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Survey of Art History

ARTH 1103

Modern Art from A New York Perspective

Regardless of the time in which a painting was created, its elements of design, when fully beheld, tells the vision behind the art and what the artist entails to be taken from it. Modern art of the 1870s to 1980s are not excused. Visiting the Museum of Modern Art in New York City introduced me to various compositions whose color, texture, line and formation, balance, dominance, proportions, rhythm, and/or repetition furthers the understanding of the story behind the illustration. A few paintings that caught my attention by looking at certain elements were Paul Cezanne's "Boy in a Red Vest", Henri Rousseau's "The Dream", Giorgio de Chirico's "The Double Dream of Spring", Frida Kahlo's "My Grandparents, My Parents, and I", and Romare Bearden's "The Dove".

Starting with Cezanne's painting from the late 1880s, "Boy in a Red Vest", the dominance portrayed from the character in the painting catches your attention. The boy takes up most of the painting as nothing else is seen. The direction that he is looking in causes mystery being that it is entirely absent from the painting. His red vest brings question to what his occupation is which can be taken as valet or a worker in the theatre. Paying attention to this broadens the imagination to what it is he can be so focused on. His blank facial expression can also make you wonder if he is thinking and either satisfied or unhappy with his setting. This art like art learned throughout this semester has emotion included which can help add on to its meaning.

Henri Rousseau's artwork "The Dream" from 1810 uses repetition throughout the composition. The flowers placed throughout the painting makes you think if they are used as a symbolic factor. It can stand for ideas such as purity, chastity or innocence. The naked woman also adds on to its figurative details. It is like other paintings with the use of the nude which can draw up emotion from viewers when taking in the entire piece.

Chirico's 1915 "The Double Dream of Spring" illustration uses the proportion to gain attention. Although what appears as a blueprint in the middle is smaller than the objects around it, its placement and unique form which appears more sketched, seems to be the main point of the painting. It seems to be the key, or goal being implied. Due to the land in its surroundings, it seems to be what the development should look like once initiated. This like other art from this course show plans, and before/after on certain subjects.

Kahlo's painting "My Grandparents, My Parents, and I" of her family tree has a way with rhythm that takes a viewer's eyes through the painting. The umbilical cord sprouting underneath the different generations brings you to observe each pair, and stop to see that a little boy is holding it in his hands. There is also a baby with an umbilical cord that is only attached to the largest woman in the center of the painting. Even before looking at the title of the painting you can tell that it is about a family, although it isn't too obvious who represents the artist. Just as other art observed, each segment is needed to understand the full image.

Romare Bearden's work from the 70s, "The Dove", attracted me by its use of color. Everything is in color except what can be inferred as photographs of African Americans with a connection to the Civil Rights movement. The pictures within the painting are black and white while the rest of the artwork is seen in color. The distinction itself can be a hidden message.

Other work uses contrasting elements to show there can be two sides to the illustration but one can be the most important to observe.

What I can sum up from my museum trip and duration of my course is that even with different art styles and eras in history, artist still use similar strategies and techniques to cause reactions from viewers and relay their visions as concrete as possible. All the mentioned French, Italian, German, or American artists, despite being from different countries and painting with a gap of years behind each other, their foundation was set by following certain elements of design, whether consciously aware or not. From the last chapter in Gardner's Art Through the Ages, "Contemporary Art Worldwide" I can say that art of the past may not have an ongoing legacy, per say, but the thought process of the artists can begin the same being that they have got to construct ways about all aspects of the art and what each feature would be considered by someone else.