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Professor Margot

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Throughout the last two weeks, I’ve had the pleasure of going to multiple galleries, each one embedding a different theme and containing art pieces from a segment of the historical timeline. Each of these museums challenged me to think critically and develop thoughtful analyses on various artworks. For instance, when I went to the Royal College of Art, I was struck by the creativity of the artists and diversity of their works. Contemporary art was always something that fascinated me, in that when an individual looks at it at first, it may not be thought of as an artwork at first glance. I greatly appreciate the process of deciphering a piece of art, whatever it may be. One painting that I thought was very compelling was this one artwork I came across in near the beginning of the walk through the gallery, which entailed six similar paintings containing lifeless-looking women either lying down or walking around like zombies. Every painting was the same, except each had slightly more women than the others. What caught my eye in the paintings was the method the artist chose to illustrate the female figures. It was as if the figures were copied and pasted from a computer, and screen-printed onto each piece of paper with different quantities. I then asked myself several questions: “Did the social issues of the time period that the painting was painted contribute to the painting of the art piece? What is the artist’s message? What is the trend in contemporary art in regards to theme?” In my opinion, the artist was trying to illuminate the darkness of war and criminal activities. The different quantities in each painting resembled how quickly bodies piled up when there was conflict. War and conflict is a contemporary issue, and it gets to the point where so many bodies pile up, the individuality is lost and ‘just another body’ is logged. I definitely struggled to find the meaning behind this particular art piece, but nevertheless I enjoyed looking at it and attempting to interpret it.

In the National Gallery, I was most enthralled to learn of landscape paintings and the lack of demand for them. Beginning in the pre-Renaissance period, people appreciated the portraitures, leading to artists like Thomas Gainsborough, who preferred to draw landscape paintings, to draw portraits of people in front of the landscape. Children in portraits were also reflective of the time period they lived in. Back in the pre-Renaissance period, children were portrayed as adult-like and serious. It wasn’t until the 18th or 19th century that individuals showed to be more charismatic and cheery.

Romanticism was a period of time in which art was depicted based on feelings. It wasn’t until the Enlightenment era that empiricism, rationalism, and sceptism were brought into the picture. When I went to the Tate Britain, I was able to identify some of the differences between the styles of Romantic art and Neo-Classical art. In most of the Romantic portraits I saw, the artists expressed the painting embodied with significant emotions and I could tell it was from an earlier time period. Neo-Classical paintings were a lot more detail-oriented and painted meticulously by the artists as compared to those of the Romantic Era. I was personally more fascinated by the ideas of the Enlightenment period, in which innovation was greatly commended. Hence, the age of Optimism was a fitting name.

Overall, these past class trips have definitely sparked a larger interest in looking at art for me. Being educated of the old-fashioned artists’ styles and reasoning for painting the pictures allowed me to expand my mind and assess the artwork in a way that I wouldn’t have if I never realized that the era the painting was painted in was an age of innovation or love, etc. Every aspect pertaining to an art creation, including an artist’s style, point in history, social issues and many more are instrumental to the overall message of the product.