

Due Thursday, May 18, 2023

Cover Sheet

Name: Frank Yungfong TANG

I understand that I am expected to use my own words in this midterm. If I use any words from a source, I must put those words in quotes and then I must give credit to the source by using parenthetical notes (in-text citations), footnotes, or endnotes. This applies to any use of ChatGPT or any other AI source, and if I use any AI bot source, I must put the words from that AI source in quotes and give credit to the AI source using one of the above citation methods.

My name: Frank Yungfang TANG Date: Feb 12, 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Frank Yungfang TANG', written on a light gray background.

ARTS 2C “History of Art: Europe from the Baroque Period Through Impressionism”

Midterm Exam, Spring 2023, De Anza College

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We have discussed Italian, Spanish, Flemish, Dutch, and French artists and artworks in the 17th century Baroque period. The major differences of Dutch artworks from the rest of Europe during this period is content, size, and the focus of details in the work, due to the differences of their patronages and the business models.

Italian artists are mainly financially supported by the Catholic church as part of their counter reformation program. Early Reformation theology discouraged Protestant churches to create religious artworks, but also triggered the Counter-Reformation program in the Catholic church to heavily invest more artworks into the Catholic church to attract illiterates. Therefore, the artworks in the Catholic majority countries are either large scale church architecture projects, or large size paintings commissioned for part of the church. The content of their arts are either focusing on religious Biblical narrative or Greek myths. Spanish, Flemish and French Baroque artists were patronized by the Spanish and French court. Therefore their works are usually large and designed for the palaces and depicting political propagandas for the court. For example, Caravaggio, one of the famous Italian Baroque artists, was well known from his heavy use of Tenebrism, as observed from his work Conversion of St. Paul (1601). In that work, he also used foreshortening to render the horse buttock to illustrate the three dimension depth. A mythical light source illuminates only part of the painting to bring the viewers attention to the focal point. Spanish Baroque artist Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez painted many works for Hapsburg Kings, Philip III, Philip IV, and Charles II. In his work Philip IV on Horseback (1629-30), he

rendered the portrait of Philip IV riding a horse, in equestrian posture to cast the image of a powerful King. With a similar motivation, French Baroque artist Hyacinthe Rigaud painted Louis XIV (1701) utilizing the composition of the background setting and the cloth of the King to illustrate a taller-than-reality image of King Louis XIV as a tool for political propaganda. Flemish Baroque artist Peter Paul Rubens rendered a more dramatic narrative in his work, such as the triangle composition in his Abduction of the Daughters of Leucippus (1617). His early study of many European masterpieces highly influenced how he used nude bodies and body posture to bring his subjects into the world of their viewers. Notice all these works are very large in size and will only fit to decorate a church or a palace.

On the other hand, artists in the Netherlands are different. The Protestant churches in this period destroyed many artworks in the Catholic church and did not financially support artists to create artworks for their church. The establishment of The East Indian company and fortune made by many Netherland merchants created a very large size of rich middle classes in the country. This large group of rich middle class had a very strong purchasing power for artworks and therefore created a strong demand in the art markets. They created a free market for small scale artworks which focus on the subject matter of landscape, seascape, portraits, and still life paintings limited by the size of the wall and the artistic taste of their buyers. Dutch painters were more focused on realism and everyday life in their Baroque arts. They were interested in capturing the world around them, rather than creating idealized or romanticized images. Due to their business model and customer preferences, they created a lot of smaller size Still Life, Landscape, Seascape, Genre, Portraits, and Group Portraits. In Laughing Cavalier (1624), Dutch Baroque painter Frans Hals, following the Northern European artistic tradition, depicted fine details of the elegant texture. In his Archers of Saint Hadrian (1633). He used Tenebrism to bring

the focus to the faces of the fourteen anchors, each expressing their unique facial characteristics and spirit. Judith Leyster in her Self-Portrait (c. 1630) depicted herself for advertising purpose, with a turn-around-with-brush posture which Frans Hals invented, and painting a work looks like her previously well-known work, Merry Company (1630), and dressed in formal luxurious dresses to express her stable financial status. Rembrandt Van Rijn illustrated many self-portraits and commissioned group portraits, such as The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp (1632). Johannes (Jan) Vermeer does not have many surviving works. But from the small set of his works, we notice he utilized camera obscura to help him render the landscape and still life with better precision. In his Young Woman with a Water Jug (1664-1665) Vermeer skillfully used different gradients of white to render the background and the headpiece of the female subject. He also paid detailed attention to the reflection on surfaces of metals as well as the quality of light shining through the window glass. All of these are examples of how the Dutch Baroque painters create very different artistic styles of arts, with different content, mainly because they are targeting their business for a very different group of customers- the large group of Netherland middle class.

In summary, during the Baroque period in the Netherlands, artists worked to supply a very different kind of demand than the rest of Europe. The market size is much bigger, while the financial reward for each piece is smaller. There are more opportunities to work as an artist and the diversity of demanding skills are also larger. Based on these factors, the artworks produced in the Netherlands are smaller in size and the subjects are closer to everyday life in the reality of the society.

Extra Credit

Both the Baroque and Rococo styles use gold or silver ornate decoration, dramatic effects, and a sense of movement. For example, both Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors) (1678), by French Baroque architect Jules Mansart, and Salon de la Princesse at the Hotel de Soubise in Paris (1737-1740), by Rococo artist Germain Bouffrand, heavily use gold and silver ornate to decorate. Both Judith Beheading Holofernes (c. 1598) by Baroque female artist Artemisia Gentileschi and The Swing (1766) by Rococo painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard show dramatic effects and a sense of movement.

However, the content of Baroque painting is more serious and dramatic, but Rococo art is more light-hearted and playful. The focus of Baroque art is more religious, but more secular in Rococo art. And artistically, Baroque usually uses strong contrasts of light and dark, but Rococo uses pastel colors and soft curves. These differences could be easily observed from the comparison between Judith Beheading Holofernes (c. 1598) by Baroque female artist Artemisia Gentileschi and The Swing (1766) by Rococo painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard. While both works show dramatic effects and a sense of movement, the subject of the former one is based on a Biblical narrative and heavily uses Tenebrism to highlight the sense of a courageous assassination. On the other hand, the subject of the latter one uses pastel color to render a secular immoral romantic affair but with a positive tone.

The Rococo style started after the death of the powerful and controlling French King Louis XIV. The French aristocracy then were freed from Versailles and started to build their own Hotels back in Paris. They do not prefer religious works to remind their own immoral secular lifestyle nor have the need to embrace political agendas.

They started to fund many construction projects and needed large amounts of paintings for decoration. This created a shift in patronage. In this period, several key female leaders, such as Madame de Pompadour, the mistress and advisor to French King Louis XV, Catherine II of Russia, and Maria Theresa, the Empress of the Austrian Hungarian empire gained more political power. Their feminine taste highly dictated the fashion and artistic style of art this period. Therefore, we see the Rococo arts focus on appealing to the taste of female customers more.