

Good essay about three art pieces

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



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci

This painting is probably the most famous one in the world and is a great work of art that contains all the elements of style that one looks for in a portrait. First of all the expression is a direct and almost informal, the sitter looks at the viewer in an almost impassionate and sensual manner that cuts to the bone. Leonardo's use of soft colourings is also very powerful indeed. Mona Lisa's staring gaze is formal and direct; she seems to be oblivious of what is going on about her whilst the background blends beautifully with the whole subject matter. She is fixated in the foreground and has a facial expression that is almost completely dominated by her large and baleful eyes whilst some commentators have noted a faint smile, although this is debatable. The work's composition is quite simple; Leonardo makes use of pastel oils that add to the brilliance of the work making it quite original in certain aspects.

A Grotesque Old Woman by Quentin Metsys

The Flemish painter Quentin Metsys is perhaps not as well-known as Leonardo da Vinci but his portrait titled 'A Grotesque Old Woman' certainly brings out the elements of style that are important in Renaissance painting. First of all, the portrait is realistic and is not embellished; Metsys does not shirk from portraying the woman in all her ugliness. The intelligent use of colours is also very important since the white and blue add to the allure of the painting, making it more believable and striking. There is also a considerable contrast between the ugliness of the face and the almost bare cleavage of the woman that create feelings of lust and carnal arousing – a

clever method employed by the artist. One feels contrasting emotions when viewing this painting, torn between the ugliness and repulsion of the face with the rather exciting exposure of the female breasts. The philosophical attraction of the painting is demonstrated in its portrayal of Paget's Disease – something which was viewed as socially unacceptable in those times.

In a way the painting reminds me of the grotesque figures presented by Pieter Breughel in his own paintings, 'Twelve Netherlandish Proverbs' and 'The Harvest' where the grotesque is an important part of proceedings.

The Conversion of St Paul by Caravaggio

In this painting, we observe a number of foibles that have made the artists famous, most of all, the clever way in which the figures seem to blend into each other whilst the colours of the flesh are immediately observed as being striking and formally direct. There is a sense of confusion in the painting with the horse particularly clear; his bulk almost seems to take over the whole canvas. We are made to observe the lighting and particularly low horizon lines just as these are described in the Acts of the Apostles. The light, in all its brilliance, forms an important part of the painting's composition. Thus, the elements of chiaroscuro are applied to the Roman soldier who is the previous reincarnation of Saul as the persecutor of the Christians. Politically, Caravaggio was also making a statement since he refers to Christianity as a religion of consequence in this striking painting

All three paintings use techniques that are familiar with the mores of their time but they also bring some outstanding new concepts which further developed Renaissance art painting.

References:

Bohm-Duchen, Monica (2001). The private life of a masterpiece. University of California Press. ISBN 978-0-520-23378-2. Retrieved 10 October 2010.

Johnson, Paul (2003). Art: A New History. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc,

Illustrations List:

Leonardo da Vinci: Mona Lisa; Art Renewal Centre; Retrieved 21 March 2014 from: <http://www.artrenewal.org/pages/artwork.php?artworkid=1971>

Quentin Metsys : A Grotesque Old Woman; The Dabbler National Treasures; Retrieved 21 March 2014 from: <http://thedabbler.co.uk/2010/11/national-treasures-%E2%80%93-metsys-an-old-woman/>

Michelangelo Merisi Caravaggio: The Conversion of St Paul; Art and the Bible; Retrieved 21 March 2014 from: <http://www.artbible.info/art/large/426.html>