

Mary cassatt art style: an overview



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Cassatt is perhaps best-known for her paintings of mothers and children, works which also reflect a surprisingly modern sensibility. Traditional assumptions concerning childhood, child-rearing, and the place of children in society were facing challenges during the last part of the 19th century and women too were reconsidering and redefining their place in modern culture. Cassatt was sensitive to a more progressive attitude toward women and children and displayed it in her art as well as in her private comments. She recognized the moral strength that women and children derived from their essential and elemental bond, a unity Cassatt would never tire of representing.

The many paintings, pastels, and prints in which Cassatt depicted children being bathed, dressed, read to, held, or nursed reflect the most advanced 19th-century ideas about raising children. After 1870, French scientists and physicians encouraged mothers (instead of wet-nurses and nannies) to care for their children and suggested modern approaches to health and personal hygiene, including regular bathing. In the face of several cholera epidemics in the mid-1880s, bathing was encouraged not only as a remedy for body odors but as a preventative measure against disease.

Shortly after her triumphs with the Impressionists, Cassatt's style evolved, and she moved away from impressionism to a simpler, more straightforward approach. By 1886, she no longer identified herself with any art movement and experimented with a variety of techniques. A series of rigorously drawn, tenderly observed, yet largely unsentimental paintings on the mother and child theme form the basis of her popular work. In 1891, she exhibited a series of highly original colored lithograph prints, including *Woman Bathing*

and *The Coiffure*, inspired by the Japanese masters shown in Paris the year before.

Her decision to become a professional artist must have seemed beyond the pale, given that serious painting was largely the domain of men in the 19th century.

Despite the concerns of her parents, Cassatt chose career over marriage

Janson's History of Art, Seventh Edition

p. 879-880

This text gives us a little insight into the life of Mary Cassatt (1844-1926). She was an American who was born into a wealthy family and raised in Pittsburgh; also influenced by Renaissance art, she approached Impressionism from a woman's perspective, mainly as a figure painter. As a female, she was often restricted as far as going places unattended where men could go. Her subject matter was attributed to these restrictions. Many of her themes included women reading, visiting, taking tea, and bathing an infant. *The Child's Bath* is not only a picture about health, but about intense emotional and physical involvement.

Paul case:

Cather's understanding of the tacit limits governing the representation of sexuality, and the way they were linked to genre, explains why she chose the mode of indirection in writing her 1905 story of a homosexual teenager, "Paul's Case." Recent developments in sexology enabled Cather to characterize Paul as a homosexual without naming his condition. Through

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background information and physical description, Cather's narrator discreetly invokes degeneracy theory to explain her protagonist, aligning him with the subjects of recent case studies. After experimenting with the persona of the "fairy," Paul uses stolen money to transform himself into a cultured, sophisticated "queer," but neither persona proves permanently satisfactory. Through its references to Paul's sexuality, the story analyzes one particular product of late-nineteenth-century consumer capitalism: the middle-class, urban gay man.

How to write it ?

Write your climax first; it will aid you to gauge properly the view-point of your story. The climax is the plot in brief: here is a hint as to plot finding. Take a situation: it may be humorous, pathetic, full of mystery, or dramatic; but it must be striking. Life abounds in many such, and he who goes about with his eyes open can not fail to set aside an ample store.

The conclusion should follow closely on the heels of the climax. Its office is to ring down effectively the curtain on the scene. Often it dovetails in the climax so that we can not tell where one begins and the other ends

When you conceived your climax, doubtless some one thing stood out in bolder relief than all the rest. It may have been humor, it may have been pathos, it may have been grim tragedy. Whatever it was, it is the point of the tale, the centre of gravity of your story. You wisely gave it a setting in keeping, and in the conclusion let it dwell like a lingering note to be a haunting memory for many a day. It is the essence of your conception, and

in the introduction you held it up before your reader's eyes as the game to be pursued. This we will call the theme of the composition.

The subtle power of the French school lies in the art of innuendo. It is what is left unsaid rather than what is said that causes the greatest thrill. But the inference must be plain: the reader's imagination should not be left to construct the tale which you set out to tell. Often a story will be saved from boredom to fascination by the power of suggestion alone. This is particularly true of love scenes, deaths, and the like, such as only a master's hand at description can hope to handle effectively.

Rosebud:

One of the key cruxes of the film is the question of what exactly Rosebud means. We ask this question even though we know that Welles & Co. were in part trying to show that you cannot reduce a man's mysteries to one thing. On the other hand, there is a solution to the "problem." It is actually found in Welles's next film, *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Throughout Welles's radio career, his most moving shows, such as his adaptation of "The Apple Tree," were about loss "loss of a bucolic past, of a domestic happiness, of a quiet life. This theme doesn't seem to have anything to do with Welles's real life. It's just something he liked, though perhaps based on the loss of his mother at an early age. *The Magnificent Ambersons* is his most poignant realization of this theme in his work. *Rosebud* leads up to that film. *Rosebud* is *The Magnificent Ambersons*. The small-town values and mother's love that the snow-ball evoke "which reminds Kane of his childhood home, and the sled

called Rosebud ” are all explored in much more detail and presented with an additional dollop of aching loss, in Welles’s second film.

Rosebud is not a gimmick. As a narrative device, it is the holy grail of the film, the engine that drives the reporter Thompson to solve the mystery of Kane, and along the way we learn as much about Kane as the characters (and the undermining overvoice of the film itself) can tell us. But when we learn, from our privileged position as viewers of the film, what Rosebud actually is, even as it is being destroyed, we also learn that it is not a hoax, nor is it hokey. As Bernard Herrmann’s beautiful music rises in the background, we feel both the unsealing of the envelope and the closing of a life. It’s a beautiful moment, one of the most expressive in all cinema. And you know what? In a way, a man’s life can be reduced to one thing, if that thing is the rich cluster of images and ideas that Rosebud contains.

The gay subtext in Citizen Kane

Who wrote Kane? The answer is in the aspect of the film that everyone is afraid to mention, the gay subtext that appears in Kane and in many of Welles’s other films. I’m not talking about his private life, in which, according to Simon Callow, Welles had a knack for attracting the support of older gay men such as Houseman, who were smitten with the youth’s vivacity. Welles, a heavy drinker, was married three times and, like Marlon Brando and Warren Beatty after him, had ostentatious affairs with many women, among them Dolores Del Rio. None of this seemed to find its way into his films.

Women don’t figure that heavily in most of Welles’s films, and rarely does sex truly enter. Love and passion are there, but often presented discreetly.

Kane offers up something of a Madonna/whore contrast, while his next film shows dedicated woman in a soap-operaish oleo of unrequited, often even unexpressed, love. Although the aborted *It's All True* celebrated the passionate life of Latin America, Welles was really interested in the politics of the time. Subsequent films dealt with "great men" and their political lives. Welles played Othello as if he were really married to Iago. There is the suggested rape of a newlywed in *Touch of Evil*, and a nymphomaniac in *The Trial*. It's a shock to see footage from the unfinished *The Other Side of the Wind* in which actual lust is realized in the back seat of a car. But the combination of sex and women is not what we carry away from many of these films.

Male friendship and its betrayals interested Welles, from one film to another, starting with *Kane* and lasting all the way to *The Big Brass Ring*, a screenplay credited to Welles but finally filmed by someone else. As in many films with a gay subtext, parts of *Kane* don't make sense unless you view them from a gay perspective. Why, exactly does Jed Leland feel so betrayed by Kane? It can't just be because Kane's political folly "put back the cause of reform 20 years." When Leland, the stooge friend, first learns of the political disgrace, he walks into a bar to drown feelings of... what? Leland, who elsewhere says he took ballet lessons with Kane's first wife and was "very graceful," has no female companions in the film, and his reaction to Kane's political "betrayal" far exceeds its actual weight. There's a love here that dare not speak its name.

This gay subtext provides another indication of Welles's hand in the *Kane* screenplay. Welles's other great movie, *Touch of Evil*, has a similar

relationship between a powerful man and a stooge, in which the powerful man is the love of the stooge's life: Welles's Quinlan and Joseph Calleia's Pete Menzies; only here, both men betray each other. And the totality of *The Trial* only makes sense if the film is viewed as really about the persecution of a gay man in a straight society. The gay subtext of *Kane* only adds to its mysteries and makes it a richer film.

Understanding themes: D1

Personal identity is shaped by one's culture, by groups, and by institutional influences. Examination of various forms of human behavior enhances understanding of the relationship between social norms and emerging personal identities, the relationships between social processes that influence identity formation, and the ethical principles underlying individual action.