**Temptation and Death**

1. Overview
   1. The struggle between man and temptation is a trend as old as time and its affects are inevitable.
   2. My theme is temptation and the inevitability of death.
   3. Three Ages of Man
      1. My first artifact is Three Ages of Man, a painting by Tiziano Veccellio. Tiziano was known as Titian by the English. Three Ages of Man was painted around 1515 in Italy (Bertman, 2001).
      2. Three Ages of Man depicts a young, passionate, couple. The woman seems to be tempting the man with a pair of flutes. To the right of them is a trio of children who resemble cupids, perhaps the product of their love. Adjacent to the children is a man holding a pair of skulls. This could be the same man as shown on the left or one of the children grown up holding the skulls of his siblings. The crisis of the old man is an earthly one. He has lost those who he loved and is close to death himself.
      3. This is a reflection on the true cost of love. Behind him stands a church which could be represented of how he lived his life and will be united with his family in death.
   4. The Ages of Woman and Death
      1. My second artifact is the painting The Ages of Woman and Death by Hans Baldung Grien. It was painted between 1541 and 1544 in Strasbourg, France (Museo Nacional del Prado, 2019).
      2. The Ages of Woman and Death depicts a ghastly demon whose arm is locked with an old woman. The old woman is pulling at the clothing of younger woman who is clearly upset. A tear rolls down her cheek as the old woman is tempting her to join them. The demon is holding an hourglass and a spear. At the end of the spear is a child which rests on the ground. Youth and old age are represented in this painting and temptation in the form of sin unites them.
      3. In the background is Jesus on a cross flying toward the sun. This is a sign that there is hope for the young woman to change her fate if she can resist temptation.
2. Theme and Relevance
   1. The idea that our actions in life determine the quality of our afterlife is something that I do not believe in; however, I do believe in making good decisions to better the earthly lives of myself and those around me.
   2. In these works, by Titian and Grien, life is summarized by a few significant snapshots: childhood, adulthood, and old age.
   3. In my experience, the religious symbolism in these pieces can simply represent having morals. It is important to have strong, clearly defined, morals and to do the right thing no matter how hard it is.
   4. In Titian's Three Ages of Man and Hans Baldung Grien's The Ages of Woman and Death there is a commonality that temptation has a long-term cost. There are commonalities between the themes of the paintings and the lifestyle choices of these demographics.
   5. Regardless of age or beginnings, we are taught to consider the consequences of our actions and navigate a world that may have blurred lines between right and wrong.
3. Evidence
   1. Chronologically, my artifacts were made about 30 years apart. Not much changed in terms of day-to-day living between these times. The world was wrought with disease, famine, and war. Both works were created "in an age when people died so young" (Bertman, 2001).
   2. These were also times where Christian beliefs were the defining feature of most Italian and French paintings. There are similarities between the paintings in the religious symbolism. In Titian's painting there is a church in the background as well as an angelic child. In Grien's painting there are demons in the distance. There is also a small image of Jesus on a cross pointing toward the sun.
   3. Both creators used painting as a medium. The painting style is similar and resemble renaissance realism.
   4. The use of literal figures is present in both paintings. There are wings in Titian's work and devils in Grien's.
   5. My thought is that this message could be useful to a social worker. Social workers help people who are at a low point in their lives.
   6. Some of this strife is caused by chance and a series of unfortunate events but it is my observation that most of the cause of low points in peoples' lives is due to poor decision-making skills.
   7. History repeats itself and people are often stuck in loops that they cannot escape due to bad habits.
4. Personal
   1. From my own experiences I understand the struggle of escaping from something that seems like an ill-fated situation. I grew up in Sugar Land, Texas. I always chose to hang out with the wrong crowd over lifelong friends and often wondered why I was in horrible situation *x*. As time passed on my trend of bad decision making continued. During my first stint in college I hung out with thugs and drug addicts. When I dropped out, I found myself in one toxic relationship after another.
   2. One thing that self-pitying humans do not realize is that order to break from this loop you have to want change.
   3. Appreciation of the humanities, such as the cultural melting pot of Star Trek and even my own artistic outbursts lead me to a deeper understanding of myself. Eventually, having grown tired of my reciprocating downward trajectory, I found a way out through a family friend. She helped me get a job with the potential of expanding to a career.
   4. Two years later and with absolution I can say that I related deeply to the message that my artifacts convey.
5. Studying the Humanities
   1. It would be useful to have a working knowledge of the humanities to draw comparisons from the past to compare to the occurrences in the lives of struggling adults and children.
   2. Appreciation of the humanities, such as the cultural melting pot of Star Trek and even my own artistic outbursts lead me to a deeper understanding of myself and I believe it will benefit you in the same way.
6. Importance of the Humanities
   1. The humanities are important to society to remind us not to reinvent the wheel.
   2. Through thousands of years of human consciousness many ideas have been expressed and as time goes on, people draw from the past for solutions to modern problems.
   3. Even during the renaissance, much was understood about patterns of the human psyche. It is useful to have an understanding of past beliefs because they are often based in a universal truth.
   4. Once you have a relevant source you can supplement your understanding of a humanities subject with modern analysis.
   5. Drawing from past human experiences gives us a deeper understanding of the human condition and saves us the trouble of grappling with the entirety of our species’ timeline.

References

Bertman, S. (2001, February 6). Three Ages of Man. Retrieved March 29, 2020, from http://medhum.med.nyu.edu/view/10361

Museo Nacional del Prado (2019). The Ages of Woman and Death - The Collection. Retrieved March 29, 2020, from https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-ages-of-woman-and-death/d5ef2c3e-48d1-40a8-8bb7-745314a1197c