movement did not last very long, the paintings created in this period are vivid and memorable. When the 1930's emerged, the Great Depression took its toll on artwork. In this period, artists from the Midwest called Regionalists "turned their attention to rural life as America's cultural backbone (1025)."

Among these artists was Thomas Hart Benton, who became the leading exponent of American Regionalism and used his paintings to convey scenes

about the hardworking rural poor of the Midwest throughout the depression. His realistic scenes of country life stem particularly from the rural historical and social past of Missouri (CM). Not only are his themes of rural poor American seen in the Haystack, they can also be seen in other works of his such as in his rendition of the nude goddess Persephone, “ which also references the rural farmer and his work, and perhaps his hardships, within the seasons (CM).” Since the US government created the Federal Arts Project, many artists such as Benton, had a chance to develop their work into what would come to be known as the American Scene era. Coming from very different time periods, Andre Derain and Thomas Hart Benton both incorporate their genre’s style into their own expressive art.

Both of these men were influential leaders of their periods and painted images in a similar way, even if their art does represent different time periods. Derain’s painting of The Turning Road and Benton’s painting of the Haystack depict similar subject matter. The images in the two paintings that are similar are the curving road, the trees, the workers and also the horse which is seen in both images. Both The Turning Road and the Haystack show an outdoor scene from the daytime with workers going about their busy everyday lives. These two paintings display a theme of “ man working in harmony with nature,” which was stated in the Haystack’s information card but can clearly be associated with The Turning Road as well. According to the museum information card on Derain’s piece, “ choreographed forms of villagers all sway to an integrated rhythm,” giving this painting movement.

This can also be seen in Benton’s piece since the museum information card on Haystack states that this image is depicted through “ rhythmic swirls of

<https://assignbuster.com/museum-of-fine-arts-essay-sample/>

paint and lyrical movement.” Derain’s piece also portrays a more rural scene and is “ far from the urban bustle of London’s waterways (CM)” as seen in Benton’s work which shows the laborious rural poor of the depression era. Both of these painting exude cool and warm colors since the blues and greens can be seen, as well as the reds and yellows in both images. Vertical poles in the Haystack seem to separate the painting which can also be seen in The Turning Road, which uses the trees as the vertical separation of the painting. In both paintings, the artists do not show where the curving road leads to, which allows your mind to wonder where you would end up if you walked along the paths, my guess is that the winding roads lead to the city and an urban lifestyle.

The technique of shadowing can be seen in both of these paintings. The shadowing can be clearly seen in the realistic scene of the Haystack, and even though the painting of The Turning Road is not very realistic since it uses complementary colors for its’ shadowing technique, there is still a hint of realism portrayed in the image since the shadows are present. Even though these paintings come from different time periods and were created by two very different artists, Derain and Benton, they still share some resemblance and connection.

Despite the fact that these two paintings share analogous attributes, they also differ in many ways. According to the museum information card on Derain’s piece, the work is “ expressive of the artists’ feelings rather than of the descriptive landscape,” which is consistent with the style of Fauvism. However Benton’s piece does not really reflect his emotions or feelings, rather it seems more optically realistic to therefore accurately portray the

<https://assignbuster.com/museum-of-fine-arts-essay-sample/>

scene of the poor rural American workers. While Derain uses vibrant and bold colors, the scene of *The Turning Road* is not shown in its' realistic colors which again contrasts the *Haystack's* pragmatic and subdued colors. The intensity of the color usage in Derain's work conveys a positive and cheery mood corresponding with Fauvism's "wild colors" while in Benton's work, the colors reflect a melancholy and somewhat gloomy tone which is consistent with Benton's time period and style of the Great Depression.

In Derain's piece he uses "thick and heavy brushstrokes (CM)" shown through geometric lines by the vertical trees and the horizontal road, while in Benton's piece, undulating and flowing organic lines are used which do not seem geometric at all. Another significant difference between the paintings is that much of the detail is omitted in *The Turning Road* and the figures are simplified into vivid Fauvism shapes (CM), while in the *Haystack*, you can clearly see the detailing of the horse and the workers and even the shading on the hay and rocks. In *The Turning Road*, the colors seem to be applied directly from the paint tubes onto the canvas (CM), while in the *Haystack*; Benton blends and mixes his colors brilliantly for a more realistic image.

These two paintings also differ in perspective since the artist of *The Turning Road* paints from more of an aerial view where as in the *Haystack*; the artist paints the scene looking straight on, as if you were looking out your window at the farmers. The focal point of Benton's piece is the workers on the farm and the house off to the left-center of the image however, in Derain's work, a focal point is more difficult to find and you tend to look at the painting as a whole instead of just the center point since the workers are in the foreground instead of the middle ground, and it seems as though every corner of this

<https://assignbuster.com/museum-of-fine-arts-essay-sample/>

piece is “ active.” In Benton’s Haystack the hills in the background seem distant where as in the piece by Derain, the “ hills don’t look distant; they are simple and part of an overall pattern of color (CM),” which is compatible again with the Fauvism style.

The two influential artists, Thomas Benton and Andre Derain both represent their time periods through their art work. Andre Derain epitomizes the Fauvism movement with his emotions through bright vivid colors and his abstract view of the landscaped scene of workers while Thomas Benton embodies the American Scene as a Regionalist and depicts his landscaped scene of workers in a more realistic and melancholy way. The Turning Road and the Haystack are both housed by the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and after visiting this museum for the first time, I came to appreciate not only these pieces that I analyzed, but also the vast array of art work displayed in the museum and also in to text book. I plan on visiting the museum again!