

ARTH 120: Art in the West

Test 4: Part I - April 9, 2021

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In the following essay, I will attempt to thoroughly analyze and compare the painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* by James Abbot McNeill Whistler with the painting *Autumn Rhythm: Number 30* by Jackson Pollock. Whistler's painting is from 1875, and Pollock's is from 1950, which gives them perspectives on two very different eras. The two works can allow us to have a deeper understanding if analyzed together, even if we do not initially see this.

Aesthetically, these two paintings have few similarities that stand out. They are quite different; however, both canvases have splatter paint. Both images have a gold, dark, and light color scheme that ties them together. However, the connection between these paintings goes deeper than baseline aesthetics. In Pollock's paintings, he has a sort of loose style with tight control. Although the image seems messy and uncoordinated, Pollock uses various viscosities, brush sizes, and movements to control the falling paint. This is similar to the Whistler painting, as it exists as the most abstract of Whistler's work. Whistler created this as an artistic arrangement and used a variety of sprinkled paint, brush strokes, and rough shapes to define it. In Pollock's painting, the eye jumps around and cannot rest, creating an energetic and stressful mood. This

painting is highly intuitive and risky. This is incredibly similar to Whistler's as the eye also juts around, looking for a defined object.

When putting these side by side and thinking about the paintings' context, we can come to one core idea that these paintings share—rhythm. Whistler spoke on how he used music as rhythmic inspiration in his art, and the painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* is no exception to the rule. This piece was intentionally created as a form of artistic arrangement with a sense of non-figurative rhythm. This is paralleled in the Jackson Pollack painting *Autumn Rhythm: Number 30*; Pollack spoke on how he needed the paint to drop at perfect times, or else the canvas was ruined. He splattered this paint to a specific rhythm. The importance of a base rhythm in creating these two paintings is evident when we look at them together, as they have some similarity, but it is much less pronounced than we first realize. Upon the first glance, we can tell that something is the same, but it is not until we dive deep that we can tell what it is.

By comparing and contrasting two paintings, sometimes a linking observation can be made about the two works. This essay analyzed the paintings *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, by James Abbot McNeill Whistler, and *Autumn Rhythm: Number 30*, by Jackson Pollock. Although some baseline aesthetic similarities are common, it is the common ties of abstraction, risk, and rhythm that give these two pieces a strong sense of unity.

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Test 4: Part 2 - April 9, 2021

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In the topics of art and art history, it is so important to use comparison and juxtaposition to analyze two works of art. In the essay, this will be done for the works for *Fountain* by Marcel Duchamp and Fred Wilson's *Metal Work*. The Duchamp piece is from 1917, whereas Wilson's collection is from the years 1793-1880. Although these are from drastically different artists and different eras, we can see some comparisons.

Initially, baseline aesthetics can be seen to be similar and different. Both of the pieces are sculptures in the round, and both have objects that stand solo. The Duchamp sculpture is a solitary object that is white, porcelain, and round. The Wilson collection is a variety of pieces that are metal and shiny silver, and are also quite round. Another way in which these two works can be compared is in the physical forms. They both have great reliance on curved shapes, and they seem to share aspects of their silhouettes.

*Fountain* was created with found objects. This was similar to Wilson's collection, which took pieces from the Maryland Historical Society. By using found and previously used objects, the two pieces are tied to each other and history. It is unique for art pieces to have the level of previously owned objects that these two do, but it definitely stands out when we see them next to each other.

Upon its creation, *Fountain* was rejected as a form of art, and many dismissed it, claiming it could not be considered as such. The Wilson collection is also pieces that would be hardpressed at the time to be considered 'art', as they would be seen as more designed craft pieces. Perhaps this is where we can see the most significant linking factor—both of these sculptural pieces are unconventionally artistic. They both derive the 'art' label from the meaning. For example, Wilson took old slave manacles and presented them with art that would not have been existent without slaves. This gives an underlying narrative that is contrasting to the history given by the Historical Society. In Duchamp's case, the absurdity and the rejection of this sculpture give it an artistic meaning in itself.

Although there are few similarities at first glance of these sculptures, we can see how they connect when we look and analyze them a little deeper. Aesthetically the only similarities between Fred Wilson's *Metal Work* and Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* would be the round silhouette forms and the fact that they exist as sculptures in the round. Only when we put these in context and look deeper than can we see these sculptures as tied, though using found objects and the meaning giving art labels. Neither of these pieces is easy for specific audiences to call art, so the artist intends to assist this label. These are all ways the two works of art relate, shown to us through comparison.