

Historical significance of mona lisa painting



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mona Lisa is a 16th-century painting made from oil and poplar wood. Due to the painting's mystique and technical mystery, it is one of the world's most famous paintings. Mona Lisa is also known as La Joconde or La Gioconda was made by a "Renaissance Man", an Italian artist known as Leonardo Da Vinci (Sassoon, 2002). The painting was later bought by the France King at that time King Francois. Mona Lisa presently hangs in the museum in ' Musee de Louvre, Paris' and is currently a French Government property. Many theories have been brought up regarding the woman sitting on the painting and the painting itself. The painting has been reproduced and can be found at almost every museum.

THE MONA LISA

HISTORY

According to Vasari, Leonardo first took four years to make the painting after which he set it aside (Barolsky 22). He thereafter moved to France to paint at Clos Luc é upon King Françoise request. Where he resumed working on the Mona Lisa. It took Leonardo three more years to complete the painting. The painting according to Farago (1999) is said to have been commissioned by Francesco Del Giocondo, a wealthy silk merchant and his wife Lisa. In spite of the continuous debate. It is a common belief that the lady in the portrait could as well be Lisa Del Giocondo. The couple requested the painting at the birth of their second child since they wanted it for their home (Van Dyke, 2008). A contrasting theory suggests Da Vinci did not paint a picture of a woman but his own portrait in feminine clothing.

Mona Lisa painting shows a woman whose facial expression is enigmatic. The half-length portrait shows a woman who is gazing at the viewer with a smile (Farago 184). The smile has raised many questions with many people arguing that the smile has a hidden mystery. Most people who had seen the portrait say that her eyes follow someone across the room if you gaze at her. The painting has been an object of continual fascination due to the ambiguous expression of the woman, the half-figure composition monumentality, the atmospheric illusionism and the subtle modelling forms (Sassoon, 2002). Da Vinci used a rare design of a pyramid to place Mona Lisa calmly and simply in the painting's space. On the front corner of the pyramid, he placed the form of her folded hands. Lighting was well used as her neck, breast and face glow with similar light as the one that models her hands (Van Dyke, 2008). Da Vinci used the formula used for 'the image of seated Madonna' that was popular at that time to create the seated female figure. He used a modification of this formula whereby he created a distance between the observer and the seated woman through visual impression (Farago 216).

SIGNIFICANCE

Mona Lisa and the viewer are divided using the armrest of the chair. Mona Lisa shows a reserved posture as she sits markedly upright her arms folded across the chest. She welcomes a silent communication to the observer through her gaze, which is constantly fixed to the viewer. The viewer is greatly attracted to Mona Lisa's face by the brightly lit face that is framed practically by darker elements of the veil, hair and the shadows. Da Vinci created Mona Lisa in such a way that her composition will evoke an

ambiguous effect to the observer. The painting shows a divine creature with a lot of mystery (Farago, 1999). The observer is attracted to her but her divinity and mystery create a distance. The painting depicts no kind of dialogue between the woman and the observer (Van Dyke 268).

MONA LISA AND FASHION DESIGN

Mona Lisa's clothing indicated the fashion design of that time (Titians) which was well designed to suit her personality, her social status and physical condition (Barolsky 78). Mona Lisa is a figure of a woman, dressed in the fashion of her days known as Florentine fashion. The painting represents Lisa Del Giocondo a wife to a Florentine silk merchant who was wealthy (Farago 202). Therefore her dressing represents class and wealth. Her dressing signifies magnificent enigma and mystery especially the dark silk swathes. The Florentine fashion worn by Mona Lisa presents a challenge to the modern fashion design some wishing to replicate her costume. Her garment which is made of sheer dark silk has some gathers around the neck (Barolsky 93). The garment has loose sleeves that roll back at the elbow embroidery or gold braid trimmings at the neck. Beneath her garment seems to be a well-structured garment that supports her bosom. A strip of white gathered fabric is visible beneath silk raping at her left shoulder. Further at the shoulder are sleeves that have a different color from the rest of the garment tied to an invisible garment (Van Dyke 63). Mona Lisa is wearing a veil made of finest black silk. The veil is stopped from falling by a line at the back of her head.

Mona Lisa style of dressing and fashion had several controversies. The white linen that was visible from the shoulder suggested that she had worn a

chemise beneath. Her outer garments showed a type of garment known as 'guarnello' which was made of linen worn by pregnant women and children of those days. Mona Lisa had made such a garment made of silk (Van Dyke 208). When Leonardo made the painting Francesco and Lisa were celebrating the birth of their third child. It is therefore very significant in the type of Lisa's dressing. The use of the fabulous sheer silk dress, the veiling on her shoulders portrays wealth and promotion of Francesca's business (Sassoon 108).

Leonardo da Vinci made Mona Lisa clothing design to match with her pregnant body and her social status as a wife to a wealthy silk merchant. Leonardo explains his design and the reasons why he used the specific materials. The gown was made from black silk damask so that it would not show through the 'guarnello' which was made of sheer silk (Van Dyke, 229). To show that the woman was recently pregnant, da Vinci used black velvet bands to edge and frost-fasten it. Her bodice was lightly boned and stiffened and then linen lined and fastened with concealed rings. A single ribbon was drawn from the bodice and a pleated trained skirt and cartridge pleated to it. During the time women were wearing full chemise with raglan cut sleeves and gathered neckline (Herald, 1981). This could be indicated through painting such as Titian's 'The Woman with the Mirror'. Leonardo decided to use a less full chemise which was less bulky. The Titian's women also wore sashes which Leonardo used to fold the sheer silk 'guarnello' and draw in the gathers in order to give the gown in painting a controlled form (Sassoon 88).

The major aspect that measures female beauty is physical attractiveness which specifically covers fashion design. Mona Lisa was one of Da Vinci's numerous works which are a masterpiece to marvel at to date. The picture of Mona Lisa has also been used to date to grace many magazines, objects such as cups and souvenirs among others (Farago 267). Da Vinci's work has challenged fashion design industry especially in construction and couture execution. A good fashion designer does not need to only be artistic but also a critical thinker. Most people argue that Leonardo da Vinci created a picture of himself as a woman and from what can be seen he was a good fashion (Barolsky 73).

According to Farago (1999) Leonardo da Vinci through the Mona Lisa painting creates a challenge to the modern designers, especially in fashion. Fashion design involves having an inherent talent and passion for fashion. Fashion design is known to be the art of designing and sketching attractive and beautiful dresses (Sassoon 188). A good fashion designer should have traits that are significant in order to produce exemplary designs. The figure of Mona Lisa is said to be one of the exemplary ancient works because da Vinci used the right materials to design it. Van Dyke (2008) aptly states that choosing the right materials plays a very crucial role because even if a designer is good on paper, using substandard wrong materials could result to a substandard design.

The perfect way that Leonardo has combined the rare design of a pyramid and 'sfumato' to create Mona Lisa indicates that a good designer should be an expert in mixing colors and designs (Van Dyke, 266). Da Vinci portrays that a designer should have an aesthetic sense such that he/she can gamble

with colors. A good designer should be sensible enough to design something that is suitable for the client's body type and personality. Da Vinci portrays this character by painting a picture of Lisa Del Giocondo (Barolsky 63).

CONCLUSION

Mona Lisa was one of Da Vinci's numerous works, which is a masterpiece to marvel at to date. Mona Lisa, which hangs on the walls of Musee de Louvre currently, depicts a feminine mystique of a mysterious woman. Although controversies have risen over the identity of the woman on the painting and the significance of the painting, many art historians and scholars have appreciated Mona Lisa's enormous success. People from all over the world often gaze and wonder at the mysterious and smiling painting of Mona Lisa. Mona Lisa also means "Lisa, of bare eyebrow". The picture of Mona Lisa has also been used to grace many magazines, objects such as cups and souvenirs among others.