

Free essay on berninis ecstasy of saint theresa and caravaggios crucifixion of

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Baroque art has long been known for its lush and ornate style. It draws from the realism of the Renaissance and pushes the limits of art, sculpture, and architecture further than it had been pushed in the past. Perhaps another one of the defining aspects of Baroque art is the application of classical and even pagan themes into Christian art and iconography; although Christianity had long been borrowing from other cultures and religions for its iconography and symbolism, the adoption of symbolism in Baroque art surpassed what had been done in the past. The art of the Baroque period was heavily encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church, which built up a society in which artists who had talent could flourish. Two of the most famous artists of the time, Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Michelangelo Merisi di Caravaggio, were responsible for some of the most notable examples of Baroque art still in existence today.

Bernini's famous work, "The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa," is a work of sculpture that sits in the Cornaro Chapel in Rome (Abc-people. com, 2013). This piece has long been fascinating for art historians and artists alike because of the lifelike nature of the piece. Bernini, unlike many other artists of the day, never had a contentious relationship with Pope UrbanVIII or his successor Pope Innocent X, and the latter Pope commissioned the piece specifically for the chapel, along with a number of other important pieces. "The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa" is an astounding piece of sculpture to behold, as it seems to be a moment, frozen in marble. The folds of the cloth appear to be stilled mid-movement, and the expressions on the faces are simultaneously otherworldly and painfully human. Perhaps the most genius aspect of the piece is the way Bernini utilized the natural light filtering into the chapel to

illuminate the piece. The piece has been an area of discussion for art historians for some time, as some claim that the depiction of Saint Theresa is such that she appears to have a look of lust or orgasmic pleasure on her face, while others claim that Bernini's purpose in creating the sculpture was to depict an individual in a state of divine joy (Carl and Charles, 2009). The latter interpretation seems to be a more convincing one, given Bernini's personal history. At the time of the commission, he was a follower of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, whose followers believed in the heavily mystical powers of God and the Church (Abc-people. com, 2013). It is entirely possible, then, that Bernini's sculpture is designed to show the Saint Theresa in a state of divine joy. Bernini was born in Naples to Florentine parents (Abc-people. com, 2013). He was heavily influenced by Greek classical works, but remained Catholic throughout his life. Bernini's talent was recognized while he was still young by the Church, and as a result, he was commissioned to do a great number of important pieces for the Church during his lifetime. Caravaggio, on the other hand, had a variety of contentious relationships in his lifetime, causing him to flee his native Milan and settle in Rome, although he was eventually exiled from Rome as well (Caravaggio Foundation, 2013). At one point, Caravaggio was named as the most famous painter in Rome, although the reputation he had was not entirely positive. The painting "The Crucifixion of Saint Peter" was commissioned for an altarpiece in the Cerasi Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome (Carl and Charles, 2009).

Unlike many representations of the Crucifixion of Saint Peter, Caravaggio chose to portray the scene as it was happening. As a result, the painting is in

movement, with three men struggling to lift the cross to crucify the saint. Some art historians suggest that Caravaggio portrayed this struggle in an attempt to show that the weight of this sin had already begun to weigh heavily on those responsible for the crucifixion of the Saint. The use of shadow, light, and dark in the painting throws the saint into focus, with the other men disappearing into the darkness. Saint Peter himself does not seem agonized by the experience, merely sad; his is the only face visible in the painting, and he appears to be resigned to his fate.

The use of light and dark in the Caravaggio painting is an aspect of art that was utilized heavily in the Baroque period. Extreme areas of light and dark, such as the highlight on Saint Peter's face, were used to illuminate and draw the viewer's attention to a certain portion of the piece. In the case of "The Crucifixion of Saint Peter," the men crucifying the saint are thrown into darkness, perhaps to demonstrate their sin, or perhaps to show that all people could be those responsible for the great sin of crucifying the saint. The painter's decision to portray the crucifixion as it happened gives emotion and feeling to the piece.

Baroque art excelled in portraying movement and emotion through static media like marble and paint. Although nothing is moving, it appears that the Saint Theresa's dress is rippling in a slight wind, and that the men are struggling to lift Saint Peter's cross. This movement gave life to the scenes and allowed the viewers greater connection with the subject matter.

References

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