

The painter of light

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ART2 The Painter of Light Looking at a variety of Rembrandt's canvases reproduced in books and on the internet, it is easy to see why he is known as "The Painter of Light." Many of his figures seem to glow as if lit from within, and lighting and shadow play an important role in most of his paintings, often adding emotional resonance and amplitude to the subject matter at hand. In other words, the artist did not just use light and shadow to create and convey forms; he also used them to create and convey ideas and emotions. This undoubtedly added to the psychological realism that Rembrandt has an established reputation for: it is not just the expression or gesture of his subjects, but it is also the ways in which they are lit, that conveys psychological tones.

In Rembrandt's painting "Danae," the approach to depicting light and character is subtle and interesting. As in Caravaggio, the painter uses light to enhance the drama of the moment captured on canvas: the lighting appears to come from the direction of the painting's spectator, illuminating the female nude in the middle ground. After a second glance, one sees the shadowy figure hiding among her bed curtains in the background. This enhances the drama of the moment, and the power of the female nude's gesture. "Rembrandt sought to emulate the drama of lighting and gesture of Elsheimer, Caravaggio, and, now, van Honthorst and to place himself firmly into the international world of art" (History, 2009). I would say that Rembrandt manages to improve upon Caravaggio's technique and bring his tenebrism a bit further, because there is a unique and almost palpable glow to the main subject. The two painters, however, have similar ideas of narrative realism.

REFERENCE

History of art—Baroque and Rococo (2009). <http://www.all-art.org/history252-21.html>