

Essay on paintings examples

[Art & Culture](#), [Painting](#)



Painting #1 Composition With Grid 1 1918 Piet Mondrian Oil On Canvas Essay Examples

The Dutch art group “ de Stijl” (the Style) was one of the first Abstract art movements and had some of the strictest rules. Through the use of pure geometry, this school of thought wanted to join the spiritual and material realms. In the case of Mondrian’s art, this junction took the form of a variety of grid patterns, made of vertical and horizontal lines and designed to symbolize worldwide harmony. The perpendicular lines forming junctions was, to him, a way to express the notions of the spiritual meeting those of the material.

In this painting, it looks like Mondrian has put together an arbitrary sequence of rectangles and squares. What is interesting about this painting is that X-ray photography was used to look at the original outlining. Mondrian’s first sketch took the classical golden section and made a grid of uniform rectangles based on that proportion. Then, Mondrian drew this pattern over it, and so what looks like a random collection of rectangles is actually based on these “ golden” proportions. The shifting between ochre and gray glazes gives a gentle flow, as the viewer’s eyes drift from one plane of color to the other.

The contour lines dominate the piece, representing the forces of spiritual (in one direction) and material (in the perpendicular direction) energy. The fact that these lines come together in such a peaceful drifting of colors, on the foundation of the classically ideal proportions, show that when spiritual and material energies come together harmoniously, the outcome is beauty. I

have always enjoyed the clean lines and sharp colors that appear in most Mondrian pieces, and these piece shows me the harmony that joining the passions and reason can bring to life.

284 words

Painting #2: Saint Joseph and the Christ Child (Guido Reni), 1638-1640, oil on canvas

Although Guido Reni is not one of the most well known painters from his era in our own time, in his day he had more fame than any other Italian painter. His renown came from the natural aura that his paintings exuded, thanks to the quiet balance that undergirds them. Their sense of grace is an affect that remains with his paintings today.

Most of Reni's works portrayed holy figures and saints. The Roman Catholic Church had developed a series of characteristics that holy portraits should have, and Reni became a master of following that formula for the patrons who commissioned works from him.

Here, the viewer sees a tender moment between Jesus and his foster father. Not much is known about Joseph except that he was a carpenter, and that he was willing to accept Mary as his bride after his visit from an angel, because of his faith. Here, though, the picture is one of a simple artisan holding his baby tenderly. The baby is several months old by this point, based on his size. The fruit that he holds is a sign of the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden, a reminder of the forbidden fruit that Adam and Eve consumed.

The contour lines in this painting are clear; they follow the yellow wrap around St. Joseph and the baby. Also, the arms of the infant and the

<https://assignbuster.com/essay-on-paintings-examples/>

shadowy line up St. Joseph's chest meet at the apple, which is the focal point. However, the implied line running from the eyes of foster father to foster son may be the most powerful line in the whole work, showing the tender love between them. The figure of Joseph does not receive much mention in the New Testament at all, and I have always thought that he deserves more acclaim for his faith. That is what drew me to the picture. The tenderness that he feels for the child born of this unusual birth speaks to me.

330 words

Painting #3: Orpheus Leading Eurydice from the Underworld (J. Corot), 1861, oil on canvas

Corot's legacy to art is a tradition of ethereal landscapes that wander along the shadowy line between reality and dream; many of his paintings place a scene from ancient mythology inside a highly personal representation of nature. In this particular work, Orpheus, who used his musical ability to charm the Greek gods into letting him go down to the underworld to save his wife, who had died from a snake bite, brings her back to the world of the living. The Greek view of the afterlife saw the dead continuing to infinity as a spirit; in this painting, you'll see other spirits of the dead gathered under the trees – which barely seem real themselves.

However, Orpheus had been instructed not to turn around and look at his wife until they had both returned to the land of the living. The moment in this painting comes before his fateful error; he clings to her hand as they walk to the light of day.

The contour lines take the form of the many trees that populate this limbo land between Hades and reality. The twisted lines of the tree behind Eurydice and the darker trees in front of Orpheus suggest the oncoming complication of temptation; that they are headed into a darker area, to the right, foreshadows Orpheus' tragic error – when he turns around to look at Eurydice, before they make it all the way out of Hades, she is doomed to stay in the underworld. The most powerful implied line goes from their avid eyes off to the viewer's right, off the edge of the painting. One wonders what they see, what inspires them – and what causes Orpheus to turn around and lose his wife forever. I have always enjoyed this tragic story from myth, and so I was drawn to this painting, and the ethereal look that Corot gives to this treatment of the story showed me how transitory all of life is.

323 words

Painting #4: A Stag at Sharkey's, 1917 (George Bellows), lithograph

One of the Ashcan School painters, George Bellows exemplified their gritty, urban realism in just about all of his paintings – this 1917 lithograph is based on a 1909 oil painting of the same name. While not all of his paintings featured boxing, it was a dominant theme that ran throughout his work; Bellows' first studio was on the other side of Broadway from the Sharkey Athletic Club, where he went in sometimes to watch “ stags,” or illegal prize fights.

Places like Sharkey's had sprung up all over New York City, as an interest in boxing was taking over the city. Even though, according to polite society,

places like Sharkey's were called immoral and tawdry, they became increasingly popular.

In this painting, the contour lines are dynamic – and diagonal. They follow the muscled legs and arms of the two pugilists – and of the referee, who is almost trapped in the shadows. The bodies almost take the form of a pyramid, in a balanced composition that looks a lot like the foundation of many classical sculptures – and the mixture of lines also evokes the organic way in which Rodin brought forms to life through twisting musculature and making figures look like they could actually be real. The lines on the boxing ring contain the action, but the implied lines are even more important, as they run from the eyes of the spectators all around the ring. The eyes are windows into the souls of us all; here, they show the vicarious interest that these people take in the massive drama taking place above them. I have always enjoyed boxing movies such as the “ Rocky” cycle, and this fighting picture immediately caught my eye. The gritty realism of boxing back before the prizefighting federations took hold of the action, when fights were really all about combat and just a little bit about money, comes out in Bellows' work to me.

317 Words