Cache Angus

ARTHIS 312 Quattrocento Paintings

Portrait Assignment

January 20, 2019

*//citations*

*//read another book on it to get more from*

To the Master of the Workshop,

As of last month, I am twenty-one years old; a very important age for someone who, like myself, was raised in the U.S. To truly commemorate the significance of this event, I am asking for a portrait to be made, depicting myself through some of the typologies of the Quattrocento. There are some attributes of the portrait that I request maintain these typologies, and some that will break these rules. Portraits were done for a number of reasons in the 1400’s, one of the most common was for a significant date (Sorabella), hence the twenty first birthday picture that I am asking for.

I am hoping to have my portrait commissioned in the style of the early painters of Quattrocento, with the most popular style of portraiture being a profile to emulate both antiquity (Sorabella) and donor portraits. This style will show a certain noble stature about my person and allow the viewer to see the many facets of myself. In the spirit of the Quattrocento, I want to convey the most naturalist version of myself. With the shift into naturalism in during the time period, portraiture, and art in general were used to depict a more realistic version of each person, someone more tangible. However, these realistic versions did not take away the style of depicting a person in their most ideal form. Therefore, I want to include the moles on my face and the under-exaggerated size of my eyes, while keeping the other lines of my face and hair smooth. As naturalism is one of the major typologies of the Quattrocento, it is important to keep this theme running throughout the entire portrait. To continuously include this theme, the style of perfected nature should follows the portraits narrative beyond just my face and into both my clothes and stature, and into the landscape behind me.

One of the focal points of portraits in the Quattrocento was to show the ties that the person depicted had with a group. As a mediator, it was used to show their status or position, as well as how they were viewed within the group. In my portrait I want to be seen holding a book that has “Engineering Practices” written on the cover. By holding this book, I am aligning myself with the academics, especially engineers. The title also indicates that I am still a student in practicum.

Quattrocento art was also used to depict the status of whoever commissioned it (Sorabella). Patrons would show off their wealth and their positions through portraiture and would often include part of their family’s crests, whether directly or through allusions (Portraiture). Adorning my hat there should be the image of a hand grasping a bow--the family crest of the MacInnes clan. This is a direct reference to my family lineage. It shows my direct ties to the family and, along the lines of renaissance portraits, also shows my status; MacInnes are one of the oldest and largest families in Scotland. This supposed status will also be seen in the way I have a very passive expression on my face. This reserved expression is common in the elites, as it would show their strength.

Standard “womanly” beauty in the 1400’s and the image of myself should run a clear parallel. In some respects, the portrait should merely follows the conventional naturalistic approach: I have blonde hair, my skin is very pale, I have red cheeks, and my neck is quite long (Portraiture). However, each of these aspects should also be enhanced and altered to fit in line with how women were typically depicted. *//maybe add more here from book*

Though I do not want my clothing intricately designed as most women would have in their portraits, I still want my attire to reflect a certain elite status and request that I have rich red clothing.

The background of the portrait is to be notable for several reasons. What is requested is a forest with a path leading through it to a lake. Like the standard fashion of the era, landscape is used to represent what is considered ‘my’ territory. This lake is Cache Lake, my name sake, and the path leading up to it is a direct representation of the connection between myself and the lake and the land around it.

With all that is going on in the background, I still want to maintain the focus of the portrait on myself. One of the techniques of artists in the Quattrocento was the create a bold barrier between the subject and the background (Wedding Pictures). I want a barrier, something like a windowsill, to be a horizontal bar behind me.

For all that I have been able to express myself through the typologies and dictions of the Quattrocento, there are certain rules that I want to break. These rules include both the idea of revealing oneself through portraiture and the idealistic and virtuous depiction of women during this time.

Though it is not spoken of directly, every part of a portrait is used to show some part of a person’s inner self. These parts are used to manipulate the subject of the portrait into a grander person than they are. In my portrait I want to wear a hat simply there because I tend to wear backwards hats. There is no greater purpose beyond the fact that I like hats. This is a direct contrast to manipulative portraiture.

Part of this manipulation of portraits was the depiction of women. Women had to follow a strict set of rules to be shown as pure and virtuous members of society (Medals), below their husbands or patriarchs. Looking a man in the eye was not seemly and did not follow either of these traits. As someone from a more modern age that must deal with the overwhelming amount of male majority in my chosen career, I feel the need to be shown staring directly at the viewer, as any man may have had the option to do. This breaks away from the typical female image while also lending itself to the Quattrocento idea that images held power over the viewer. By trying to emulate the power and privilege a man may have, I am giving myself these characteristics in the eyes of the viewer.

Another very important aspect of a woman’s portrait during the Quattrocento was the stylization of her hair. Typically, those who are young and unwed are shown with flowing locks of hair. I wish to be depicted instead as I am, with short and ragged hair. It may not lend much to my character, as was the purpose of portrait hairstyles, but it does show a feature important to me.

I hope to see the results soon.

Regards,

Cache Angus

# Bibliography

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