

One that is why his
works can never



One of the most important themes in the western art is religion, and one of the most inspiring images for may be each of the greatest artists has been the Virgin Mary. Enormous amount of works of art depict the Virgin, and since with the course of time artistic styles change, these images are revealed differently. It will be very interesting to compare two images of the Virgin, depicted in different epochs by different artists: Raphael and Paul Gauguin. First of all, I would like to focus on the work of art by Raphael Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints, dated 1504. This is an altarpiece painted with oil and gold on wood.

It depicts the Virgin with her holy Son on the throne in the center, God the father, angels and two apostles who surround the Virgin Mary forming perfect framing. The piece represents an example of Florentine style; it is very bright and symmetrical. This painting like the rest of Raphael's works reveals his style of perfection and dignity. At this point it is necessary to point out that Raphael is one of the greatest Italian artists of the High Renaissance.

In spite of his short life, he was only 37 when he died, he left enormous amount of his beautiful works: paintings, architecture, frescos, altarpieces, drawings, etc. Here are only few of his most famous works: Madonna of the Chair, The School of Athens, The Sistine Madonna. Raphael lived in the epoch of Da Vinci and Michelangelo, and three of them formed the trinity of great masters of those times.

Raphael, to certain extent, was influenced by Da Vinci, but still he had his own style (D'Anvers 10). Despite such great number of different works, this

painter is best known for his Madonnas. It is necessary to stress that his “type of beauty is not such as calls forth immediate or extravagant admiration” (Hurl X). Raphael sticks to harmony in everything and that is why his works can never be tiresome.

At this point I would like to pass on the other painting depicting the Virgin Mary, painting by Paul Gauguin *la Orana Maria*. First of all, it is necessary to point out that Gauguin is famous Post-Impressionist artist, who turned from Impressionist style to Synthetics style, and finally introduced Primitivism. His life wasn't quite long (he lived 55 years) but very interesting and eventful. He started artistic life when he was forty and had a wife and five children, but he abandoned his family, peaceful life and even motherland; he became an artist who had to live in poverty for the rest of his life looking for real life and real people, which he found on islands.

It is necessary to add that Gauguin lived in epoch of drastic changes in art, when traditions were broken and artists were seeking for new forms and means of expressing their inner world. His most famous works are *Vision after the Sermon*; *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*, *The Yellow Christ*, *la Orana Maria*, *Tahitian Women on the Beach*; *Where Do We come from? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* Gauguin's image of the Virgin differs from the rest of such images, like Gauguin differs from the rest of artists. In this painting Gauguin “transposes the Christian story of the Son of God to a South Seas setting” (Walther 42). First of all, the Virgin with her Son is depicted as a Polynesian woman in an island, she doesn't hold her Son traditionally in her arms, and he sits on her shoulder. The Virgin stands in front of two other Polynesian women.

Behind the two women the angel with yellow wings is depicted. This piece is painted in Primitivism style, with quite bright colors. Comparing these two paintings it is necessary to point out that they are totally different. The former reveals transparent idea of the Holy Mary and Her Son. It is very symmetric and even perfect in its form and its idea: depiction of the joy of Jesus birth.

But as far as Gauguin's painting is concerned it is necessary to admit that the form of the painting is not so symmetrical and ideal, and the form is not the main concern, it is idea of the painting that matters: Christianity comes to the islands and is accepted by the natives in their own way. These two paintings' theme is the Virgin, who is depicted in two different ways: Raphael depicted the Virgin very realistic and Gauguin painted in Primitivism style. Raphael focused on the form more than on the idea; Gauguin revealed his idea via simple lines to stress his idea. Thus, it is possible to conclude that religion is a powerful and inexhaustible source of inspiration of all times. The artists referred to religious characters, and above all the Virgin, during centuries and each epoch presented its own view of eternal image. Such eternal subjects are very valuable in terms of art study, since it is possible to differentiate different styles and even epochs considering the image of the Virgin depicted by different artists.

Works Cited

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