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Nattanit Nittayaporn

The immortal artist, Eugene Delacroix

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It is undeniable that art has a significant impact on the way people perceive themselves and the world. Throughout the many years of human history the conceptual frameworks of art have changed dramatically. The Middle Ages was a period during which many countries in Europe experienced political, social, economical, cultural transformation as well.¹ Neo-classical art was reinterpreted and the romantic approach emerged. Ferdinand Victor Eugene Delacroix is one of the most prominent romantic artists who challenged the neo-classical definition of art. The life and works of Delacroix inspired a number of artists and people around the world. This essay will explore how Delacroix played a role in shaping both artistic movement and social transformation in the late 18th century.

To begin with, Eugene Delacroix played an important role in the development of the romantic approach that represented the life of people during the Middle Ages. Before the development of Romantic art, it is the era of the Neo-classical art. Most artists of the era tried to illustrate artificial constructions and universal characters that influenced by Greek and Roman history.² Their paintings were complicated to understand for ordinary people.³ The main idea of primitive cultures and

¹ "Middle Ages" History, American and World History. 8 Sept.2012
<<http://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages>>

² "Neoclassicism | Art Movement" Art education, an Australian fine art education resource 13 Sept.2012 <<http://www.arteducation.com.au/art-movements/neoclassicism.php>>

³ Gontar, Cybele. "Neoclassicism" In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 13 Sept.2012 <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/neoc_1/hd_neoc_1.htm>

individualism were suitable with aristocrats, but much more of the middle-class could not accept these artists' paintings. For all of these reasons, most people could not access or understand artist's paintings. On the other hand, Delacroix's artworks abandoned former art styles that made him distinctive from other neo-classic artists. He directly emphasized both contemporary and realistic events. People could define what he aspired to demonstrate. His paintings were broadly acknowledged in France and other countries including the oriental world. The historic masterpiece of his works, the Liberty Leading the People, is known as the unique artwork of romantic style.⁴ This dynamic painting portrayed the freedom that the French gained after the French Revolution.⁵ Further, this work represented the middle-class Frenchman without the presence of the noble man. It also differs from other anterior paintings because almost all of his works relate to true historical and religious stories. The Romanism in these works is of a wider perspective when compared with Neo-classicalism. Because of the inspiration of Delacroix's work, he became an international recognize as a widely romantic pioneer.⁶

In additional, Delacroix's artistic technique has become the key factor for his success in drawing the attention from viewers, other artists, and critics. At first, He used to mimic his masters. But he tried to find his individual way. So his artworks possessed the unique style that was created through self-teaching which was extraordinary from others at the time by moving away from old traditions.⁷ The use of color to express abstract ideas and inner thoughts inspired many symbolist artists. He

⁴ Tel Asiado. "Eugene Delacroix Biography Greatest French Romantic Painter of 19th century" *suite101*. 13 Sept. 2012 <<http://suite101.com/article/eugene-delacroix-biography-a19977>>

⁵ Khanacademy "Romanticism in France Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People" Smart history 13 Sept. 2012 <<http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/romanticism-in-france.html>>

⁶ "Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix." Encyclopedia of World Biography. 2004. Encyclopedia.com. 13 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

⁷ "Eugene Delacroix Biography" Eugene Delacroix the complete works. 15 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.eugenedelacroix.org/biography.html>>

used not only earth colors, but also warm colors in order to contrast light and shade. This radiated his works with violent emotions to come alive with patches of colors. Delacroix also used spot colors on the canvas instead of blend colors like many artists before him had done. Moreover, his composition concept perfectly consisted of painting dark backgrounds and bright foregrounds. It fetched interest to almost all observers. It is obvious that from the path of his performance, he could produce dimensional paintings. The Death of Sardanapalus illustrates his special methods.⁸ The result combines divergent colors with harmony in which viewers could perceive the enormous power jumping off the canvas. The picture presented various emotions to impact viewers. They could feel what the artist wanted to describe from the lines, value and color.

Equally important, Delacroix is not only the remarkable romantic artist but also the main drive in social change. He communicated human emotion through his paintings. He has created a lot of paintings regarding to political instability during his time that imply freedom, vision and liberty.⁹ During that period, there was a large gap between rich and poor people. Although the majority of poor people imagined having a better life, they had no way to express their desire and pursue their dreams. However, Delacroix's paintings not only represent people's suffering but also depict the life of people in other cultures such as oriental world. Therefore, people were inspired to do something to enhance their quality of life. This can be a significant drive of social movement which eventually led to industrial revolution.

⁸ Tom Lubbock "Great Works: The Death of Sardanapalus (1827), Eugene Delacroix" The independent 16 Sept.2012 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/great-works/great-works-the-death-of-sardanapalus-1827-eugegravene-delacroix-2015856.html>>

⁹Jonathan Jones " Cry freedom: how Delacroix captured the ecstasy of liberty" The Guardian 16 Sept.2012<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2005/apr/02/art1>>

After the era of romanticism, many artists after his time have been encouraged by Delacroix's artworks. Some imitated his works; some adjusted his technique and style to their own paintings.¹⁰ For instance, Edgar Degas, who was an impressionist artist, merged the classic style with romantic style. And even though Picasso was a popular modern artist, he had been inspired by Delacroix's painting as well. Moreover, many modern day artists remained using his vivid color. Therefore, Delacroix's influence has existed until now.

In conclusion, Delacroix, undoubtedly, is one of the most famous romantic artists in the world. He left many contributions to mankind with his inspiration and technique. He is not just an artist who has great value when he lived but he could also create the major phenomenal impact on the society when he had gone. His influence and popularity are not only widespread in his country, but also expand into other continents. He has received admiration from a plenty of followers. Although he passed away, the artworks he had created for all of his life could change the world forever.

¹⁰ "Eugene Delacroix" Artble. 16 Sept.2012<http://www.artble.com/artists/eugene_delacroix>