

Art critique: starry night by vincent van gogh essay sample



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A full and in depth appreciation of Vincent Van Gogh's Aesthetics entails a comprehensive insight of the principles behind art and philosophical foundations that emanates in the paintings that he made.

The most conspicuous element of art to which the "Starry Night" painting is often used as an illustration is the principle of movement. The night sky which practically occupies majority of the painting is filled up with spinning clouds, glittering stars and a dazzling moon that illuminates the ambiance. The ingenuity of this principle applied in the painting rest on its ability to enliven the idea of a vivid light, which effectively lights up the town underneath it to allow the viewer to see and inspect what is happening in the painting. Thus it guides the audience in viewing the whole painting. (Zeri, et al, 2000)

At the bottom of the painting is a quiet and peaceful small town. The dark colors of the houses and other structures with glowing windows depict the tranquility of the night. However, a solid shadowy structure glooms at the left of the painting which is left for the viewers to interpret whether it is a silhouette of a leafy bush or perhaps the shadow of Van Gogh's paintbrush when he tries to isolate the scene. Whatever that element is in the picture, it adds to the mystery and depth of the night which Van Gogh seemed to adore or may be intrigued about. In reality, the shadows of the night indeed add up to obscurity and mysticism of the dark. What do you think is that dark shadow and what does it stand for?

It must be noted that the starry night is just one of the Van Gogh's nocturnal paintings. His other paintings that exhibit a night scenario included "The

Night Café and Starry Night over the Rhone, among others. The night themes in Van Gogh's paintings may reflect his passion for the night. Some experts believed that Van Gogh's attachment to the night reflects his troubled life. He used his painting as a creative form of self-expression of the frustrations he went through, the emotions that he repressed and his passionate dreams that were left unrealized. (Cunningham and Reich, 2005) What feelings do darkness and night evoke?

Incidentally, Van Gogh may have initiated the development of expressionism in painting.

The basic nature of art is mimetic. Paintings and sculptures are representations of an imitated object in reality. It is a re-creation of reality in the perspective of an artist. However, Van Gogh's paintings are more than just a replica of things, people, animals, plants, and landscapes. It was his means to express emotions. Thus, people who are in distress may be able to relate to the world of make-believe that Van Gogh wanted to create.

Despite the fame and ingenuity that the world has accorded to Van Gogh today, he was actually unrecognized and unsuccessful during his time. In fact, he sold only one painting (The Red Vineyard) in his lifetime, which he did a few months before his death. Not only was he not commercially successful in painting, he felt that he was under the mantle of family shame for being incompetent and useless. Van Gogh actually lived a turbulent and unhappy life characterized by periodic incidents of depression and even violence. (Meier-Graefe, 1987) He may have found the elation and serenity he wanted in life in his night pictures. The stars in the night may signify his

fiery dreams. And he might have found home and light in darkness. Thus, Van Gogh finally took his own life.

The value of Vincent Van Gogh's paintings is beyond the ingenuity that the artists employed in his work of art nor does it lie on the meanings that it serves that viewers interpret. The Value of Vincent Van Gogh's art lies in the life that was lost behind his paintings.

References

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Zeri, F., Dolcetta, M, Mazour, E. and Eaton, M. (2000). Van Gogh: Starry Night. NDE Publications