

Orientalism: the intricacies in the field of art history

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Orientalism: The Intricacies in the Field of Art History In the field of art history, there is a certain field whose intricacies can be deemed contestable and problematic. Orientalism is a classification based on the dominance of the West over the East and the exotic treatment of the former over the latter (Nochlin 34). Orientalist approach has been used by Western artists to portray the cumulative differences of the people in East and the West in terms of the political, social, ideological and cultural practices (Grigsby 1). In the field of art, the aforementioned conditions that highlight the superiority of the West over the East are clearly implied through the manner of representation done by the artists in making art. There are several artists who have shown a remarkable presentation of the East through glorification of the West. Antoine-Jean Gros' artwork entitled *Bonaparte visitant les pestifères de Jaffa* is one of the artworks that renders a very different representation of the East (Grigsby 3). This artwork is done to counter the fear of the people about the Bubonic Plague and there is a misrepresentation of the Arabs included in art piece (Grigsby 4). The Arabs, in reality, are assisting these French soldiers who are experiencing the plague though they are experiencing repressive conditions like being tortured to death of there will be submission on their part to the needs and wants of the French Army back then (Grigsby 10). However, in the painting, they are the ones who are depicted to be experiencing the plague which provides an intrinsic ironic situation about the manner of representation (Grigsby 10). This is a form of disillusionment. The East is being subjected to pre-occupations of the Western conquerors being dominant and civilized. This becomes a distorted reality about the East and these give rise to further complexities about how the West would colonize the East. The reason for this is not just bringing in a <https://assignbuster.com/orientalism-the-intricacies-in-the-field-of-art-history/>

civilized civilization but domination and forwarding the best interest of the oppressors. Another artwork that problematizes the representation about the East by the West is the piece by Philippe-Auguste Hennequin entitled *La liberti de l'Italie didie'e aux hommes libres* (Grigsby 16). This artwork shows Napoleon being hugged by nude men referred to as the East and shows an intricate scenario of showing acceptance by the West towards the East (Grigsby 16). This artwork highlights a very pervasive and sexually-driven matter about the relation of East and the West. This has been possible due to association of sodomite practices which are uncivilized and threatens the masculinity and dominating nature of man in the West (Grigsby 17). Based on this sexually-driven matter about orientalism, one thing can be inferred from the situation. The West has actually preferred to dominate the East to ensure that the uncivilized act that the West is referring about the East will not be used as a tool for the East to subjugate the West. This apparently shows a superiority complex for the West which can be still seen in the modern times through the way of how the western powers continue to dominate the world. The last artwork I will be referring to here is the piece made by Jean-Leon Gerome entitled *the Slave Market* (Nochlin 46). This art will further exploit the aforementioned about the idea of dominance and sexism that involves femininity and masculinity. In this piece, the girl has been a subject of the male gaze by the Western White men (Nochlin 47). How is this gaze problematic and how does this aggravate further the problem about Orientalism? The male gaze provides a sexual condition that Eastern people are mere sexual objects, especially the women whom are exploited accordingly to the like of the White Men (Nochlin 47). This is crucial because the East is associated with concept of Women that must be

subjugated and dominated by men (Grigsby 17). Since the women of the East are being subjects of desire due to their exotic appeal, the West will have more drive in subordinating the East and this has greatly affected the matter of representation of East and distorted somehow the field of Orientalism that works on the ideological framework supplied and asserted by the West (Nochlin 57). By carefully synthesizing and analysing the manner of representation done by the West about the East, there is relatively a big problem. They have presented the East in a very different manner since they have imposed their own living standards and ideals without even at least taking into consideration the uniqueness that the East possesses. There is abhorrence on the part of the West in terms of treating the East and this has been presumably their working stance on how they implement certain actions about the Eastern practices that they have deemed barbaric and problematic. Ultimately, it is clear that the West has distorted the representation of the East and has somehow given a false standard of identification on these people. Instead of being objective about the East, the West have glorified their own selves and shown that they are the saviours or teachers of the East to get on the path of being civilized. This already shows that there is a need to make sure that there will be a paradigm shift to fully understand the East accordingly to their own point of view and assertions instead of certain impositions that have incurred a problematic effect about how people will be receptive about the ideas of the East. WORKS CITED Grigsby, Darcy. "Rumor, Contagion, and Colonization in Gros's Plague-Stricken of Jaffa (1804)." *Representations*. University of California Press: 1995. pp. 1-46. PDF. Nochlin, Linda. "The Imaginary

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