

Introduction to Visual Arts of the World: Renaissance and Baroque

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In human history, art has been one of the concepts that are always present and prevalent. It has been used to define societies. People from contemporary societies have used art as their identity. Art is the expression of an individual's skills or imagination and thereby communicating a particular message. Its specific architecture has characterized every period (Alkalimat, 2004). The term art has been literary to represent visual art so that there can be a difference from other forms of art. Therefore, art can encompass diverse media, including painting, printmaking, sculpture, drawing, photography, installation, and decorative art (Alkalimat, 2004). Underlying visual art is a continuum that ranges within a broader spectrum from purely aesthetic purposes on one side and purely utilitarian purposes on the other side (Alkalimat, 2004). The polarity of purposes of this continuum is reflected in the commonly used terms as artists and artisans, with the artisan being regarded as the one who gives considerable attention to utilitarianism. However, the broad continuum of visual art through ages has resulted in different characteristics of art characterized by various aspects that define art (Alkalimat, 2004). Therefore, for the purposes of this research, we will consider the two common forms of art; Renaissance art and baroque art, detailing the differences that exist between them and how similar they are to one another.

Visual art is the most typical form of art that is studied, and that has existed for long. It encompasses all art forms, including painting, printmaking, drawing, videography, sculpture, crafts, design, ceramics, and filmmaking (Alkalimat, 2004). Visual arts is one of the oldest forms of art which has undergone tremendous changes throughout time and history, making distinct characteristic features from the traditional style of art to the present. It involves many artistic disciplines like the performing arts, textile arts, and conceptual arts, which have reinvented usage

of some aspects of visual arts alongside other types. Visual arts forms the most significant combination of art as it includes very many different disciplines like applied arts, interior design, fashion design graphic design, decorative art, and industrial design (Alkalimat, 2004). However, currently, usage of visual arts refers to aspects of fine art, and the crafts of decorative art. The major types of visual art form the past decades were renaissance art, which developed into baroque and impressionism (Alkalimat, 2004). Renaissance art forms comparatively speculative features that define and distinguish it from baroque arts despite being almost of the same period. The renaissance and baroque art resemble and differ from one another in many ways. The two forms of art represent characteristically different features in the possession, and their analysis reflects many concepts, including their geographical context and cultural exchange aspects (Alkalimat, 2004). Therefore, to be better understand these forms of art, it is imperative to introduce their specificities before ascending to how they compare.

Renaissance art can be defined as the painting, decorative and sculpture arts of the history of the European period, which distinctively emerged as a style in Italy in 1400 (Steele, 1993). Renaissance, also known as rebirth art, is perceived to be the noblest of the oldest traditions, and it is taken as the foundation of classical antiquity, which has transformed its tradition through absorption of the recent developments in northern European art alongside the application of the contemporary scientific knowledge (Steele, 1993). When renaissance art was incepted, it spread throughout Europe and affected the artists and their patrons as it involved new technical developments as well as unique artistic sensibilities. Renaissance art is a reflection of the transition of Europe into its early modern age from the medieval period (Steele, 1993).

Notwithstanding, baroque art resurfaced after renaissance art the period between the late 16th century and later 17th century among the characteristic artists of baroque art included

Caravaggio, who is renowned for making use of tenebrism (Friederich, 1947). Alongside Caravaggio is Peter Paul Rubens, who was a Flemish painter whose skills were adopted during his studies in Italy, working in Antwerp churches and also painted the series of Marie de' Medici (Newman, 2011). Baroque art is representative of a style of architecture, painting, music, dance, sculpture alongside other forms of art that flourished in Europe in the early years of the 17th century (Friederich, 1947). It extended to almost 1940, though it continues to surface the areas along with the territories of Portuguese and Spanish empires together with other novel forms of art up to the early 18th century. Baroque art followed renaissance art and mannerism, and it preceded Rococo, which was regarded as late baroque as well as neoclassical forms (Friederich, 1947). The Catholic church promoted baroque art as a form of countering the austerity and simplicity of the architecture, music, and art by protestants through the Baroque of Lutheran art, which had been developed in some parts of Europe (Newman, 2011). Baroque art is characteristic of its usage of contrast, deep color, movement, grandeur, exuberant detail, and surprise to achieve an awed sense. The typical Baroque style started from Rome and rapidly spread to France, Portugal, Spain, northern Italy, Austria, Germany, and Russia (Friederich, 1947). Baroque art, however, is represented to have undergone transition since as early as the 1730s, it is depicted to have revolved into Rococo or rocaille, which was a more flamboyant style.

Arguably, both renaissance and baroque are used for the identification of two different things concerning visual art; the historical era and the artistic style. Both renaissance and baroque arts refer to European style and art. Both the techniques are depicted to have excelled in their realism representation (Friederich, 1947). Renaissance and baroque employ vivid and evocative pigments, and the most vexing aspect are that in areas of concern of subject matter,

they both indicate a strong emphasis on the Judeo-Christian Bible topics as well as the mythology of Greco-Roman. If keen interest is not taken into these two eras and styles, there can be confusion and misinterpretation (Friederich, 1947).

To establish the differences between these two forms of art, it is prudent to assign specific words to them. Renaissance can be designated as stabilize while baroque can be assigned dramatize (HUNTER, 1914). Stabilize and dramatize can be well representations of the two styles when looking at the world of fiction science of the 21st century regarding this arts. For instance, artists working in Star Trek and Star Wars have demonstrated these words drama and stability distinctly (De Jésus et al., 2001). The first aspect concept between renaissance and baroque is the line strategy. In the context of Star Trek, when the directors and artists want to demonstrate enterprise, or a space station, which stationary and stable like K7 or DS9, they indicate that the subject being horizontal from the perspective of the viewer. Besides, when they want to demonstrate stability for an object that should be standing and narrow, they use a perfect vertical viewpoint which achieves the same effect (De Jésus et al., 2001). It is a novice device that either vertically or horizontally when demonstrating that there is nothing amiss. Renaissance art has been shown to apply the same impact on its art to achieve the same purpose. Renaissance art, when demonstrated through Madonna and Child, there is the use of distinct vertical and horizontal lines, which are clearly emphasized (De Jésus et al., 2001). Artists sometimes go as far as composing paintings that are visually similar to pyramids so that the broader part of the paint is at the bottom while the narrower part is towards the top. Pyramids represent the most stable 3-D shapes. The Madonna and the Child painting is a representation of the usage of lines in the renaissance (De Jésus et al., 2001).



The same effect is represented by the Pieta by Michelangelo, where the view from the front, the legs of Mary comprise the bottom, while little Jesus is at the middle and the shoulders of Mary and the head form the peak. Like any other renaissance art, the painting conforms to the horizontal factor of stability.



However, when renaissance focuses of stability, baroque arts centers more on dramatize. Though the concept of drama comes with a sense of instability as well as some intense energy. The concept of energy can be demonstrated by an object at an angle. The picture below of the Klingon Cruiser represents clearly drama which is accompanied by instability. From the picture, the ship is considered to move at high warp speeds, and from the ship's angle the feeling of speed and energy van be captured.



The European baroque artists clearly understood this principle, and they included angles to give the energy, which brings in instability or adds drama. However, in baroque art, the emphasis on visual lines is less as compared to the renaissance (Renaissance and Baroque Art, 1970). As indicated in the renaissance, the paintings are placed in composition so that they can emphasize the aspects of horizontal and vertical lines. This aspect is different in baroque as lines in baroque art might start with only one part of the composition and progress with the other part that is seemingly unrelated to the other. In most cases, in baroque art, the blackened background functions as a diagonal line (Renaissance and Baroque Art, 1970).

Moreover, other than the use of horizontal and vertical lines in renaissance art, there are more specifications to the form which bring out the difference between baroque and renaissance. The time frame is also a consideration in the two forms of art (Renaissance and Baroque Art, 1970). For instance, the reason as to why the Renaissance Madonna and the Child motif is structured in the shape of a pyramid and stable implies the duration of time length. The time indicated by the art in the renaissance is not on the fact that art can be of any era but about the period within the piece of art itself. From the different artists representing the motif of Madonna and the Child, the aspect of duration can be brought out (Renaissance and Baroque Art, 1970). When analyzing the two pictures of Madonna and the child, they indicate that Mary is looking at the baby, and the baby gives back the glance while resting for stability at the chest of the mother. In renaissance art, the principle of time remains as well. For instance, the statue of David by Michelangelo indicates a tall man in a stable stance (Renaissance and Baroque Art, 1970). The right leg is fully engaged, and it is standing vertically. From the pictorial presentation, it is clear that the statue can maintain a posture that way for a long time and aspect that can be considered as consuming time.



Another aspect of difference and similarity between renaissance and baroque is the backdrop. Backdrops deal more with drama than it does with stability. Here, the background of the painting is entirely put into consideration and this involves more baroque than the stability that renaissance articulates (BEARE & DYER, 1953). Baroque and renaissance form a stark contrast in terms of background which leads to an extra exploration. In renaissance, the background of

the paintings has more developed parts. For instance, such part may be horizon scenes like the back of a wall but backdrops are always shown in astounding detail. Thus, they do not imply much stability but adding a completion dimension ((BEARE & DYER, 1953). For instance, from Mona Lisa painting by Leonardo represents a young lady sitting at the balcony with a fictitious background that is seen at a distance. The painting physically shows the horizontal and vertical lines in parts of the horizon and the balcony (BEARE & DYER, 1953). The distinct component of time is also present since it is not illustrative of how long an individual can sit on a beautiful balcony. The painting thus provides an epic representation of what a renaissance painting is. However, despite the increased representation of renaissance, the backdrops indicate the baroque astute which have not been exaggerated and thus considered unimportant as they are blackened (BEARE & DYER, 1953). The backdrop aspect is used by baroque artists as their advantage, though renaissance artists do not frequently utilize the backdrop aspect in art.



Many enthusiasts of art argue that the baroque period does not present any great artistic value. However, the works of the prominent Baroque artists, including Bernini and Caravaggio, disapproved of this contention. The reason that was given for disliking the baroque artists was that they recreated what had previously been produced by renaissance artists. However, the style that the artists have applied in the two eras brings out the most considerable difference. Renaissance artists embraced the use of perspective in their artwork. As a result, Renaissance

artists were able to demonstrate more realism. However, the addition of depth to renaissance art has resulted in the paintings to lack emotions and further fails to capture the emotions that the art should demonstrate. Therefore, the aspect of stillness that was present in renaissance art was resolved by baroque art as artists in this era focused more on subject drama than stability.

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