

Baroque and classicism

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The Baroque style in art that flourished in the seventeenth century is characterized by "intense emotions, monumental decors, and even a kind of artistic sensationalism (Hunt, Martin and Rosenstein 473)." It is a movement that was heavily embellished and very complex, primarily because it wanted to evoke a strong sense of emotion from the viewer. The artists who subscribed to this particular movement "embraced dynamism, theatricality, and elaborate ornamentation, all used to spectacular effect, often on a grandiose scale (Klein 649). The term itself is believed to have come from the Portuguese word *barroco*, which referred to an irregularly shaped pearl. It is somewhat fitting, as baroque sculptures, particularly, have many complex textures as part of their ornamentation. A prime example of the baroque style in sculpture is the work of Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*. The sculpture is distinctly baroque, first in terms of its form. Looking at the sculpture, it is easy to see how diverse the visual textures are in Bernini's work. The large, thick folds of the clothing of Saint Teresa contrast with the lighter, thinner texture of the clothing of the angel piercing her with an arrow. These textures are also clearly discernible and different from the smoky texture of the cloud below, the smooth, porcelain-like skin of both Saint Teresa and the angel, and the ordered rays representing God behind the primary figures. This diversity in textures is a manifestation of the baroque style's obsession with ornamentation, as the complexity it creates is almost overwhelming to the viewer. Another aspect of Bernini's work that exemplifies the baroque is its whitetail presentation of emotion.

The choice of the subject matter is already lends itself to such theatricality, since the sculpture is depicting the SST. Teresa in one of her trances after her conversion to Catholicism after the death of her father, which she describes as being caused by " the fire-tipped arrow of divine love that an angel had thrust repeatedly into her heart (Klein 654). " The emotion on her face as rendered by Bernie is one of an almost sexual climax, on display for everyone to see. This equation of an orgasmic, painful pleasure is a means to let the viewer understand on hysterical terms the transcendent experience of the divine.

Only the baroque style, with its emphasis on emotion can capture and manifest such a state. Classicism is an art movement that was also popular during the seventeenth century, but more so in France, compared to the primacy of the baroque in Italy. It was espoused by the French king, Louis XIV as the preferred style for French artists. Classicism reflected the ideals of the art of antiquity: " geometric shapes, order, and harmony of lines took precedence over the sensuous, exuberant, and emotional forms of the baroque Hunt, Martin and Rosenstein 510). It recalls the classical period, which in the arts refers to the traditions of the Greeks and the Romans. There is a stronger emphasis on symmetry and straight lines in classicism, which embody the order and reason prized among artists that subscribe to this movement. The work by French artist Nicholas Poussin, Discovery of Achilles on Gyros, is an excellent example of classicism. Looking at the forms in the painting, it is easy to see how ordered everything is. There is a dominance of straight lines, not only in the classical architecture depicted behind Achilles and his sword, but also in the poses assumed by the figures.

The arms of the women are carefully positioned to create straight lines. The use of color is also very harmonious and ordered, as Poisson uses complementary colors of blue and orange to make the clothing pop out. The skin tone of all the women are also clearly fairer than that of the men, so as to make the viewer clearly recognize differences in gender. There is a distinct lack of emotion in the painting, as the facial expressions of the figures are very stoic and subdued.