

Main idea of the horse fair novel

Science



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Rosa Bonheur's "The Horse Fair"

Aspects of Interest and Initial Thoughts

The art piece I selected to feature in my essay is *The Horse Fair*, by artist Rosa Bonheur. Initially, I was attracted to this piece based on the name. With such a large list of art and musical classics to choose from, it was hard to narrow in. But I have a love for animals, and I grew up around horses on my grandparents' farm, so when I saw "horse" in the title of this painting, it led me to click on it. Once I viewed the art piece, I was drawn to the fact that it was an oil painting. I have many oil paintings in my house and have taken several oil painting classes as a hobby, so I was able to connect with Bonheur's piece on a personal level. Not only did I enjoy the realistic-looking horses in the painting, but I also enjoyed how Bonheur was able to narrow in on the finer details of her work to truly create something beautiful. You can see the brush strokes that created each leaf on the trees, the dark, heavy clouds rolling through the sky, and even a faint glimpse of a building's rotunda in the background of it all.

Exploration of Theme

Bonheur's work was created from 1852-1853, during the Realism era. It was touched up and added to in 1855 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016). During this movement, artists were being more realistic about their work and the world around them - hence the "Realism" name. What is meant by this is that artists and creators of this time period stopped folding to the idea that unpleasant content should be censored and ignored. Artists began depicting more realistic, if not harsh, realities of life in their works. Most simply, Realism "is the attempt to represent subject matter truthfully, without

artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions, implausible, exotic and supernatural elements” (Wikipedia, 2017). You can see Realism at work in The Horse Fair as many of the horses appear frightened and even angered by being herded around and eventually sold off to the highest bidder.

Historical Context

During this time in history, automobiles were not yet available and travel by horse was most common. There were horse markets every week in Paris, France, in the 1850's. Workers would parade the horses around in front of prospective buyers, who were almost always men. Men did not believe that women belonged at the horse market. However, Rosa Bonheur secretly dressed up in men's clothing and attended the market twice per week in order to sketch the scene for The Horse Fair (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016). Bonheur created this work at a unique point in French history, as 1852 was shortly after the 1848 Revolution and on the tail-end of the Second Republic era in France, but just before the massive rebuilding of Paris and the industrialization of France as a whole under Napoleon III (Wikipedia, 2017). During this era, the French were mostly a working class people, and males were considered the dominant gender in society.

Insights into the Work

Rosa Bonheur was born in Bordeaux, France in 1822 and was trained by her father, who was an art teacher. She always had a unique passion and talent for sketching animals, and this passion is what fueled her work for The Horse Fair. She began visiting animals of all kinds at farms, horse fairs, and even slaughterhouses, in order to study their movements and mannerisms and capture them more accurately in her paintings (Kuiper, n. d.). The Horse Fair is considered to be Bonheur's best and most highly regarded piece.

Relevance of the Work

I believe this painting is still relevant to today's audience, as a lot can be learned from the Realism era and French culture during the 1850's as a result of learning the story behind this painting. It is an incredibly popular

piece that has now been on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City for over fifty years. It has quite literally traveled the world and been on display in several prestigious institutions (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016). Additionally, animals are of a general interest to most people, and a painting depicting horses would get a lot of attention from the young and old alike.

Effect of Analysis on Perception

When first taking on this task, I seriously doubted my ability to write a full-length paper just based off of learning about a single painting. However, I am better off for the knowledge I have gained from researching the life of Rosa Bonheur and the struggles she faced as a woman in 1850's France. I admire her strength and resilience in hiding her identity and dressing as a man multiple times per week in order to create this magnificent work of art we are now all able to admire. We later learned that Bonheur was actually more comfortable in men's clothing anyway, and received special permission from the authorities to wear male trousers on a daily basis (Kuiper, n. d.).

However, she still faced possible harassment, embarrassment, and ridicule from the men at the horse market if her true identity was revealed, which was not viewed as an appropriate place for women to be. Bonheur was committed to her craft and I think she demonstrates fortitude by choosing to forgo schooling to become a seamstress in order to pursue her dreams and her true passion of art. Her life and works demonstrate a certain tenacity that is no doubt admirable for all who take the time to learn about them.